

PublicSector

MANAGER

ADG Mokonyama

Driving excellence
behind a high-performing
transport sector

Transport Month

Building a safe,
sustainable, reliable and
affordable transport
system

Social Development Month

Strengthening families
and communities through
partnerships





Contents: October 2026

REGULARS

Minister's Message

Building a safe, sustainable, reliable and affordable transport system **P4**

DG's Message

Social development: Progress, purpose and the responsibility to deliver **P8**

Conversations with leaders

Transport ADG Mathabatha Mokonyama shares how the department is sustaining clean audits while advancing the transport sector **P12**

Women in the public sector

Dr Laurie Milligan leads a major study in breast cancer care **P16**

Trailblazer

UFS's Professor Edward Netherlands brings cutting-edge research to Africa **P20**

Profiles in leadership

Professor Ntombifikele Gloria Mtshali's vision for empowering rural healthcare through targeted nursing education **P24**

Office of the President

Our constitutional values are part of our common heritage **P28**





P46



FEATURES

PRASA's focus moves to optimisation

PRASA Group CEO Hishaam Emeran traces how the agency has moved beyond recovery **P30**

When false information moves faster than the facts: Rethinking government communication

New study finds that accuracy alone is not enough to win the battle against misinformation and disinformation **P34**

From stage to stadium: Why Gauteng's events economy needs seamless public transport

Gautrain is helping connect people to Gauteng's thriving creative, cultural and sporting events through reliable, efficient and integrated public transport **P38**

Transport infrastructure: Driving growth, connecting communities and delivering on South Africa's development priorities

SA's transport infrastructure remains one of the country's most powerful tools in building a capable state **P40**

LIFESTYLE

Grooming and style

Step into spring with Irene Makhavhu's colourful designs **P42**

Food and wine

Enjoy every spoonful: Thai chicken prawn curry **P44**

Travel

Exploring Witsieshoek: Adventure, heritage and mountain views **P46**



**government
communications**

Department:
Government Communication and Information System
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE MAGAZINE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION-MAKERS | **Publishers:** Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)
Enquiries: +27 012 473 0010 Switchboard: +27 012 473 0000 Tshedimosetso House: 1035 Francis Baard Street (corner Festival Street),
Hatfield, Pretoria Private Bag X745, Pretoria, South Africa, 0001 www.gcis.gov.za

Acting Director-General Nomonde Mnukwa **Acting Deputy Director-General: Corporate Services** Terry Vandayar
Deputy Director-General: Intergovernmental Coordination & Stakeholder Management Michael Currin

Acting Deputy Director-General: Content Processing & Dissemination Sandile Nene

Head of Editorial and Production Zanele Mngadi Zanelemngadi@gcis.gov.za

Managing Editor Tshapo Nkosi tshapon@gcis.gov.za

News Editor Miriam Mokoena miriam@gcis.gov.za

GCIS Photographic Unit Elmond Jiyane | Ntswe Mokoena | Siyabulela Duda | Kopano Tlape | Busisiwe Malungwane

Production Assistant Jauhara Khan **Graphic Designer** Tendai Gonese

Building a safe, sustainable, reliable and affordable transport system

This year marks 21 years since the first October Transport Month, in 2005.

The year 2026 also commemorates 30 years since the enactment of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. An effective and efficient transport, mobility and logistics system lies at the heart of ensuring all citizens can access their social and economic rights.

Accordingly, this month, we must shine a spotlight once again to evaluate the progress we are making in building an integrated safe and affordable transport system that acts as a catalyst, not a constraint, on a society and economy that works for everyone.

This year has been a difficult one for households, bus and taxi operators; and the broader freight and logistics industry. Our geopolitical environment is not of our choosing. Its impact

on supply chains, trade routes and the fuel price is there for all to see.

From our side, we are doing everything in our power to make public transport more affordable.

Over the past two years, we have recovered 35 of 40 priority passenger-rail lines, including most recently part of the Midway to Lenz route. PRASA passenger trips rose from 10 million in 2020/21, after the COVID-19 pandemic, to an audited figure of 101 million at the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

On average a PRASA passenger pays between R12 and R15 for a return trip at peak hours depending on the distance travelled.

This year we will continue to refurbish track, signalling and stations to ensure we deliver more frequent, punctual services and with higher passenger volumes. On 15 October,

we will invite you to experience signalling rehabilitation on the Mabopane line and later in the month to launch the new Station Complex at KuGompo City.

The integration of passenger and road transport systems is central to improving affordability and safety for commuters. Bus and minibus taxis remain central to our transport system.

We are in the process of reforming our public transport grant system into a unified support model available on selected routes to bus and taxi operators alike. Our reform is guided by

foundational principles, including integration, sustainability, fairness, safety and commuter affordability. Consultation continues with all affected parties



Transport Minister
Barbara Creecy.



Earlier this month, I received good news from the International Civil Aviation: with a final safety rating of 94.99%, South Africa has retained its position as the highest-ranking country in Africa and the seventh-leading globally for the effectiveness of its civil aviation safety system.

to develop a workable model.

The Department continues to cooperate with the taxi industry to reform and formalise the sector by:

- Repurposing the Taxi Re-capitalisation Grant and de-risking the industry so operators can buy cheaper vehicles with lower repayments; and
- Formalising and right sizing the industry through pilot transport operating companies, one in each province, to test new management and investment models.

Rail and port reform are at the centre of government's agenda for the transport sector. Last week Cabinet supported the separation of the Transnet Ports Authority (TNPA) as

a stand-alone company owned by the State.

The principles on which the separation will be effected include fair compensation for Transnet, on an independently assessed valuation of TNPA, long term financial sustainability and equitable allocation of liabilities to both the Transnet Group and the TNPA; protection of all workers, jobs and customers; preservation of strategic state ownership and control of national ports infrastructure and improvement in investment capability and infrastructure development of both TNPA and Transnet.

This significant development will bring TNPA in line with the National Ports Act as well as international best practice. As an independent company, TNPA will be able to use its revenue to invest in port infrastructure and equipment, thereby accelerating

the journey which has already seen three of South Africa's ports tagged as most improved in a recent World Bank study.

The *2022 White Paper on National Rail Policy* and the 2023 National Freight Logistics Roadmap are now delivering results.

In March, the Department approved 11 private train operating companies (TOCs) to use the state-owned national rail network, bringing private expertise and capital into operations. Operations are due to begin in April 2027.

In July, the Transnet Rail Infrastructure Manager published a second network statement, creating the necessary certainty to ensure the TOCs can secure rolling stock, staff and capital.

Approved for public comment earlier this year, the Draft National Rail Master Plan outlines our future vision for an

interoperable regulated and well maintained state-owned railway network that will form the backbone of an integrated transport system for the movement of people and goods.

Transnet's 2025/26 results show rail volumes of about 167.9 million tonnes against a target of 180.6 million tonnes – progress towards our goal of 250 million tonnes a year on the Transnet network by the end of the political term.

Increasing rail tonnage requires both significant state and private sector investment in rail infrastructure.

Through the Budget Facility for Infrastructure, R16.8 billion in public investment has already been approved and is in execution across the coal and iron ore lines and port infrastructure. Applications for a further R23.6 billion are being developed. On 12 October, we will invite you to the Northern Cape to view current rail upgrades to the iron ore line during the annual "shut".

Private sector investment in the rail and port infrastructure is being facilitated through projects currently in the market for the Ngqura Manganese Export Corridor, Richards Bay Dry Bulk Terminal, and later this year the container corridor between Gauteng and Durban.

Earlier this month, I received



Delegates attending the launch of OTM 2026.

good news from the International Civil Aviation: with a final safety rating of 94.99%, South Africa has retained its position as the highest-ranking country in Africa and the seventh-leading globally for the effectiveness of its civil aviation safety system.

This outcome from the United Nations' specialised agency for international aviation safety and security affirms once again the strength and maturity of the country's aviation safety oversight system.

Despite capacity constraints and a flight-procedure backlog, Air Traffic and Navigation Services submitted 220 procedure designs to the South African Civil Aviation Authority (ACSA) in the past financial year, against a target of 90.

ATNS is safeguarding its skills pipeline by retaining experienced controllers and flight-procedure designers, while expand-

ing bursaries and training for the next generation of aviation professionals.

I am pleased to confirm that following last week's Cabinet Meeting, both ATNS and ACSA now have permanently appointed Chief Executive Officers. This is an important step in further strengthening and stabilising these critical aviation entities.

Investment in public infrastructure projects is a significant catalyst for job creation and economic development. This year our national roads agency, SANRAL, will through a number of large-scale projects, continue to improve safety and shorten travel distances while creating over 35 000 job opportunities and supporting more than 2 000 small enterprises.

In response to recent court cases, SANRAL will end pre-selected panels for routine road-maintenance tenders and

return to open, route-by-route tendering to widen participation and competition.

Open tendering will be supported by procurement reforms, revised supply chain procedures, updated committee terms of reference and mandatory templates and checklists.

SANRAL has strengthened governance by adding independent specialists to its Audit and Risk, Loss Control, and Road Infrastructure and Projects committees.

