

■ CONSTRUCTION



THE Department of Public Works has promised that the Mamelodi magistrate’s office complex, which has been abandoned for a while, will be completed in August next year. | **JACQUES NAUDE** African News Agency (ANA)

Magistrate’s office delays anger residents

SAKHILE NDLAZI
sakhile.ndlazi@inl.co.za

RESIDENTS of Tsakane in Mamelodi East are in the dark and desperately searching for answers about the prolonged construction of the Mamelodi magistrate’s office complex.

The imposing structure is on Tsamaya Road and has been there since 2014, but it does not seem it will be completed any time soon.

A resident said she had watched construction workers embark on strikes for weeks on end.

She said that since the construction began, there had been problems with the ward councillor, locals and contractors.

“People are always protesting about wages or something of that sort; it’s never peaceful.”

The building, at an estimated R100 million, should have been completed by 2017. Despite the ongoing fiasco it has been guarded by security around the clock.

A security guard at the site said: “We have been put on site since the

beginning of the year. And we are mainly guarding against the theft of metal structures that nyaope boys steal.”

Public Works Minister Patricia de Lille said the Justice and Correctional Services Department had R531m available for upgrading courts. Her department budgeted R2.5 billion for repairs this financial year.

Public Works Department spokesperson Thami Mchunu said the project which was being implemented by the Pretoria Region had experienced a lot of delays.

He said most of the delays were caused by community members.

“There were initial violent disruptions by community members who wanted to participate in the contract and wanted the department to accept their terms and conditions.

“However, it could not accept as they were not in line with the conditions of contract entered into with the contractor Fikile Construction.

“The community at the time disobeyed their local councillor. They rejected the community liaison office’s

plan elected and provided by the councillor,” said Mchunu. He said they demanded that labourers appointed in the project should be paid rates which were higher than normal.

“They demanded to be appointed as sub-contractors for work which they do not have Construction Industry Development Board grading and also wanted to be appointed in spite of their high prices for the same work,” he said.

Mchunu said that as a result the department received claims from the contractor for the contract period to be extended, which was awarded as per contract provisions.

The contractor also claimed for damages and loss due to outstanding time.

Mchunu said when those demands were not met the community threatened the contractor and closed the site. The disruptions were resolved when new councillors came on board. A new liaison officer was introduced and some of the challenges were resolved.

The department now anticipates to complete the project in August next