

## Prisons overcrowded, Courts overloaded in KZN

Amelia Naidoo

WITH no signs of crime abating, Durban's Westville Prison is bursting at the seams, with almost 100 inmates being added daily to its overpopulated facilities. Overcrowding was the main challenge cited by KwaZulu-Natal Correctional Services Commissioner Nkosinathi Nhleko yesterday,

When he and other stakeholders briefed the National Council of Province's select committee on security and constitutional affairs on a range of issues in Durban.

This was followed by a tour of the facilities at the Point Police station, the regional courts and the prison.

The committee embarked on five-day oversight visit to KwaZulu-Natal yesterday to monitor the services provided by the departments of Justice, Correctional services and Safety and Security in the province.

Westville Prison was alleged to have a high level of corruption and malpractice.

The prison's Medium B cells had 4 337 prisoners, but had been designed to accommodate 2 137. In addition, its C1 block, which holds illegal immigrants awaiting trial or deportation, held 63 inmates when it was only meant for 19.

The President of the Regional Court of KwaZulu-Natal, magistrate Hamilton Cele, examined the poorly ventilated cell holding illegal immigrants and said: "These conditions are not fit for humans to live in."

The courts were also groaning under a huge workload, said the KZN Director of Public Prosecutions, Shamila Batohi.

She said that the conviction rate was high - as much as 80% - but that crime was not being reduced and this created a steady stream of cases, adding to the load.

Cele added that the regional courts were not fully operational, as only 11 of the 16 courts were functioning.