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ACCOUNTABILITY

Infrastructure projects worth R4.4bn stalled

A TOTAL of 71 infrastructure projects, valued at R4.4 billion and managed by the Public Works and Infrastructure Department, have stalled for periods exceeding a year.

This was revealed by Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Sihle Zikalala in reply to parliamentary questions from EFF MP Sinawo Thambo.

Zikalala said: "The department has approximately 71 stalled projects exceeding 12 months due to construction companies' incapability to complete the contracts."

Zikalala's responses showed the tender for the demolition of a workshop and upgrading of his department's head office in Pretoria was cancelled in February, and R32m of the R115m contract had already been paid.

A R962m project of the Defence

Department at Bloemspruit Air Force base was cancelled in November due to "no funding" after R42m had been paid to the contractor.

Contracts were also cancelled in the Goodwood Wingfield Military Base and Oudtshoorn Infantry School due to poor performance by contractors.

In at least four projects Public Works contractors had cash flow problems, and in one the court ruled that an R88m contract be re-advertised.

Zikalala's responses also showed that repairs at Correctional Services' Mogwase Prison in Mmabatho were cancelled after a contractor was liquidated. In Mthatha, a contractor was booted out of the site for not complying with contract conditions for the construction of a new 10111 Radio Control Centre.

Zikalala said a range of measures had been taken by his department against the contractors, which included warning letters and ultimately the termination of the contracts.

Yesterday, Zikalala's spokesperson Lennox Mabaso listed the reasons for the stalling of projects as funding problems, poor costing of projects, capacity and skills challenges, labour disputes and threats by the construction mafia. "We've also noted fraud, corruption, false liquidations and ceding of contracts."

ACDP deputy leader Wayne Thring said: "Contractors do not adhere to contracts because of lack of capacity and skills and work that is shoddy. Contractors are not held to account despite poor performance ... some get awarded more contracts." | Mercury Correspondent