

Protesters claiming cash stop construction

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MBOMBELA - Construction of the Mpumalanga Parliamentary Village project in Mataffin has recently been stopped by a group of angry protesters armed with pangas, knobkerries and sjamboks.

The protesters claimed to be beneficiaries of the land upon which the project is being built, and said they did not benefit from the sale of the land. Edson Mdhluli said the project will not continue until the matter is resolved. “There has been a great deal of dishonesty that took place before the project could commence, and it is still happening today after giving them the benefit of the doubt. Now this project will stop until all this unscrupulousness have been dealt with and the matter is brought to finality,” Mdhluli said.

The project, administered by the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport (DPWRT), for the accommodation of 31 members of the legislature, was announced by the former MEC for finance, Eric Kholwane, during his budget speech for the 2016/17 financial year.

It is understood that more than R300 million has so far been spent on the project built on 50 hectares of land, bought for R30 million. About two-thirds of the project has so far been completed, and it is not clear



The parliamentary village site.

when the project will resume.

The DA in Mpumalanga said it is concerned by the slow pace of the project and its increasing costs. “The costs started at R300 million; we are now on R550 million with less work done. If you look at bulk services, water is not completed and the fence around the parliamentary village is not completed. One wonders why the costs are escalating while the work is not being completed, and this is the question that every resident need to ask, because this is taxpayers' money,” said the DA leader, Jane Sithole.

The spokesperson for the DPWRT, Bongani Dhlamini, said the department has nothing to do with the project being brought to a

halt. “What we understand so far is that misunderstandings between the Mataffin Trust and community members who claimed to be excluded on the payment of the land, is what has stopped the project,” Dhlamini said. “It is the matter involving them and the trust.”

Dhlamini added that the project was scheduled to be completed in March last year, but the deadline was affected by community unrests and the Covid-19 lockdown.

“It is unfortunate the project had to be delayed owing to those disruptions, but with the new deadline being pushed to March 2022, we are hoping that it will be completed if there are no further disruptions,” Dhlamini said.



Some of the work already done at the parliamentary village.