

# Court services get biggest slice of justice budget

PRETORIA: A large chunk of the Department of Justice and Correctional Services budget has been allocated to court services, says department Minister Michael Masutha.



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Of the total R17.9bn budget, R9.3bn has been allocated to the functioning of the courts.

Delivering the department's Budget Vote in Parliament, on Tuesday, 29 July, Minister Masutha said the development and improvement of courts constitute the primary mandate of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development.

"It is for this reason that the bulk of the budget allocated for the Justice and Constitutional Development vote is allocated to the Court Services programme."

According to the minister, there are 763 magistrates' courts and 13 High Courts country-wide, of which 45 magistrates' courts were built in the past 20 years of democracy.

He said in the past 20 years, on average, two courts were built per annum. He said government spends, on average, between R330 million and R350 million towards the construction of a new court.

"Our court infrastructure constitutes our greatest capital investment," he said.

Minister Masutha said the construction of the Limpopo and Mpumalanga High Courts are earmarked for completion by 2015 and 2016, respectively.

A further four magistrates' courts are earmarked for completion by the end of 2016/17 financial year, and these will be built in Booysens, Mamelodi, Plettenburg Bay and Richards Bay.

According to Minister Masutha, in the past four years, 29 out of 90 Branch Courts were revamped and proclaimed as full

services. A further four Branch Courts will be converted into full services in the current financial year.

"We are also accelerating the alignment of magisterial districts with municipal boundaries with a view to ensuring that there is a magistrate's court in each municipality.

"This process also seeks to redress the past geo-spatial injustices through which the majority of Africans were attached to far flung courts in self-governing territories and Homelands," he said.

## **Child maintenance**

Minister Masutha said Child Maintenance and Deceased Estates are important service delivery outcomes that his department have prioritised over the years.

"We are pleased that many child maintenance beneficiaries are opting to receive payment through the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) and bank system," he said.

## **Chapter 9 institutions**

Also receiving a boost was Chapter 9 institutions, which includes the Office the Public Prosecutor and the South African Human Rights Commission, which have received a total amount of R2.1bn.

This, according to Minister Masutha, is to enable the institutions to carry out their constitutional mandates of promoting accountability, good governance and the advancement of human rights.

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