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Mafia behind Mpumalanga's water woes

Province hit by cases of vandalism

By **Tshwarelo Hunter Mogakane**

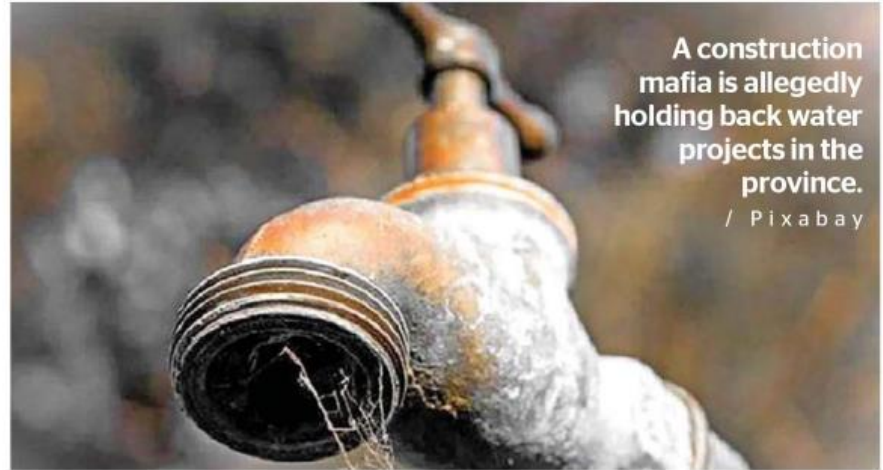
A delegation from the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) has raised concerns after learning of a construction mafia that has been holding water projects hostage in Mpumalanga, leaving community members with dry taps.

The NCOP delegates conducted an oversight visit to a water reclamation plant in the Nkangala District Municipality this week as part of their Provincial week activities as Mpumalanga delegates in parliament.

They said Mandla Msibi, MEC of cooperative governance and traditional affairs (Cogta) told them that the infrastructure vandalism and the construction mafia were among the reasons for water shortages.

The construction mafia is a loose phrase that refers to a group of community members, business owners and in some cases thugs, who demand protection fees or extort money from construction companies in exchange for allowing service delivery projects to continue unhindered.

“The MEC in the province, Mandla Msibi, told the delegation that while most municipalities were making strides in the provision of water and sanitation to communities, the biggest hindrances were aging water infrastructure and vandalism. Another concern that was a



A construction mafia is allegedly holding back water projects in the province.
/ Pixabay

threat to the delivery of water services were mafias that hold projects hostage and demand 30% payment without doing any work,” said Mpumalanga provincial whip in the NCOP, Ethel Nkosi.

Nkosi met with the Mpumalanga department of cooperative governance and traditional affairs, the department of public works, roads and transport, the South African National Road Agency (Sanral), the Nkangala district municipality and the national Department of Water and Sanitation for an update on the state of municipal infrastructure, water and sanitation and road upgrades.

“This matter is receiving attention from the national government, and the relevant law enforcement agencies are responding to it. The NCOP delegation also heard that Mpumalanga municipalities owed water boards huge amounts of money, and some had no capacity to service the debts.

“Another contributing factor to the challenges of water supply was the growing population

through migration as well as the effects of climate change. Sanral reported that there was progress in the upgrade of the notorious Moloto Road, the R573, in the Thembisile Hani Local Municipality.”

Nkosi added the delegates would closely monitor the province alongside national departments tasked with ensuring that services were delivered in Mpumalanga.

Provincial Week is one of the NCOP's initiatives aimed at enhancing oversight over provincial and local governments through the direct engagement with communities.

“It also provides an opportunity for the NCOP and the provincial legislatures to jointly engage with citizens on challenges they experience, and to provide an opportunity to receive reports from government departments and municipalities on service delivery progress.”

However, on Wednesday, the NCOP only met with officials.

Msibi was not available for further elaboration on the construction mafia.