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Influx of migrants affects police resources

Cops are struggling to curb crime, says Mathale

By **Mpho Koka**

The high influx of migrants in provinces such as Gauteng and Western Cape has played a role on police's resources being stretched, says deputy police minister Cassel Mathale.

Mathale said between 2016 and 2022, Gauteng has seen 1,52-million migrants flocking into the province, up from 503,400 in 2016. Western Cape recorded 458,749 migrants by 2022 – up from 161,436 in 2016.

"We are having inflows and this is one of the factors affecting our resources negatively. We have to police more people in these provinces," he said.

Mathale, who was speaking at a ministerial briefing session on the resourcing of the police service and police stations in the National Council of Provinces in parliament yesterday, said the increasing population growth in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape has heavily impacted on limited resources and equipment police have, forcing them to struggle in keeping up with the demand to curb crime.

Mathale's presentation in parliament comes in the wake of minister Bheki Cele's visit to Finetown, south of Joburg, on Monday, where seven people were shot dead on Saturday.

Mathale said the SA Police Service does not have enough resources in terms of police officers on the ground to patrol,

police vehicles and stations.

He said the ideal number of officers needed in the country for the 2021/2022 financial year is 193,476 – but the actual figure stands at 105,935. He said SA is short of 2,173 police vehicles. He said for the 2022/2023 financial year, 2,991 vehicles have been ordered but only 818 have been delivered.

Mathale attributed this shortfall to merchants not meeting the specifications of the ministry.

"The merchants were affected by a number of factors such as not having the type of models that were required. We had to change the orders. We are confident that before the end of the financial year all vehicles will be delivered."

Mathale said there has been

a steady increase in the number of police stations built in the past 13 years due to challenges that the department of public works and infrastructure has been facing. He said in 2009 SA had 1,116 stations and by this year had 1,158.

"To combat crime we need personnel, vehicles and more stations. Where there is a population that grew we need to expand our footprint and build more satellite stations..."

On police's strategy to combat crime, he said fighting crime is not a sole responsibility of the police. "... through the interface between ourselves [police department] and communities, that will make it possible to deal with shortcomings of resource constraints."

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