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Long queues, no power irk

ACTION: JUSTICE MINISTER VISITS JOBURG MASTER'S OFFICE THAT CAN'T DELIVER SERVICES

⇒ 'The building is not conducive for staff or stakeholders.'

Brian Sokutu

Long queues, no electricity or back-up generator and an unconducive building for staff and the public...

This was the first-hand encounter with reality for Justice and Constitutional Development Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi when making her first stop at the Johannesburg Master's Office at 66 Marshall Street.

Accompanied by Deputy Minister Andries Nel and senior department staff, Kubayi on Friday conducted a service delivery enhancement visit to courts in Gauteng, describing her interaction with staff as "an eventful day, which helped in understanding the challenges and what the needs are".

The visits to the Master's Office, and Kempton Park and Tembisa magistrate's courts, formed part of the government's effort to increase access to justice for all through the enhancement of service delivery, promotion of fairness and improving the effectiveness of the administration of justice.

The visits provided Kubayi with crucial insights into the operational performance of the courts and the challenges encountered, with engagements



SMOG CITY

The city skyline blanketed in polluted haze amid high levels of air pollution in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, yesterday. Picture: AFP

creating opportunities for direct interaction with stakeholders, court officials and members of the public.

"Interacting with our staff has been quite an eventful day, understanding their challenges and what they need from us as the leadership and to be able to provide a good service to the public," Kubayi said.

Referring to her experience of the Master's Office, she said: "There is no electricity here and

the building is not conducive for staff or stakeholders. I had to walk up the steps to feel the experience of what our staff members are going through daily.

"I will be reaching out to the minister of public works as our landlord, to be able to help us with our buildings. There is no backup generator in this building."

She said the Master's Office provided valuable services to the most vulnerable members of society.

"These are the most vulnerable people who come here – a widow who has just lost a husband who needs a letter of authority and some needing help with those letters to be able to bury their loved ones. They are not able to get the service they so much need.

"Today, being a Friday, other people are supposed to have funerals on Saturday or next week.

"Because there is no electricity, the system is not working, meaning they have to be turned back

without receiving help, unassisted.

"Some have to borrow money to come here to get service.

"It is those things that one worries about, making citizens unhappy, due to coming to a government office and going back without receiving help," Kubayi said.

The Master's Office office deals with wills and the appointment of liquidators, "with committees unable to sit because there is no electricity".

"I have also been alerted that the network system is not working, something I have to solve with the DG (director-general).

"As a department, we have taken a decision that we are going to move our services online, like registration. This will help us to have a better interaction with communities.

"Those dealing with liquidators face threats, with appointments being questioned – raising possibilities of our officials being corrupted.

"We are dealing with a number of matters, making the effective functioning of this office a crucial matter. Getting the basics right is key," she said.

At the Kempton Magistrate's Court where she also visited a section dealing with children, Kubayi said the court was "peculiar in that it deals with a lot of foreign nationals being arrested".

"In dealing with foreign nationals, we have to employ a lot of court interpreters, something driving up costs," Kubayi said.

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