Across the world, the rapid development of digital technology and artificial intelligence is changing transport ecosystems and regulatory processes. To catch up with the times, the Department and its entities have taken a decision to establish a transport digital authority with the aim of developing an integrated digital transport platform for all online permitting services

through one citizen interface.

Immediate priorities include the following applications: online registration of e-hailing vehicle owners and drivers from November this year; digitisation of flight operator permits by December; and accelerating a new online licensing system to clear renewal backlogs for taxi operators and support provincial regulatory authorities.

Our vision is an integrated, sustainable, resilient and inclusive transport system that strengthens the economy and serves all South Africans with dignity and efficiency.

The road ahead requires consistent leadership, sound policy and sustained investment.

****This message is part of a speech delivered by Transport Minister Barbara Creecy at the launch of October Transport Month 2026***

Scan the QR code for the full message.



OCTOBER IS TRANSPORT MONTH



THEME

**Building a safe, sustainable,
reliable and affordable
transport system.**



Gauteng Roads and Transport Department



@GPDRT



@GPDRT_



GAUTENG PROVINCE
ROADS AND TRANSPORT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



GGT2030
GROWING GAUTENG TOGETHER

Social development:

Progress, purpose and the responsibility to deliver

October provides an important opportunity to reflect on the interconnected responsibilities of government and society. As we observe Social Development Month and Transport Month, we are reminded that dignity, safety, mobility and access to services cannot be addressed in isolation. The urgent national response to gender-based violence and femicide further reinforces

the need for coordinated action that protects vulnerable people, strengthens families and ensures that government programmes deliver meaningful change in people's lives.

South Africa's social development story is one of both progress and unfinished work. Since the advent of democracy, government has made social development a national priority, investing in social protection, welfare services and community development programmes to improve the quality of life of citizens.

These interventions have helped build one of the most extensive social protection systems in the developing world, providing support to millions of South Africans. Yet poverty, inequality and vulnerability remain a daily reality for many households. While Social Development Month provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made, it also gives us a chance to consider what more

can be done to ensure that development reaches those who need it most.

Our reflection on vulnerability cannot be separated from the continuing scourge of gender-based violence and femicide. In his address to the nation on 29 September 2026, President Cyril Ramaphosa outlined the steps being taken by government to confront GBVF and update the nation on the investigation into the recent murders of women in and around Ekurhuleni.

This grave national challenge requires more than government intervention alone. It demands coordinated action by families, communities, public institutions, civil society and every citizen. As public servants, we must ensure that survivors are treated with dignity, can access information and support services, and are not failed by fragmented systems or poor implementation.

Observed annually in October, Social Development Month highlights government's commitment to combating poverty

and hunger, strengthening social protection and ensuring that vulnerable communities can access the support and services available to them. It also coincides with important commemorations such as the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October, the International Day of Rural Women on 15 October and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October.

This year's theme, "Strengthening Families through Partnerships", recognises that sustainable social development depends on collaboration between government, communities, civil society organisations and other social partners. It acknowledges that poverty, inequality and vulnerability affect not only individuals, but also families and the community support systems upon which many people rely. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated action that strengthens families, empowers communities and expands opportunities for those most in need.



Nomonde Mnukwa,
GCIS Acting Director-General.

SASSA officials serving Midvaal residents through a community-based service activation.



Photo: SASSA X account

Government has identified reducing poverty, tackling the high cost of living and building a capable, ethical and developmental state among its key priorities for the Seventh Administration. Social development speaks directly to these goals. It is a whole-of-government responsibility that requires effective leadership, coordination and implementation across all spheres of government.

Social Development Month also coincides with Transport Month, reminding us that access to safe, affordable, reliable and accessible transport is central to social and economic inclusion. Transport connects people to employment, education, healthcare, social services and economic opportunities. For older persons, persons with disabilities, rural women and vulnerable families, the absence of accessible and dependable

transport can become a barrier to receiving the very services and support intended for them. Our social development efforts must therefore be supported by an integrated transport system that enables people to participate fully in society and the economy.

Government's sustained investment in social development has earned the country international recognition, with a 2021 World Bank review describing South Africa's social assistance system as one of the country's most important post-apartheid policy successes. The review found that social grants make a significant contribution to reducing poverty and inequality, with approximately one-third of South Africans benefiting directly from grants and nearly two-thirds benefiting directly or indirectly from the system. It also highlighted the positive

contribution of social assistance to food security, education, health and livelihoods.

Similarly, the International Labour Organization has reported that South Africa's social protection coverage is above the regional average and comparable with that of other BRICS countries, reflecting government's sustained commitment to supporting vulnerable groups through social protection measures

These achievements demonstrate the impact of deliberate government action. They should also prompt an important question: if South Africa has established one of the most extensive social protection systems in the developing world, why do poverty, vulnerability and inequality continue to affect so many citizens?

Part of the answer lies in the complex nature of poverty itself.

While social assistance provides a critical safety net, many households continue to face the realities of unemployment, food insecurity and limited economic opportunities. According to Statistics South Africa, poverty remains closely linked to unemployment, while women and female-headed households continue to experience higher levels of deprivation than many other groups.

The commemorations observed in October draw attention to groups whose experiences should concern every public servant. Older persons continue to play a vital role as caregivers, mentors and pillars of support within families and communities, yet many remain vulnerable to poverty, social isolation and abuse. Rural women contribute significantly to food security, family wellbeing and local economies, but many continue to face barriers that limit access to economic opportunities and services.

One of the articles in this edition highlights research into the experiences of women from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those living in rural areas, in accessing breast cancer care. The study found that many public healthcare facilities struggle to meet national guidelines for breast cancer treatment and care. These findings remind us that development is not

only about having policies and programmes in place, but also about ensuring that citizens are able to access quality services when they need them.

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty further reminds us that poverty is not only about a lack of income. It is also about inadequate access to opportunities, services and resources that enable people to improve their circumstances and participate fully in society.

Government has long recognised these challenges and has introduced a range of interventions to address them. Through the South African Social Security Agency, social grants continue to provide critical support to older persons, children, persons with disabilities and vulnerable households. Programmes such as the Child Support Grant, Older Persons Grant, Foster Care Grant and Care Dependency Grant remain among government's most important poverty

alleviation measures.

These are complemented by early childhood development programmes, nutrition support initiatives, social welfare services and community development programmes aimed at reducing vulnerability, strengthening families and expanding opportunities.

The challenge before us as public servants is, therefore, not whether programmes exist, but whether they are achieving their intended impact.

Are vulnerable households aware of the support available to them? Are services reaching communities most in need? Are departments collaborating effectively to address the interconnected challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality? Are budgets, policies and programmes translating into measurable improvements in people's lives?

The same World Bank review that recognised South Africa's

social assistance system also highlighted the importance of strengthening links between social assistance and programmes that support livelihoods, employment and economic participation. This observation is particularly relevant as government continues its efforts to build a capable, ethical and developmental state. It reminds us that social development is most effective when support programmes are integrated with broader efforts to expand opportunity, promote self-reliance and improve long-term outcomes.

As we observe Social Development Month, we should take pride in the progress that South Africa has made while remaining focused on the work that still lies ahead. Government has put the necessary programmes, policies and resources in place. Our responsibility is to ensure that they reach those who need them most and deliver meaningful, lasting change.

At the heart of social development are the people government serves. It is about ensuring that older persons can live with dignity, that rural women can access opportunities, that vulnerable families can build resilience and that every South African has the opportunity to realise their full potential.

By strengthening implementation, improving accountability and placing citizens at the centre of our work, we can help ensure that no one is left behind. This requires us to connect social protection with safe and accessible transport, economic opportunity, quality healthcare and decisive action against gender-based violence and femicide. Social development must ultimately be measured not only by the programmes we establish, but by whether people feel safe, supported, connected to opportunity and able to live with dignity. ♦



**SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT
MONTH** *OCTOBER 2026*
Strengthening Families Through Partnerships

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION

MEET THE ELECTION TEAM



**PRESIDING
OFFICER**



**DEPUTY
PRESIDING
OFFICER**



**VOTERS' ROLL
OFFICER/ VMD
OPERATOR**



**BALLOT BOX/
BOOTH
CONTROLLER**



**BALLOT
PAPER
ISSUER**



INKER



**QUEUE
WALKER**



**DOOR
CONTROLLER**





Sustaining clean audits while advancing transport sector objectives

Reliable roads, safe public transport, efficient freight movement and modern infrastructure all depend on one thing: a government that manages public resources responsibly. Behind every transport project is a commitment to accountability, transparency and sound financial management.

As South Africa marks Transport Month, *Public Sector Manager* magazine spoke to the Department of Transport Acting Director-General (ADG) Mathabatha Mokonyama about how the department transformed its governance systems to achieve two consecutive clean audits after more than

Department of Transport ADG
Mathabatha Mokonyama

three decades without one.

The department's clean audit outcomes for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years represent more than an administrative achievement. They signal a culture change aimed at strengthening public confidence and ensuring that resources are used effectively to deliver quality transport infrastructure and services that support economic growth, regional trade and improved mobility for all South Africans.

