

New cop cars and stations

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NEW police stations and new vehicles should be the priority of the SAPS but foreign expertise to fight crime is a no-no for now.

This was the reaction of the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) to Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan's Budget speech yesterday.

Popcru general secretary Nathi Theledi welcomed the more than R87 billion earmarked to fight crime and ensure better police visibility across the country.

Gordhan prioritised the construction of new police stations and the purchase of new vehicles for police.

"Enhancing police visibility entails optimising spending on personnel, vehicles and infrastructure to ensure the police service is accessible to communities and can make its presence felt.

"A significant proportion of the Budget, about 76.4% over the medium term, is allocated to spending on compensation for employees.

"However, to keep spending within the compensation of employees' ceiling approved by the cabinet in the 2016 Budget, the department plans to reduce personnel numbers from 194 431 in 2016/17 to 191 431 in 2019/20.

"The reduction in personnel numbers is not expected to reduce the department's overall performance over the medium term, as most of its performance targets in relation to the investigation and detection of crime will remain constant over the medium term," Gordhan said.

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He said R2.5bn was allocated over the mid-term expenditure framework (MTEF) period to an administration programme to build, upgrade and maintain police stations.

The department was planning to build 63 additional police stations over the period, at an estimated cost of R588.3m.

It also planned to prioritise the replacement of vehicles which have exceeded 200 000km as these vehicles, which constituted 35% of the total fleet at the end of 2015/16, required significant maintenance each year.

An amount of R5.7bn was allocated over the medium term for transportation equipment, including vehicles, and R4.5bn was budgeted for fleet maintenance.

The department was developing a plan to expand public order policing to support the implementation of the recommendations of the Marikana Commission of Inquiry.

Allocations of R242m in 2017/18 and R355.8m in 2018/19 were approved by the cabinet in last year's Budget for this purpose.

This explained the projected increase of 7.9% over the medium term in expenditure in the Specialised Interventions sub-programme in the Visible Policing programme.

While Popcru welcomed the budget increase in police visibility, it warned against using foreign experts who, according to Theledi, could use strategies that might not be applicable in South Africa.