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# Crime costing Gauteng investment, says Lesufi

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**G**auteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi says the province recently lost seven big investors who chose to go to the Western Cape because of high crime levels. However, he told City Press after the state of the province address that he took solace in the fact that Gauteng managed to secure R14 billion from other investors.

Lesufi said crime was one of the main issues raised by investors.

"What we did after failing to convince those investors to stay with us is to make those who remained in Gauteng happy, because they'll be the point of reference when other investors want to come. The price is not to attract new investors - it's to satisfy current ones because new investors ask current ones about the environment," said Lesufi.

According to the latest crime statistics released in March, Gauteng experienced a surge in contact crimes between October and December 2023, with figures rising from 50 039 in 2022 to 51 327 in 2023 - an increase of 1 288 cases.

However, during his state of the province address in Katlehong, Ekurhuleni on Thursday, Lesufi reiterated his commitment to fighting corruption and crime, enhancing security and creating jobs.

His intervention has employed more than 7 000 wardens known as amapanyaza to fight crime in the streets of Gauteng.

#### DEPTH OF THE PROBLEM

"However, we underestimated the depth of crime. It's really deep and manifests itself in many ways, like hijacking buildings, zama zamas and kidnappings. A number of people are kidnapped on a daily basis, which is a new phenomenon. By contrast, the old forms of crime, like rape and murder, are still stubborn and not going away. We also have a new crime of people being hired to kill other people," he said.

He told City Press that when he made an undertaking to use the wardens to help law enforcement agencies fight crime, he had not realised the extent of the problem.

"But we've put in all the systems we said we'd put in. We have a fully operational interim command centre, helicopters and panic buttons that are readily available to be downloaded on smartphones by the community," he said.

He said the command centre was monitoring targeted areas and he promised to keep a close eye on it. "We've installed almost 8 000 CCTV cameras up they're working. We have three helicopters to chase criminals and have stopped many hijackings," he said.

He added that law enforcers would continue fighting crime by employing more young men and women to do so. This, he

Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi has spelt out his **extensive crimefighting** initiatives in his state of the province address

said, would also be a form of job creation.

"We have 7 000 wardens, 2 000 of whom graduating in a few days' time, so we've put the plans in place," he said.

#### A CASHLESS SOCIETY

Lesufi explained that part of the integrated crime prevention plan was eliminating eliminate cash usage. "If we eliminate cash, ATM bombings will come to an end. We want to find ways to encouraging people to use cashless methods for transactions, where possible," he said.

Lesufi emphasised that, to date, 250 vehicles had been given to the SA Police Service to strengthen the fight against crime and more than 400 visible policing vehicles had been deployed.



**CRIMEBUSTER** Gauteng Premier Panyaza Lesufi, who is combatting crime

PHOTO: OJ KOLOTTI / GALLO IMAGES

"We've deployed drones in high-crime areas, which are all linked to our interim command centres and are working closely with other law enforcement agencies.

"To date, more than 30 000 epanic and physical buttons have been distributed to citizens as part of the new epolicing initiative. The epanic app is a gamechanger in fighting crime, particularly gender-based violence and femicide. We encourage all communities to download and use the app," he said.

He added that his law enforcers had realised that in the majority of major crimes, a motor vehicle is involved. "It's within this context that we're overhauling our number plate regime to disrupt the involvement of vehicles in criminality. From

January 2025, these new registration plates will be rolled out to all motor vehicle owners.

"Equally, our department of roads and transport is beefing up our capacity to combat public transport conflict and taxi violence, in partnership with the Road Traffic Management Corporation, the SAPS and Metro Police units," he said.

He said that they had successfully recruited more than 7 000 traffic wardens (excluding the more than 2 000 military veterans who were in training) and were monitoring their impact in high-crime hotspots in all corridors.

"We're implementing our antiland invasion strategy to ensure that no new informal settlements are established. In implementing this strategy, we've created a land invasion monitoring and inspection tool, the first of its kind in the country. They're starting with government cars; come 1 January next year, everyone will have new number plates that can't be copied, among other things," he said.

Lesufi explained that with the new provincial commissioner of police, Lieutenant General Tommy Mthombeni, who replaced the retired Lieutenant General Elias Mawela, they believed the plan for fighting crime would continue as anticipated. "We have to implement those plans and hopefully the next crime statistics, when they come, will reflect this," he said.

#### JOB CREATION

Lesufi said that when he was elected to the position two years ago, he could not make long-term plans, but he wanted to effect changes and had come up with the idea of employing more than 130 000 people during that 18-month period. "We can fill Ellis Park stadium with people who weren't previously employed. We make the interim arrangement until we finalise long-term plans. Yesterday, we showed [during his state of the province speech] that these are long-term plans which are now permanent and sustainable jobs," he said.

In defending Nasi Ispani, he said it had not been an election or political gimmick. "We had a strategy for the long term of not seeing people suffer. We wanted to have expanded public works and training programmes to give people the necessary support while we were looking for sustainable jobs. So now it's a real test," he said.

#### ON THE ANC

Lesufi said he believed the ANC would bounce back in the next elections, but that it needed to make tough decisions to change. "The ship is sinking. The problem is, instead of identifying why that's happening so that we can stop it from sinking, we're squabbling over who should own and command the ship," he said.