According to Mokonyama, the milestone reflects the department's commitment to embedding sound governance, accountability and ethical leadership into its day-to-day operations.

"We should not treat auditing as an event that only concerns us during the audit cycle. We need to ensure that we always

do everything right so that we are in a good position when auditors knock on our door," said Mokonyama.

He added that the department has long benefited from the expertise of skilled financial managers who ensured that its financial statements accurately reflected its work. As a result, the department's financial statements have required no major corrections for the past seven or eight years.

Corrective measures

Achieving a clean audit required more than sound financial management. The department had to overcome challenges that repeatedly surfaced during the audit process.

Key areas of concern included the quality of performance information, the alignment between

targets and achievements, consequence management and contract management.

Consequence management

One of the key areas the department had to confront on its journey to a clean audit was consequence management.

Mokonyama says the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) had repeatedly raised concerns about how long it took the department to act against officials implicated in wrongdoing or negligence.

"For instance, when the department incurred irregular expenditure in previous years and investigations pointed to wrongdoing or negligence, we sometimes exceeded the periods provided for by the Irregular Expenditure Framework, and that is one of the things we needed

to fix," he explained.

Recognising that delayed action weakened accountability and affected audit outcomes, the department moved to strengthen its processes and ensure that matters requiring investigation and disciplinary action were dealt with more timeously.

According to Mokonyama, part of the department's success can also be attributed to a closer working relationship with the AGSA. Following each audit cycle, the department and auditors held post-audit workshops to unpack findings and identify areas requiring improvement.

The engagements provided officials with valuable insight into the AGSA's audit methodologies and expectations, helping them understand the standards against which the department's performance was being measured.



Port infrastructure in Gqeberha

The department now develops clear post-audit action plans that spell out the corrective measures required and assign responsibility for implementing them. This approach has helped ensure that findings are not repeated and that weaknesses identified during audits are systematically addressed.

"We hope to sustain this clean audit feeling. We just need to keep doing what we have been doing in the past two financial years and even more," he added.

Transport sector recovery

While achieving a clean audit is a significant milestone, Mokonyama points out that it is only one part of the department's mandate. At its core, the department exists to keep South Africa moving and to support the country's economic growth and development.

Like many institutions, the department felt the full impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns, which brought large parts of the transport sector to a standstill. Even after restrictions were lifted, recovery was far from im-

mediate, as years of disruption had left their mark on critical infrastructure.

One of the hardest-hit areas was the rail sector. Extensive vandalism of trains and railway stations during the lockdown period left large parts of the network severely damaged, presenting a major hurdle when operations resumed.

"We had to embark on a recovery plan. Today I can tell you that of the targeted 40 corridors that we needed to recover, we have already recovered 35 and the trains are moving," said Mokonyama.

The importance of rail extends far beyond transporting passengers. Freight rail carries minerals, agricultural products, manufactured goods and export cargo that drive economic activity, while passenger rail influences how people move between their homes, workplaces and communities. The efficiency of the rail network affects everything from travel times and commuting costs to the movement of goods through the economy.

For this reason, the department's recovery efforts have also

focused on restoring infrastructure in the freight sector. Mokonyama said the ability to move goods efficiently to ports and markets is essential for economic growth and competitiveness.

Creating employment

Beyond infrastructure and logistics, Mokonyama emphasised the transport sector's critical role as a major employer and economic enabler.

The sector provides thousands of direct jobs through the Department of Transport and its entities, as well as through industries such as bus, taxi and rail transport. Yet its indirect contribution is even greater, supporting countless economic activities that rely on the movement of people and goods.

The sector enables millions of South Africans to travel to work each day, connects businesses to suppliers and customers, and ensures that cargo reaches local

and international markets. From farms and factories to mines, warehouses and harbours, much of the economy depends on a well-functioning transport system.

"If we do not do our bit as a sector, many things would not function. The industry contributes about R290 billion per annum to the economy of the country," he says.

As a key enabler of trade, investment and development, the transport sector remains central to government's vision of a modern, efficient and integrated transport system. Continued investment in infrastructure, improved governance and enhanced operational performance are expected to support economic activity, facilitate regional connectivity and improve access to opportunities for South Africans. ♦

The rail sector was one of the worst hit by COVID-19.



GET YOUR DATES RIGHT!



Breast cancer care falls short of national guidelines, study finds

Every October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month encourages women to know their bodies, recognise warning signs and seek medical attention when something feels wrong. But while awareness remains a vital tool in the fight against breast cancer, new research suggests that early action alone is not enough.

For many women who depend on South Africa's public healthcare system, access to timely diagnosis, specialist care and treatment remains a significant challenge.

A major study led by Dr Laurie Milligan, a global surgery researcher at the University of Cape Town (UCT), has revealed deep systemic inequalities in breast cancer care across the country. The research highlights critical shortages of surgical

services, specialist healthcare professionals and diagnostic capacity, leaving many women without access to potentially life-saving treatment.

Titled *Breast Cancer Surgical Services in South Africa: Availability and Barriers to Guideline-Concordant Care*, the study was led by UCT's Department of Surgery and Groote Schuur Hospital and published in the *South African Medical Journal*. Drawing on data from 43 public hospitals across all nine provinces, it provides the first national snapshot of breast cancer surgical services in South Africa's public health sector.

The findings point to significant disparities in service provision, with resource constraints and the uneven distribution of healthcare services limiting access to guideline-concordant care.

Lack of capacity

Speaking to *Public Sector Manager* magazine ahead of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Milligan stressed that breast cancer treatment cannot



Dr Laurie Milligan.

Photo: Supplied

be viewed simply as a question of whether a surgeon is available to perform an operation.

She indicated that effective cancer care requires an entire system, from early recognition and diagnosis through to staging, surgery, pathology, oncology, radiotherapy, rehabilitation, palliation and follow-up.

The study found that while national guidelines for breast cancer management are in place, many healthcare facilities lack the capacity to provide care that consistently meets those standards.

"Less urban provinces had poorer access to diagnostic and staging modalities. Across the facilities surveyed, 79% reported being able to perform breast-conserving surgery, but access to other key surgical interventions was limited, with only 53% performing sentinel lymph node biopsy, and just 35% providing breast reconstruction surgery," she explained.

The research also uncovered shortages in multidisciplinary expertise. Only seven of the 43 facilities surveyed reported having the radiologist, pathologist and mammographer recommended for a basic breast unit.

These findings reveal the need for sustained investment in public healthcare services, particularly as South Africa seeks

to improve access to quality healthcare for women.

"This means, within the public sector, we need investment in the form of staffing, equipment, training and audit to support health facilities to meet the described standard of care," said Milligan.

"We need to train and retain surgeons, radiologists, pathologists, oncologists, specialist nurses and other healthcare professionals, while also thinking carefully about how these services are distributed across the country."

Strengthening healthcare at grassroots level

At the centre of the crisis is late diagnosis.

The study found that approximately 67% of breast cancer patients present with advanced-stage disease, reducing survival chances and limiting available treatment options.

For many women, particularly those living in underserved communities, delays in diagnosis can have serious consequences.

Although basic diagnostic tools such as mammography and biopsies are widely available, more advanced technologies, including MRI and PET scanning, remain out of reach for many facilities. As a result,



women often face additional barriers before receiving the specialist care they need.

According to Milligan, strengthening services at primary healthcare and district level is critical to improving outcomes.

"If patients are diagnosed at a later stage, their treatment can become more complex and the options available to them may be more limited. We therefore need to strengthen services at primary and district level so that concerning symptoms can be recognised and investigated promptly, with efficient referral

pathways to centres that can provide specialist care," she added.

Preparing for the future

The findings come at a time when South Africa is preparing for a growing cancer burden. The study suggests that the incidence of cancer in the country could double by 2030, increasing pressure on healthcare services already facing significant resource constraints.

Milligan said in order to address the challenge, there is a

Photo: Supplied

A health official explains a mammogram to a member of the public.

need to strengthen the entire cancer-care pathway.

With more patients expected to require treatment in the years ahead, investment will be needed not only in specialist services but also in prevention, early detection, pathology, imaging, oncology, radiotherapy, palliative care and follow-up services.

Reliable information will play an important role in this effort.

"Data is crucial. We need good information about where patients are being diagnosed, what stage they present at, how long they wait for different parts of their treatment and what their outcomes are. That information allows us to identify where the greatest gaps are and where investment is likely to have the biggest impact," she said.

Milligan also believes the organisation of specialist services warrants careful consideration.

"We also need to think differently about how specialist services are organised. Not every hospital will be able to provide every highly specialised service, but patients should be able to move through the healthcare system efficiently to access the level of care they require."

Beyond awareness

Milligan believes awareness campaigns must be accompanied by efforts to address the barriers women face within the healthcare system itself.

"I think it is really important for South Africans to understand just how common breast cancer is, but also to understand that there is much that can be done when it is detected and treated as early as possible," she said.

She encouraged women to seek medical attention if they notice a persistent or concern-

ing change in their breasts. At the same time, she argued that awareness should not focus solely on individual responsibility.

