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## EDITORIAL

# CONSTRUCTION MAFIA MUST BE ROOTED OUT

THE CRACKDOWN on construction mafia that have been disrupting development projects across the country can only work if the police start arresting and prosecuting those behind the illegal practice.

Speaking in Durban last week, Minister of Public Works Sihle Zikalala promised that the government would crack down on the illegal activities of these gangs, saying their activities could not be normalised.

Zikalala said a national forum had been set up to co-ordinate the cases in all the affected provinces.

He added that according to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, the disruption and blockages of construction sites in 186 projects cost the economy more than R68 billion before the pandemic.

The invasion of construction sites by the so-called business forums has caused serious economic impact and fuelled criminality and violence, leading to the flight of investment from the country's major cities.

This crime will continue unabated if the police don't do what they are supposed to do – arrest the leading figures and prosecute them for what is essentially a crime against the state.

It is an indictment and a shame that this illegal conduct, perpetuated by individuals that are politically connected, has been allowed to go on for so long.

Any country in the world would not tolerate a group of individuals hell-bent on destroying the country's ailing economy by chasing away much-needed investment.

The government must stop paying lip service to its commitment to rooting out the activities of the “business forums”.

The fact that the phenomenon of the construction mafia, which originated in KwaZulu-Natal, has spread to other parts of the country is due to the fact that the culprits have been allowed to get away with it.

Those behind the hijacking of construction sites have successfully managed to enrich themselves by extorting millions of rand from construction companies.

This has to come to an end or we risk creating an impression that the state is weak and cannot deal with organised crime.