



Cyril Ramaphosa. > Photo: Stefan de Villiers

SA's newest High Court officially opened at last

Charl Pienaar

MBOMBELA - It was a historic moment when President Cyril Ramaphosa officially opened the Mpumalanga Division of the High Court on Friday.

The province is the last of the nine to have its own High Court.

Ramaphosa was accompanied by minister of justice and constitutional development, Ronald Lamola, Patricia de Lille, minister of public works and infrastructure, deputy Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, Justice Sisi Kampempe, Judge President of the Mpumalanga Division of the High Court,

Francis Legodi and Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane, on a walkabout of the 12-courtroom building.

Ramaphosa later added that Legodi had noted that there were benefits to being "last-born", as this court is the most magnificent of them all. However, it came at a price.

The building, which started operations in May, was more than three years overdue, as it was initially set to be completed in October 2015, and cost double its original estimate of R600 billion.

Moreover, it is not yet 100 per cent

complete, as an additional access road still needs to be constructed.

De Lille told *Lowvelder* that her department was involved in securing the land and the upkeep of the building. The Independent Development Trust, although a parastatal of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), contracted directly with the Department of Justice (DoJ) in the construction of the building and are mainly responsible for budget and the timeline of the construction.

She stated that the decision to change the first selected construction spot and the

procurement of the land to start building caused some of the delays.

"During the construction period there were also some problems with the contractors and contractual obligations, but it is a long list of issues which gave rise to the court only being opened now."

She responded that the DoJ had set aside R600 million, but the current budget for the construction is just over R1,2 billion.

De Lille added that investigations into the overruns by the Special Investigation Unit are underway.

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