

IFP: Crime will affect 2010 WC

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Cape Town - The 2010 Soccer World Cup will be a "monumental flop" if South Africa (SA) does nothing to counter international perceptions that the country is a criminal haven, warned Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi on Friday.

"SA, unfortunately, is perceived in many parts of the world as a criminal haven. A walk down London's Regent Street or Sydney's Oxford Street will, sadly, provide ample anecdotal evidence to support this perception," he said.

Once a perception was cast, it could prove almost impossible to shift.

The 2010 World Cup was expected to attract about 450 000 visitors to SA.

"But if prospective international visitors judge our country not safe enough to travel to, the event could turn out to be a monumental flop, and any economic gains hoped for will vanish into thin air."

'Justice System on the verge of collapse'

Buthelezi said it was totally unacceptable that tens of thousands of rapists, murderers, paedophiles, vehicle hijackers, drug dealers and thieves, as well as national and international criminal syndicates, "strike every hour and everyday in SA - usually with impunity".

The country's criminal justice system was on the verge of collapse.

"The government's inability to identify, combat, isolate and successfully prosecute and incarcerate criminals is a national disgrace."

However, the reason for this was not because government was soft on crime, despite perceptions to that effect.

"The problem is... that in many ways the country's state is weak and ineffective. The fight against crime is another reason why we must win the political argument that the decentralised state is more effective than the unitary state in delivering essential services.

"Policing in the country, for example, remains highly centralised, while countries such as the United States, Brazil , Canada , Mexico and Germany , have a multiplicity of policing agencies at the national, state and local levels.

' Policing must be decentralised '

"The recent appalling crime statistics illustrate that the highly centralised system of policing much favoured by the ANC alliance is an abject failure.

"Policing must be decentralised as a matter of urgency with a new and competent leadership," he said.

Buthelezi noted it would be necessary to identify and remove "unhealthy, unfit, semi-literate police officers untrained in detective work and forensics" from the SA Police Service (SAPS).

He said crime was sometimes "glamorised" in the country's townships.

"This culture must be condemned and citizens must accept the truth of the saying that ' he who profits from crime, commits it ' . The purchase of stolen goods, for instance, must be seen for what it is: a crime."

Buthelezi also called for tax rebates for the many South Africans who had been forced to pay private security firms to safeguard their homes and families.

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