"I would also like Breast Cancer Awareness Month to be about more than individual awareness. Our research highlights that there are significant barriers within the health system itself. We need to ask why so many women are presenting with advanced disease and what actions can be taken to make diagnosis and treatment more accessible," she said.

She added that awareness can only be effective if the healthcare system is able to respond when people seek help.

"Know your body and seek care if you are concerned, but we also need to continue investing in and advocating for a healthcare system where access

to high quality breast cancer care does not depend on where you live or what resources you have."

Government stance

Government has identified the strengthening of public health-care services as a national priority and continues to invest in initiatives aimed at improving access to quality healthcare. Efforts to expand healthcare infrastructure, train health professionals and improve equitable access to specialised services form part of broader measures to ensure that all South Africans can access the care they need.

Addressing inequalities in breast cancer services remains important to improving health outcomes for women and building a health system that leaves no one behind. ♦

Scan the QR code for the full report.



”

We cannot police our way out of gender-based violence alone. We cannot arrest our way out of this crisis alone. And we cannot wait until a woman is murdered before the state intervenes.

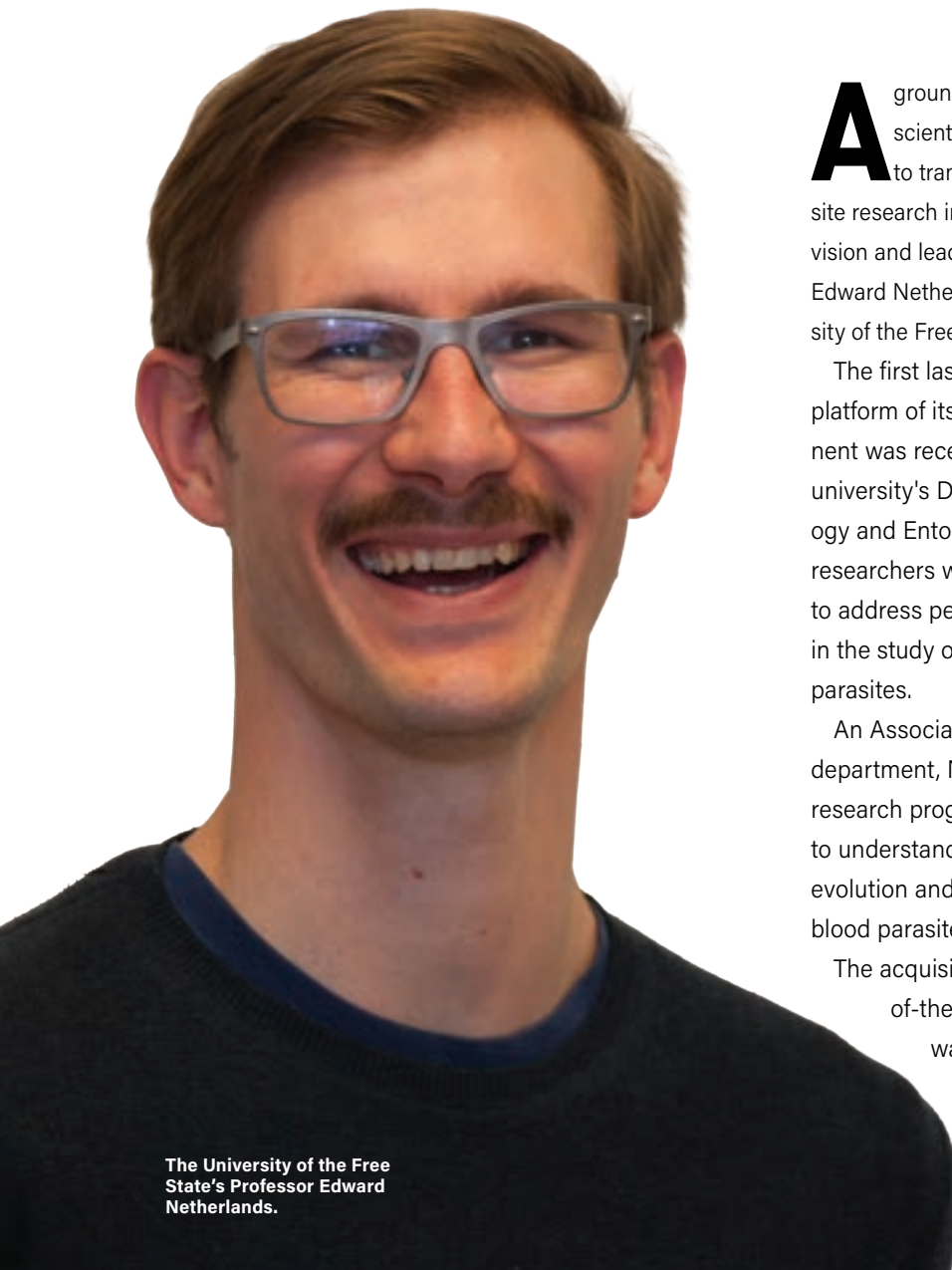
Our task must be to prevent the violence before it happens.

PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON GBV & FEMICIDE
29 SEPTEMBER 2026



Trailblazing research: bringing cutting-edge microscopy to Africa



The University of the Free State's Professor Edward Netherlands.

A groundbreaking piece of scientific equipment is set to transform wildlife parasite research in Africa, thanks to the vision and leadership of Professor Edward Netherlands of the University of the Free State (UFS).

The first laser microdissection platform of its kind on the continent was recently unveiled in the university's Department of Zoology and Entomology, providing researchers with a powerful tool to address persistent challenges in the study of wildlife blood parasites.

An Associate Professor in the department, Netherlands leads a research programme dedicated to understanding the biodiversity, evolution and ecology of wildlife blood parasites.

The acquisition of the state-of-the-art technology was made possible through a R4.5 million National

Research Foundation (NRF) National Equipment Programme grant secured by Netherlands. Additional support from the UFS Large Equipment Fund and the Directorate Research Development brought the total investment to R7.4 million.

At the heart of the new facility is the Leica LMD6, a sophisticated laser microdissection platform that combines advanced microscopy with precision ultraviolet laser technology. The system enables researchers to identify, isolate and collect specific cells, tissues and microscopic structures directly from a specimen for detailed molecular analysis.

Unlike conventional microscopes, which are primarily used for imaging and observation, the Leica LMD6 allows scientists to physically isolate individual cells or targeted regions of interest. This capability opens the door to advanced investigations, includ-

ing DNA sequencing, genomics and other specialised molecular studies.

The unveiling of the microscope marked the culmination of several years of planning and preparation. The platform is housed in a newly upgraded microscopy laboratory within the Department of Zoology and Entomology, providing researchers with access to technology previously unavailable in Africa.

It will be used in research focusing on the diversity, evolution, ecology and life cycles of blood parasites that infect wildlife, particularly amphibians, reptiles, and birds. It will also support future research in areas such as veterinary diagnostics, pathology, biodiversity research and single-cell molecular biology.

The new platform is also expected to benefit a wide range of scientific disciplines across the UFS. Researchers in fields such as infectious disease, molecular ecology and genetics, biodiversity and conservation science, veterinary science, cell biology, histology and pathology will also have access to the technology.

Netherlands told *Public Sector Manager* magazine that the idea for acquiring the technology stemmed from a longstanding



I recognised that laser microdissection could solve this problem by allowing us to isolate single parasite-infected blood cells before DNA extraction

challenge in wildlife blood parasite research.

"Many infected animals carry multiple parasite species simultaneously, and this is one of the greatest challenges in the wildlife parasitology that makes it extremely difficult to isolate DNA from individual parasites using conventional molecular techniques," he explained.

A solution for researchers

Traditional DNA extraction methods collect genetic material from everything present in a sample, often resulting in mixed genetic sequences that are difficult to interpret accurately. For researchers seeking to understand individual parasite species, this has long been a significant obstacle.

Netherlands saw laser microdissection as a potential solution to the problem.

"I recognised that laser mi-

crodissection could solve this problem by allowing us to isolate single parasite-infected blood cells before DNA extraction," he added.

The technology is expected to significantly enhance the identification of parasites, support the discovery of new species and advance research into parasite evolution, life cycles and disease ecology. More importantly, it enables scientists to investigate biological questions that were previously beyond the reach of conventional research methods.

Bringing the vision to life required years of planning and coordination. Netherlands had to demonstrate a clear national research need, establish collaborations, consult with researchers locally and internationally, design future research programmes around the technology and prepare a highly competitive funding application.

As the principal investigator,

he led the development of the successful proposal submitted to the National Research Foundation's National Equipment Programme. From the initial concept to the installation of the instrument, the journey spanned several years and required sustained commitment and strategic planning.

"The Leica LMD6 represents a significant enhancement of the university's advanced imaging and molecular research capabilities and positions the UFS as a regional leader in single-cell and microdissection-based research," he said.

Recent research findings

Although the Leica LMD6 has only recently become operational, it is already delivering promising results.

One of the flagship projects underway involves the whole-genome sequencing of a Trypa-

nosoma parasite that infects the African clawed frog (*Xenopus laevis*), commonly known as the platanna.

