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FIRE

Parliamentary officials to release details of rebuilding

PARLIAMENTARY officials say efforts are under way to rebuild Parliament after parts of the building was gutted in a fire in January last year.

The promise comes more than a year after a blaze ripped through Parliament's Old Assembly building, damaging part of the New National Assembly and four months after Treasury set aside R2 billion for the purpose.

Parliament's secretary, Xolile George, yesterday said there would be a "scheduled media briefing next week" on the issue.

However, he said work had been done since the October announcement by Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana that Treasury had allocated R2bn to start the reconstruction and restoration of Parliament.

"There will be a scheduled media briefing next week to advise South Africans on where the work of Parliament is in the undertaking of this mammoth task."

MPs yesterday spoke about their worries over the delay in getting the project started, despite funds being available.

Al Jama-ah Party leader Ganief Hendricks said: "There is a strong push to get (Department of) Public Works to rebuild Parliament as soon as possible, but the delay is because many want to share the spoils."

"My concern is prices will be inflated by consultants and heritage people who will rip us off instead of reducing their prices for the national good."

DA Chief Whip Siviwe Gwarube said: "No work has been done. No investigation has been initiated, as far as I know and really Parliament is



EFFORTS are under way to rebuild Parliament's Old Assembly building after last year's fire. | ARMAND HOUGH
African News Agency (ANA)

using the Good Hope chamber as a stop gap measure."

Gwarube said the party would soon act on its pledge to approach the courts to force Parliament to find an alternative venue.

FF Plus MP Philip van Staden said his party had warned in November last year that the lack of an effective maintenance programme for government buildings was concerning and that fire at the National Assembly was an example.

Zandile Mafe, who is in custody, is charged with housebreaking with intent to commit arson and arson, terrorism, and theft in connection with the fire.

According to a summary of the facts placed before the court, Mafe had on December 31, bought R10 from a petrol station in Bellville, poured it into a cold drink bottle and travelled to the Cape Town City Centre.

| Mercury Correspondent