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## Parliament's R2 billion restoration to take two years

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THE restoration of the buildings that were gutted by a fire in Parliament in January 2022 can be done within 24 months, Secretary to Parliament Xolile George said yesterday.

George said Parliament had finalised discussions and an agreement with a state-owned development finance institution to act as an implementation agent for restoring the damaged buildings.

"We are therefore pleased to announce today that Parliament and the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) Limited, through its Infrastructure Delivery Division, have agreed to collaborate in tandem with other stakeholders, such as the Department

of Public Works and Infrastructure and the Treasury, in respect of the implementation of the project."

He said the DBSA was the most suitable entity, given its expertise and experience in providing infrastructure management services.

The New Assembly, Old Assembly, committee rooms and offices of MPs and staff were damaged during the fire, which lasted about three days.

During his medium-term budget policy statement last October, Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana allocated R2 billion for the restoration of Parliament and a further R118 million to help the national legislature respond to unforeseen costs due to the fire.

George said the R2bn for the restoration came from the estimation done by engineers.

"Perhaps more details might come to the fore from the Minister of Finance. It is our task to make sure that everything is done within that budget."

He said the restoration project provided a unique opportunity to ensure that spaces in the parliamentary precinct were designed in a manner that best suited the specific needs of a democratic Parliament and to modernise the institution's digital infrastructure.

"It is therefore envisaged that, through this project, South Africa will have a new Chamber that fully serves the imperatives of our constitutional democracy, which includes sufficient capacity for joint sittings and a larger public gallery to accommodate members of the public."

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