According to Netherlands, what makes the project particularly significant is that the genome is being generated from a single parasite cell isolated directly from a naturally infected blood smear rather than from cultured material.

This demonstrates the power of laser microdissection to isolate individual parasites from complex samples and generate high-quality genomic data from organisms that are extremely difficult, or even impossible, to culture in the laboratory.

Beyond this project, the technology is enabling Netherlands and his team to obtain species-specific genetic data from mixed parasite infections, link different life-cycle stages of parasites, and improve their understanding of parasite biodiversity and evolution.

These advances are opening entirely new avenues for wildlife disease research and position UFS at the forefront of biodiversity genomics in Africa.

"It is not simply about obtaining an instrument; it is about creating research capacity that will benefit students, colleagues and collaborators for many years," he said.



The Leica LMD6 is the first laser microdissection platform available in Africa.

Academic journey

Professor Edward Netherlands's path to becoming a leading researcher in wildlife parasitology began at the North-West University (NWU), where he completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology and Botany, followed by an Honours degree in Zoology. He later earned a Master of Science in Zoology, specialising in parasitology and wildlife diseases.

He went on to complete a PhD in Biology through a joint programme between KU Leuven in Belgium and the NWU.

Following the completion of his doctorate, Netherlands undertook a postdoctoral fellowship at the NWU before joining the UFS as a senior lecturer. He has since progressed through

the academic ranks and currently serves as an Associate Professor in the Department of Zoology and Entomology, where he balances teaching, postgraduate supervision and research.

Throughout his career, his contributions to science have earned recognition from the research community. One of the defining moments in his early career came in 2018, when he received the NRF Research Excellence for Next Generation Researchers Award. In the same year, he was also recognised by the NRF as the Best Final Year PhD Student across all disciplines.

His growing reputation as an emerging scientific leader was further highlighted in 2023, when he was named a top 10

finalist in the TW Kambule National Science and Technology Forum Awards. He is currently a nominee for the 2026 NRF Research Excellence Award in the Early Career/Emerging Researchers category.

The acquisition of Africa's first laser microdissection platform reflects the broader national emphasis on strengthening science, technology and innovation. Through continued investment in research infrastructure, skills development and collaborative research, government has committed to advance knowledge generation, support innovation and enhance the country's contribution to global scientific discoveries. ♦

”

I have directed the Minister of Police and the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, working with the South African Police Service and, with due regard to prosecutorial independence, the National Prosecuting Authority, to undertake a national case-recovery operation focused on unresolved murders, attempted murders, rapes and serious sexual offences involving women and children.

PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON GBV & FEMICIDE
29 SEPTEMBER 2026



From rural wards to national reform:

Professor Mtshali's journey of transforming nursing

Before she became a nationally recognised nursing leader, researcher and regulator, Professor Ntombikile Gloria Mtshali, learned the realities of healthcare not from boardrooms or policy documents, but from the frontlines of rural South Africa.

It is a world nestled where nurses could mean one young professional carrying the weight of an entire hospital.

It was in those demanding early years that Mtshali's leadership philosophy took root. Her career has since taken her from rural wards in KwaZulu-Natal to university lecture halls, international development projects and the highest levels of nursing regulation in South Africa.



Today, Mtshali is the Chief Executive Officer and Registrar of the South African Nursing Council (SANC), a role she transitioned into in 2023 after a

distinguished academic career that included serving as head of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) School of Nursing. Across every chapter

of her journey, one purpose has remained constant: strengthening nursing education, developing health professionals and improving healthcare systems.

Mtshali began her nursing career in 1986. Her early experience included Ekombe Hospital in Nkandla, northern KwaZulu-Natal, where she confronted nursing shortages that would shape her understanding of healthcare inequality.

"I was still new and when we came in, we were only two. We had to be in charge of wards and even manage the hospital," she recalled.

Those immense early responsibilities unearthed niggling challenges facing rural healthcare, igniting a lifelong commit-



ment to finding solutions.

That experience established the question guiding her career: how can South Africa educate and retain nurses equipped to serve communities where the need is greatest?

"We always complain about the shortage of nurses in the city, but if you go to the remote areas, you actually experience what shortage means," she lamented.

Expanding access to healthcare

Rather than simply highlighting the problem, Mtshali chose to contribute to building systems capable of addressing it. After years in clinical practice, she moved into nursing education, resigning from her hospital

post to complete a master's degree at UKZN. She accepted a contract lecturing position at roughly half her previous salary, driven by a belief that education could transform the profession.

"I was passionate about teaching because of where I came from, I wanted to conduct research that would make a difference and assist in improving how we teach."

Her research focused on widening access to nursing education, particularly for students from rural and previously disadvantaged communities. She questioned whether traditional admission pathways reflected the realities of learners from under-resourced backgrounds.

"How do we craft our programmes and have programmes

accredited according to the needs of the different areas?" she asked, adding that there is a need for strong academic or comprehensive support for students from rural and remote areas.

Flying the South African flag high

Mtshali's commitment to impactful research earned her international recognition. In 2024, ScholarGPS named her a Top Scholar, placing her among the top 0.5% of scholars globally in nurse education. She was recognised for both her lifetime contribution and her work during the preceding five years.

The recognition came as a surprise to her.

"They do the work without

you knowing about it. You are not even aware, and then they say, 'we have identified you and we are recognising you.'"

Mtshali said the award was not only personal recognition, but also a reflection of the growing global profile of South African nursing scholarship.

"Most of the people who have been awarded these are from developed countries," she said. "For South Africa to be recognised in such spaces means a lot. It profiles nursing education and nurse educator research in South Africa." Her influence has extended beyond South Africa's borders. Mtshali contributed to nursing education initiatives in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide and supported specialist education in Seychelles and Lesotho. >

Heading the profession

When Mtshali became SANC CEO, she entered a new environment – one where regulation, governance and public accountability became central to her leadership role. She believes that leadership is about applying principles wherever one goes.

“The challenge was the culture within the organisation because it is different. It is very structured and bureaucratic,” she explained.

Her response was to understand the system, identify obstacles and focus on practical improvements. One of the most

urgent priorities was digitisation.

“When I came in, the biggest challenge was that we were doing things manually,” she reflected.

The Council had relied heavily on paper-based processes, physical receipts and long queues. Institutions submitted accreditation applications manually, while nurses often travelled long distances to resolve registration and licensing matters.

Under her leadership, the Council appointed a digitisation service provider, established a steering committee and began moving accreditation, finance, supply chain and licensing

processes online. Institutions can now submit programmes electronically and practising certificates can now be generated and sent digitally.

Empowering workers

Mtshali acknowledges that digital transformation also requires careful management of its impact on staff.

“Some people become redundant in other positions. The solution is to reskill them and move them to other positions where they can add value,” said Mtshali.

Mtshali has also prioritised reducing accreditation backlogs

and improving turnaround times through additional capacity, quicker recruitment and clearer processes.

Strengthening public healthcare

For Mtshali, strengthening nursing education and regulation is inseparable from strengthening public healthcare. Nurses remain the backbone of service delivery.

“Nurses are the majority of health workers. They are at the first point of entry when a person needs medical attention or health support, and when patients exit the system, it is nurses.”

That responsibility requires competence, ethical conduct and professionalism. It also requires a regulator willing to act when public trust is compromised.

“The professionalism that we exhibit when we care for patient improves how they view the profession. If unprofessional conduct is reported, the regulatory body has to take action, and the public needs to see that action,” explained the CEO.

From rural hospitals to lecture halls, international partnerships and national regulation, Mtshali’s career has been defined by one belief: leadership must create meaningful change. ♦



”

I have directed the Minister of Police, the National Commissioner of Police and the relevant forensic authorities to present, within 60 days, a funded plan to reduce forensic backlogs and establish clear turnaround standards for priority gender-based violence and femicide cases.

PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON GBV & FEMICIDE
29 SEPTEMBER 2026



Our constitutional values are part of our common heritage

On Heritage Day last week, we celebrated the many languages, traditions and cultures of our people.

It is always heartening on this national day to see South Africans from every community celebrating their own heritage

while also honouring the heritage of others.

Over the past week, social media has been filled with such images of black, white, Indian and Coloured South Africans proudly displaying the richness of their cultures and participating in the traditions of their

fellow South Africans.

That we have built a country founded on equality and non-racialism, in which every citizen should feel that they belong, is something we do not take for granted. We pay tribute to the courageous decisions that made democratic South Africa possible.

In 1994, the South African people made a historic choice. We

chose to acknowledge the grave injustices and immense suffering of the past while committing ourselves to live together and build a new nation.

Our constitutional order gives expression to the values of non-racialism, non-sexism, equality, democracy and human dignity.

These values are as much our heritage as the cultures we practice and the languages we speak, the traditions we observe and the cultures we celebrate.





They express who we are, and who we aspire to become.

Heritage is not only what we celebrate. It is also what we defend.

We cannot allow violence against women to define who we are.

The abuse, rape and killing of women is a stain on our national conscience. We cannot claim to be a society founded on freedom, equality and human dignity while half of our population lives in fear of violence.

