**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO 618**

**DELAY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SCIENCE CENTRE IN COFIMVABA: EASTERN CAPE**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 10-2017**

**Ms C King (DA) to ask the Minister of Science and Technology:**

 ***"(a) By what date will the R30 million science centre in Cofimvaba, Eastern Cape, be completed and (b) what are the reasons for the delay in construction".***

 **NW676E**

**REPLY:**

**Reply to Question**

(a) The construction of the science centre in Cofimvaba is scheduled to be completed by 31 March 2018

(b) The delay in the construction of the science centre in Cofimvaba was due to compliance requirements with the National Environmental Management Act (107/1988): Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014 and National Water Act 36 of 1998.

 The science centre exhibition to be established is intended to include both indoor and outdoor displays. The outdoor display was planned to encompass development of an artificial wetland to advance life and earth sciences. In June 2016, the DST in pursuit of this idea sought technical assistance towards the development of artificial wetland from the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). DEA runs the *"Working for* *wetlands"* programme that seeks to rehabilitate and protect wetlands in country.

 Upon surveying the project site, DEA's experts discovered an existing wetland surrounding almost the entire area demarcated for the erection of the building. The discovered wetland was not readily visible and hence it was not picked up during the pre-building site appraisal. This being the situation, there is an obligation to comply with legislation relevant to the construction of a building on this kind of land. Compliance issues that led to the delay in the construction of the building included the following:

* Permission had to be sought from DEA regarding the conditions under which the construction of the science centre could proceed. DEA granted permission for the construction to go ahead in December 2016.
* The site plan had to be revised and resubmitted to the Municipal Planning Tribunal in order to comply with the minimum distance that has to be maintained between the building and a water course. The approval was secured in February 2017.
* Work towards compliance with National Water Act in progress and technical expert are compiling information necessary for the final submission to Department Water and Sanitation.