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TRANSPORT

Prasa set to recover 80% of its passenger rail corridors

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TRANSPORT Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga has said that by the end of this financial year, Passenger Rail Agency of SA (Prasa) would have recovered 80% of its passenger rail corridors and brought a modernised passenger train experience to the people.

She said this Transport Month they were concentrating on infrastructure, adding that it was time to celebrate their achievements as a department.

They would showcase what they are doing now, what they have done, and what they intend doing, as they look at all the modes of transport post-pandemic, Chikunga said.

And all this while recovering in either aviation, maritime, road or rail.

Chikunga said the restrictions on movement impacted negatively on transport operations across the different modes.

"Beyond Covid-19, some provinces experienced devastating flood disasters."

Chikunga, together with the MECs of Transport, Roads, Infrastructure, Public Works and Community Safety and Liaison, along with department entities and stakeholders in the sector, officially launched the 18th instalment of the annual October Transport Month campaign in Midrand, under the theme "Siyakha – we are building a better transport infrastructure to grow South Africa together".

Chikunga said an increase in road accidents was due to the rise in rail freight and rail passenger transport. Land transport, air transport and transport support services also reported positive growth in economic activities.

Currently, the economy faces several domestic constraints that have remained particularly binding over the medium term.

"These constraints have included,

among others: inadequate and unreliable electricity supply, skills constraints, regulatory uncertainty in certain parts of our economy, the concentration of particular markets and the existence of highly untransformed markets that discourage new entrants," she said.

Chikunga added that these challenges had also deepened as a result of a deep and structural economic crisis that had progressively worsened over the past few years, greatly exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and in part by historically slow infrastructure build.

They also celebrated Prasa's milestones in restoring the passenger rail network as the future backbone of public transport, while unlocking the socio-economic benefits of the rail sector.

"We proudly announce that to date, 18 corridors have been recovered out of the 40 corridors operated by Prasa in Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, with a total of 230 stations refurbished to basic functionality. Trains are running in major cities such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Pretoria and Ekurhuleni.

"By the end of this financial year, Prasa will have recovered 80% of the passenger rail corridors and lines, while bringing to our people a modernised passenger train experience," she said.

Chikunga said the recent reopening of the Leralla to Germiston line takes them a step closer towards running the service between the three big metros in Gauteng.

"Soon trains will be running from Pretoria to Ekurhuleni, and all the way to Johannesburg Park Station, reflecting the interconnectedness between our metros. As I speak, trains are running from Pretoria to Kempton Park."

She revealed that to date, Prasa had invested R3.667 billion in rail recovery, including the refurbishment of the stations.