We refuse to be defined by xenophobia and intolerance.

The peoples of Africa provided moral and material support to our liberation struggle, and our democracy. Democratic South Africa remains committed to advancing the ideals of African unity and integration.

At the same time, migration

must take place within the law. Government has a responsibility to manage our borders effectively, and everyone who lives in South Africa is required to respect our laws.

Racism will never define who we are.

We are determined never to return to the racial division and oppression of our apartheid past.

In 1994, we chose to build one nation from people of different races, cultures and backgrounds. It is a choice that we must continue to renew every day. Democratic South Africa is committed to correcting the injustices of the past.

There is no moral equivalence between redress and discrimination. There is no equivalence between legitimate, constitutionally grounded measures of

redress and the systematic racial oppression of apartheid.

There is no equivalence between measures designed to overcome racial exclusion and the apartheid laws that were designed to enforce racial exclusion, dispossession and inequality.

We must remain vigilant against those who seek to undermine our national unity and turn South Africans against one another.

We all have a responsibility to hold our social fabric together.

We must guard against words and actions that polarise communities, inflame public opinion and reopen the wounds of our past.

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression. But with this freedom comes responsibility.

In a country where women live in fear of abuse and are killed every day, the public humiliation of women is not harmless. It reinforces the attitudes that sustain discrimination and violence.

At a time when undocumented migration is fuelling social tensions, inflammatory statements about foreign nationals are dan-

gerous and irresponsible.

In a country with unacceptably high levels of violent crime, language that glorifies killing or encourages hostility has no place in our public life.

At a time when unemployment is high and we need to grow our economy and attract investment, travelling to foreign capitals to spread the falsehood of a “white genocide” and discourage investment in one’s own country, is neither responsible nor patriotic.

We may be a diverse nation, but we are united by the constitutional values that make us South African.

These values transcend race, gender, language, culture and geography.

Guided by these values, let us continue to work together to overcome the common challenges we face.

Every day, through our words and our deeds, we must renew the choice we made in 1994 and affirmed when we adopted our Constitution: the choice to build this country together.

That is our shared heritage. It is also our shared responsibility.❖

**This message was first published on 28 September 2026.*

PRASA's focus moves to optimisation

As the nation marks Transport Month, PRASA Group CEO Hishaam Emeran traces how the agency has moved beyond recovery and how its people are shaping a railway built to perform.



PRASA Group CEO
Hishaam Emeran.

Across South Africa's more than 2 200 km of passenger rail network, the platforms bustle with activity in the morning rush hour. Whether it is Naledi, Soweto; KwaMashu,

north of Durban; Chris Hani on the Central Line; Mabopane in Pretoria North and at several hundred other stations across the country, commuters embark on travels to work, school and other destina-

tions. Most of these journeys take place on PRASA's Isitimela Sabantu, the modern trains at the Gibela Plant on the East Rand. The doors open, the carriages are wide and inviting, clean and safe,

brightly lit, providing a pleasant experience for commuters.

PRASA is well on its way to fulfilling its role as the backbone of an integrated public transport system by providing the most affordable commute in the country. For many communities served by PRASA, the passenger rail services are a lifeline that links them to work, school and opportunity.

This Transport Month, PRASA's story has moved from one of recovery to that of optimisation: drawing the full value from our assets, our people and delivering on the trust of our people.

To get a sense of how far PRASA has come, it is worth remembering that as recently as 2020/21, its achievement in terms of its annual performance

plan was a lowly 19%. Since then the performance trajectory has been positive, exceeding 80% for the past three years.

Perhaps the most important metric has been the growth in the number of passenger trips. In the past year, passenger trips reached 101 million and this figure is expected to increase substantially in the new year.

A fleet made in South Africa

Optimisation begins with the assets that carry our passengers. At the Gibela factory in Dunnottar, Nigel, South African artisans and engineers build the X'Trapolis Mega trains that have mostly replaced the legacy fleet that served commuters for decades. More than 320 of the 600 trainsets have been delivered, with over 60% of components now sourced locally.

While the trains boast impressive features, beyond these technical elements, an equally important factor is the impact of the Rolling Stock Modernisation Programme on the supplier network. The establishment of PRASA's Gibela factory has played an important role in reviving the rail sector, preserving skills and creating jobs and livelihoods.

A modern train deserves a network to match. In 2023/24,

PRASA achieved 144% of its capital budget, converting funding into working infrastructure at pace. Our engineering teams have rebuilt stretches of track that were lost to theft and neglect, restoring the formation, rails and overhead traction equipment on which reliable service depends.

Signalling modernisation, the nervous system of a safe and punctual railway, is advancing in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. Station upgrades continue in parallel, so that the first and last moments of each journey reflect the same standard as the ride itself.

Security that thinks ahead

PRASA has implemented an effective plan that has significantly reduced security incidents at both the asset and passenger level. The model combines protection officers on the ground with surveillance technology and intelligence-led deployment.

The Asiphephe campaign is at the heart of PRASA's implementation of a safety-first culture. This has been experienced by commuters who confidently board PRASA's trains knowing that their journey is going to be a safe one.

Every investment finds its purpose on the platform. Cashless



PRASA is on its way to fulfilling its role as the backbone of an integrated public transport system.

ticketing will bring convenience to our commuters, especially once a single tap-and-go ticket is introduced across train, bus and taxi services. Data analytics now shapes our timetables and helps us grow off-peak travel.

Commuters experience the difference in cleaner carriages, clearer information and more predictable journeys, and our

customer satisfaction results reflect that shift.

PRASA carries a secondary mandate: to generate income from the assets in its care. Through Intersite, formerly CRES, stations are becoming commercial precincts, and land holdings are becoming homes, shops and places of study. A recent co-investment deliv-

ered accommodation for some 3 200 students alongside 7 000 square metres of retail space. The commercialisation of our national fibre network offers a further avenue. Each rand earned in this way eases reli-

ance on the fiscus and returns value to the service.

The people who make it work

No structure moves a single train. That work belongs to our people: drivers and train crews, station staff, control and signalling personnel, engineers, information technology specialists and protection officials. The numbers in this article belong to them.

Over the past year, PRASA completed the most significant redesign in its history, establishing PRASA Capital – the long distance public

transport division, Intersite and a Shared Services Model. At our Top 200 Management Forum in August, I asked our leaders to explain these changes to their teams and to connect every role to our mission. Through our graduate internship programme, young South Africans are gaining experience in engineering, finance, property, renewable energy and train operations. They represent the skills a growing railway will require.

The destination ahead

On 1 April 2026, Cabinet approved the draft National Rail Master Plan for public consultation. It places rail at the centre of the National Transport

Strategy and confirms a target of 600 million passenger trips in the next five to seven years.

A few years ago, I spoke of the people, the skills and the determination to restore passenger rail as the backbone of public transport. Those qualities remain our foundation. Stability was the first step. Optimisation is the discipline. Six hundred million trips is the destination and the journey continues each morning on platforms across the country. ♦

***Hishaam Emeran is the Group Chief Executive Officer of the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa.**



This Transport Month, PRASA's story has moved from one of recovery to that of optimisation: drawing the full value from our assets, our people and delivering on the trust of our people.



”

**The freedom promised
by our Constitution
cannot be a freedom
enjoyed fully by men and
cautiously by women.**

PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON GBV & FEMICIDE
29 SEPTEMBER 2026



When false information moves faster than the facts: Rethinking government communication

Government has put in place programmes and processes to ensure that the information it shares with the public is accurate, credible and verified. However, accuracy alone is not always enough to win the battle against misinformation and disinformation, finds a new study.

The study, which examined the role of social media management strategies in countering misinformation and disinformation within a national government department in South Africa, highlights the growing challenges government communicators face in the digital age. It drew on the experiences of nine communication practitioners who are directly involved in managing the department's social media platforms.

One of the study's key findings is that having accurate information does not necessarily guarantee that official information will be the first to reach the public or that citizens will engage with it.

Unlike unverified online con-



tent, government communication is guided by strict processes designed to ensure accuracy and accountability. Information must be verified, relevant stakeholders consulted and, where

necessary, approvals obtained before any public response is issued. While these processes are essential in maintaining credibility and public confidence, the challenge, according to the

study, is finding ways to respond quickly without compromising accuracy.

Misinformation and disinformation

The study also highlighted the importance of distinguishing between misinformation and disinformation. It adopted definitions used by the European Commission and UNESCO, which describe misinformation as false or misleading information shared without the intention to cause harm, while disinformation refers to deliberately false information shared with the intention to deceive. Although both can have harmful consequences, the distinction is important because each may require a different

communication response.

Through semi-structured interviews with the nine communication practitioners, the study explored the strategies used to counter misinformation and disinformation, how these strategies are implemented in practice, the factors that influence their effectiveness and opportunities for improvement.

We cannot only communicate when something goes wrong

One of the study's key findings was that countering misinformation and disinformation cannot be limited to correcting false information after it has already spread.

Participants indicated that the department uses a combination of proactive and reactive approaches, including disseminating accurate information, engaging with the public, monitoring the information environment and issuing corrective communication when necessary.

