

NPA to get a slice of R10bn pie to fight crime

February 20, 2008 *Edition 2*

Finance Minister Trevor Manuel has allocated an additional R10 billion over the next three years to hire more police, prosecutors, judges and magistrates, as part of the overhaul of the criminal justice system.

The money will also be used to build 40 police stations, prisons and improve technological equipment in fighting crime.

In attempting to reduce overcrowding in prisons, re-duce the number of repeat offenders and "improve rehabilitation", Manuel said the Department of Correctional Services would procure six new-generation correctional centres to house 18 000 offenders by the 2010/11 financial year. Five of these would be built through private and public partnership programmes.

In his Budget review, Manuel said there would be an additional allocation of R250 million for the upgrading of equipment in police forensic science laboratories and R530m for the appointment of about 8 500 police officials, "bringing total projected police numbers to 201 000 by March 2011".

"An amount of R1.3bn is allocated for the upgrading and renewal of the information and communication technology network of the SAPS, providing the platform for better control of vehicles, dockets and firearms."

The appointment of two prosecutors to each court was continuing, he said, and additional allocations totalling R410m would be used for the appointment of about 50 judges, 170 magistrates and 171 public defenders.

"A further R65m supports the development of the National Prosecuting Authority's electronic case-flow management system."

In delivering his budget, Manuel said the fight against crime was bearing fruit, but cautioned against complacency.

Today's Budget comes amid a contentious overhaul of the criminal justice system, which includes the incorporation of the Scorpions into the SAPS.

The overhaul, with an emphasis on the integration of law enforcement agencies' efforts in combating crime, has been in the pipeline for two years.