The study found that clear and consistent communication about government policies, programmes and services can help reduce the information gaps in which speculation, misinformation and disinformation are able to thrive.

The findings suggest that countering misinformation should not begin during a crisis, but should be embedded in everyday government communication efforts.

A strategy may be sound, but can we implement it quickly enough?

The research also highlighted the gap that can exist between having a strategy and being able to implement it effectively.

Communication practitioners operate within policies, guidelines, approval processes and coordination structures that are designed to ensure accuracy and accountability. Government cannot respond to an unverified claim with information that has not itself been verified.

However, the study found that limited capacity, coordination challenges and procedural delays can affect the effectiveness of the response. These internal challenges are compounded by the speed and complexity with which misinformation spreads across digital platforms.

One participant captured the challenge simply, citing:

"Slow turnaround times due to approval processes, which can allow misinformation to spread rapidly."

The finding raises a critical question for the Public Service: how can government retain the checks and balances that protect the credibility of official communication without allowing those same processes to delay urgent responses?

The study does not suggest abandoning verification or ap-

proval procedures. Instead, it points to the need to assess whether existing processes are suited to the demands of the digital communication environment. This includes having clear mechanisms for verifying information, escalating urgent matters and securing approval when a rapid response is required. It is also important to ensure that decision-makers are available when issues arise.

While these may appear to be operational considerations, the study found that they can have a significant impact in the fast-paced social media environment. They can determine whether government engages in a developing conversation in real time or responds only after a false narrative has already gained traction.

Better tools help, but technology is not the whole answer

The study also points to the need for stronger monitoring capabilities and appropriate technology. Government communicators need to know what is being said, where conversations are taking place and when an emerging issue requires intervention.

Another participant highlighted a particular challenge:

"Closed platforms such as WhatsApp present additional challenges, as misinformation spreads in private groups that cannot be directly monitored."

This means that even advanced monitoring tools cannot give communicators a complete picture of how misinformation and disinformation circulate. Information shared in private



**Zanele Mngadi, Chief Director:
Products and Platforms, GCIS.**

groups may only come to government's attention when someone reports it or it appears on a public platform.

The study notes that technology can play an important role at a time when the volume of online information continues to grow. But technology cannot replace professional judgement. While monitoring tools can help identify emerging trends and potentially misleading content, communication practitioners must still interpret the information, understand the context and determine the most appropriate response.

One of the study's conclusions is that strengthening technological capability must go hand in hand with strengthening the skills and capacity of the people managing government communication.

Trust matters as much as speed

Another issue that emerged strongly from the study was the importance of audience engagement and trust. Government may correct false information, but a correction will have limited value if the audience does not regard the source as credible.

One participant highlighted another important consideration: how official information is presented matters:

"A key challenge is that



Government messaging is often perceived as too formal and less engaging. Misinformation tends to gain more traction because it is presented in a more appealing or relatable way.

government messaging is often perceived as too formal and less engaging. Misinformation tends to gain more traction because it is presented in a more appealing or relatable way."

Accuracy remains non-negotiable, but accuracy alone does not guarantee that people will notice, understand or engage with the information.

For government communicators, trust is not built only when misinformation appears. It is built through the everyday work of providing accurate information, responding to people, correcting mistakes when they occur and communicating in language that people can understand.

Publishing information is not necessarily the same as communicating it. People consume information differently and across different platforms. The responsibility is not only to make credible information available, but to make sure that it reaches people in forms that are accessible, relevant and useful to them.

A challenge for the Public Service

The research does not suggest that government is starting from scratch. Strategies, structures and communication practices already exist. Rather, the findings point to the need to strengthen and refine existing approaches.

The study recommends strengthening organisational capacity, improving coordination and response processes, enhancing technology and monitoring tools, and adopting a more audience-centred approach to communication.

The findings also reveal that misinformation and disinformation cannot be left to communication units alone. Communicators depend on programme managers, subject specialists and decision-makers to provide accurate information quickly. Effective responses, therefore, require cooperation across an institution.

The study ultimately underscores the important role of the Public Service in ensuring that

reliable information remains accessible, visible and responsive to the needs of citizens.

The Public Service must be able to verify information, make decisions and communicate promptly when false claims emerge.

The responsibility remains the same: to provide the public with information that is accurate, credible and useful. What has changed is the speed at which this now needs to be done.

In an environment where false information can travel in minutes, the truth cannot routinely arrive hours or days later. ♦

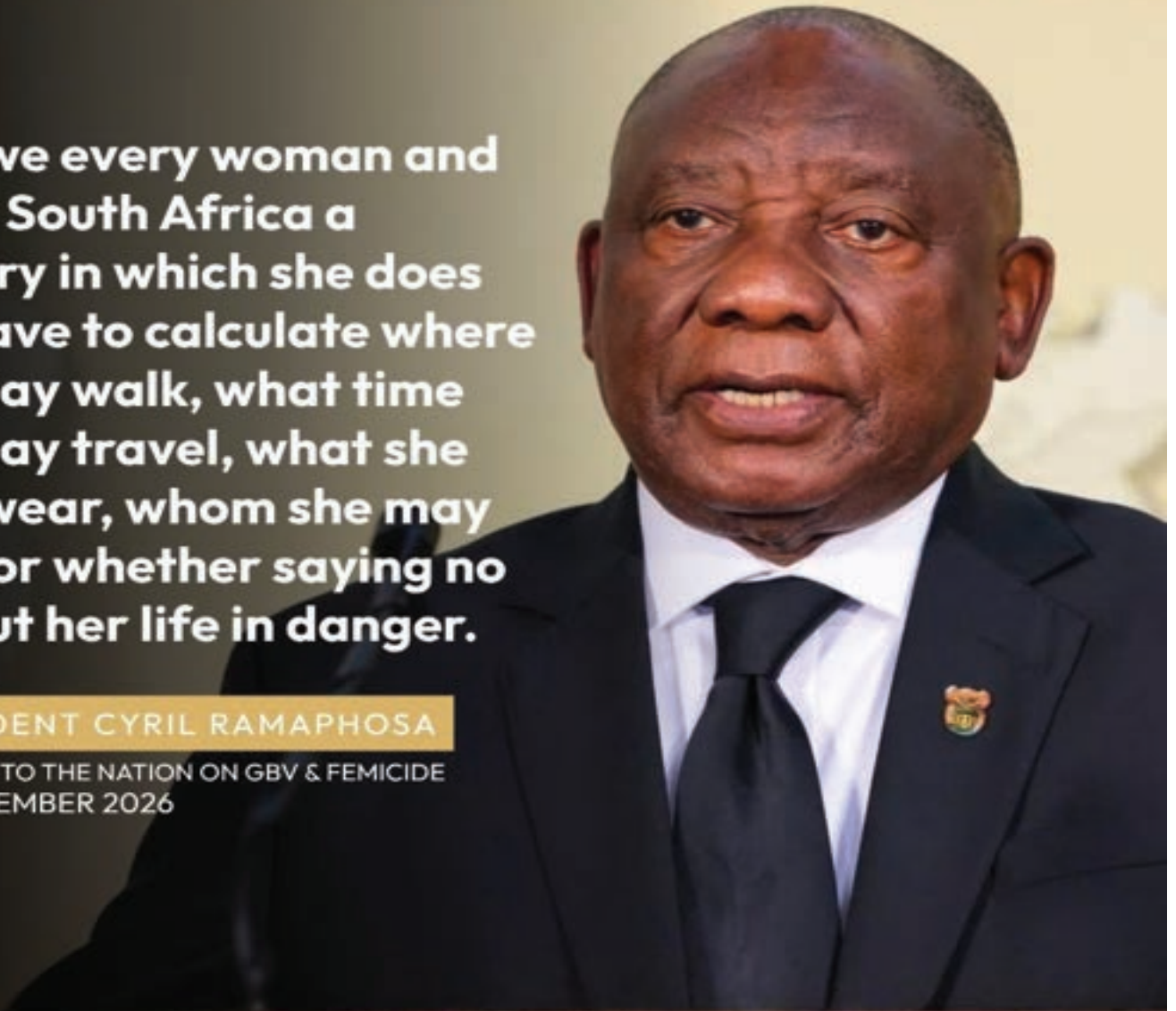
***Zanele Mngadi is the Head of Editorial and Production of Public Sector Manager magazine and Chief Director: Products and Platforms at the Government Communication and Information System. She conducted the study as part of her Bachelor of Public Administration Honours degree at MANCOSA.**

”

We owe every woman and girl in South Africa a country in which she does not have to calculate where she may walk, what time she may travel, what she may wear, whom she may trust or whether saying no will put her life in danger.

PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA

ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON GBV & FEMICIDE
29 SEPTEMBER 2026





Gautrain helps thousands of participants travel to major events such as the 702 Walk the Talk.

From stage to stadium:

Why Gauteng's events economy needs seamless public transport



Gauteng is often described as the economic engine of South Africa. Beyond being a business hub, it is the cultural and creative heartbeat of the nation. From star-studded concerts to sold-out rugby and football matches, this is where South Africa comes alive.

The province's social, lifestyle, sport, art, and entertainment events are not merely spectacles, they are powerful

economic drivers. These events create jobs, boost tourism, attract investment and sustain thousands of small businesses across Gauteng's thriving creative and cultural industries.

However, for this momentum to be sustained, and for the sector to grow, one essential component must keep pace: reliable, efficient and integrated public transport.

Some of South Africa's most iconic and unifying moments are deeply linked to this sector.

Think back to 1995, when Francois Pienaar lifted the Webb Ellis Cup, handed to him by Nelson Mandela. Or the unforgettable 2010 FIFA World Cup, when the world gathered here and *vuvuzelas* echoed across the globe. These were not just sporting achievements, they were milestones of nation-building and social cohesion.

Lifestyle enabler

Today, our events continue to foster that same spirit, drawing

communities together through shared experience. However, without seamless public transport, these gatherings lose some of their power. If people cannot reach events safely, affordably, and easily, the entire ecosystem is at risk, from artists and performers to vendors and local businesses.

At Gautrain, we have seen first-hand how the movement of people influences the movement of money, ideas and opportunity. Our mission extends beyond connecting commuters to jobs and education, it includes connecting them to the moments that matter: music festivals, theatre screenings, sporting showdowns and cultural celebrations.

That is why we view transport not simply as a utility, but as a lifestyle enabler.

This philosophy informs everything we do, from running special late-night trains during major events, to partnering with other public transport providers for integrated services, to launching our Midibus Service in collaboration with minibus taxi operators to extend our reach to key nodes such as Hatfield, Centurion, Midrand, Marlboro and Rosebank.

It is no exaggeration to say that Gauteng is the “Hollywood of South Africa.” The province



is home to a booming film and television industry, a dynamic creative economy and a vibrant social scene that draws people from across the globe. Events here do not just entertain, they inspire, employ and empower.

Enhancing tourism experience

For tourists especially, transport is central to the experience. A visitor’s impression of South Africa begins the moment they land at the O.R Tambo International Airport. Can they navigate the city easily? Can they get to their hotel, to business meetings, or to that much-anticipated concert without stress? If the answer is yes, they are far more likely to return and to recom-

mend the experience to others.

The transport sector is far more than infrastructure, it forms the foundation of a well-functioning society. It facilitates trade, drives tourism, fuels small business and connects people to each other and to opportunity. An integrated, people-focused transport network is essential to any inclusive and sustainable growth strategy.

That is why Gautrain continues to invest in integration, innovation and inclusivity. Our goal is clear: to make public transport a safe, accessible, and convenient choice for everyone. Reducing our over-reliance on private vehicles will ease congestion, lower carbon emissions, decrease road fatalities and help

foster the vibrant, liveable cities our province deserves.

Accommodating the city’s growth

As Gauteng continues to grow, the need for a transport system that matches its ambition becomes even more urgent. Every large-scale event hosted here is not just an economic opportunity, it is a chance to showcase our province, bring people together and reinforce South Africa’s global relevance.

Gautrain is proud to be part of this journey, delivering a transport solution that is efficient, reliable and designed to support the full spectrum of urban life – work, education, leisure and culture.

We will continue to partner with sporting organisations, private sector players and local communities to ensure that Gauteng’s events economy is supported by a transport system it needs to thrive. Ultimately, moving people is not just about trains and buses, it is about creating connection, unlocking opportunity and building a province where everyone belongs.

***Modise is Senior Executive Manager: Communication and Marketing at the Gautrain Management Agency**

Transport infrastructure:

Driving growth, connecting communities and delivering on South Africa's development priorities

Transport infrastructure is far more than roads, railways, ports and airports. It is a catalyst for economic growth, job creation and social inclusion. It connects people to opportunities, businesses to markets and communities to essential services.

As South Africa implements the Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2024 – 2029, transport infrastructure remains one of the country's most powerful tools for driving inclusive growth, reducing poverty and building a capable developmental state.

The MTDP recognises infrastructure development as a central pillar of economic transformation. Reliable transport systems support investment, reduce the cost of doing business and improve access to employment, education and healthcare. In a country seeking faster and more inclusive growth, efficient transport networks are not a luxury but a necessity.

South Africa's growth ambitions depend heavily on the performance of its freight and logistics networks. As goods move efficiently from production

centres to domestic and international markets, businesses become more competitive, exports increase and investment grows.

Progress made

Recent progress under Operation Vulindlela demonstrates how structural reforms are beginning to strengthen the transport sector. During the first quarter of 2026, government advanced key freight logistics reforms aimed at improving efficiency, reducing costs and supporting export-led growth.

Government has also made progress in attracting private sector investment into strategic logistics infrastructure. A

revised network statement was published to facilitate open access to the freight rail network, while rail access agreements were concluded with all 11 train operating companies allocated capacity on the network. These operators are expected to increase rail volumes by approximately 24 million tonnes over the medium term, contributing towards government's target of moving 250 million tonnes of freight by rail.

Transnet has issued requests for proposals for projects, including the Ngqura Manganese Export Corridor, a Rolling Stock Leasing Company and the Cape Town Multipurpose Terminal.

These initiatives are expected to strengthen export capacity, improve operational efficiency and enhance South Africa's competitiveness in global markets.

In addition, the National Rail Bill is being finalised to create an enabling legislative framework for a modern and competitive rail sector, while preparations continue for the establishment of a transport economic regulator to support fair competition and investment certainty.

These reforms highlight the growing role of transport infrastructure as an engine of economic development and a key contributor to the country's recovery and growth agenda.



Access to economic opportunities

Transport infrastructure is equally important in addressing poverty and the high cost of living. For millions of South Africans, access to affordable and reliable transport determines whether they can reach workplaces, schools, healthcare facilities and government services.

South Africa has already demonstrated the benefits of integrated public transport systems. The Gautrain and Bus Rapid Transit systems such as Rea Vaya, A Re Yeng and MyCiTi have improved mobility, reduced travel times and enhanced access to economic opportunities.

Encouragingly, passenger rail services are showing strong signs of recovery. According to Operation Vulindlela's latest progress report, PRASA has restored 35 of its 40 priority rail corridors. Passenger journeys increased dramatically from approximately 17 million in 2021/22 to more than 101 million in 2025/26, while on-time train performance improved from 50% to 91% over the same period.

These improvements are particularly significant for low-income households that rely on affordable public transport. Bet-

ter rail services reduce commuting costs, improve mobility and increase access to economic opportunities. As passenger rail continues to recover, it is helping to rebuild confidence in public transport while contributing to greater inclusion and improved quality of life.

Addressing inequality

Transport infrastructure also has a critical role to play in overcoming South Africa's spatial inequalities. Decades after apartheid, many people still live far from economic centres and basic services. Strategic investment in roads, rail networks and public transport corridors can help reconnect communities to opportunities and stimulate development in underserved areas.

The restoration of commuter rail services, combined with government's broader efforts to improve urban mobility and support affordable housing development, is helping to address these historic inequalities. Transport infrastructure contributes directly to social inclusion and regional development by improving connectivity between residential areas and economic hubs.

Government's increasing emphasis on integrated planning

and spatial development further strengthens the developmental impact of infrastructure investment by ensuring that projects are aligned with broader social and economic objectives.

Successful infrastructure delivery requires capable institutions, sound governance and effective oversight. Every transport project completed successfully strengthens public confidence in government's ability to deliver services and create conditions for growth.

The reforms being implemented through Operation Vulindlela illustrate the manner in which institutional reform can improve state capability. Efforts to modernise the rail sector, strengthen regulation and attract investment demonstrate the importance of coordinated planning and implementation in achieving development outcomes.

As South Africa advances the implementation of the MTDP 2024 – 2029, transport infrastructure will remain central to achieving national development objectives. The progress recorded through Operation Vulindlela shows that reform and investment are beginning to deliver measurable results. From opening access to freight rail and modernising ports to restoring passenger rail services and

crowding in private investment, transport reforms are creating new opportunities for growth and inclusion.

The challenge now is to maintain this momentum and ensure that infrastructure investments continue to translate into tangible improvements in people's lives. When transport systems enable businesses to grow, communities to prosper and citizens to access opportunities more easily, infrastructure fulfils its true developmental purpose. In this way, transport infrastructure remains one of the strongest foundations upon which South Africa can build a more inclusive, competitive and prosperous future. ♦

****Lawrence Ngoveni is the Director: Media Engagement at the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.***



Lawrence Ngoveni

Step into spring with

Irene Makhavhu's colourful designs



For Irene Makhavhu, being a fashion designer is not only about making clothes but ensuring that every piece is crafted with intent and worn to be unforgettable.

This edition features Irene Makhavhu Designs, a collection perfectly suited to the vibrant spirit of spring. Featuring bold colours, eye-catching prints and lightweight fabrics, the collection celebrates the season's energy while offering comfort and elegance.

Irene Makhavhu Designs

- ◉ Shudufhadzo Dress: **R2 999.00**
- ◉ Irene Makhavhu Vhudiawe Dress: **R2 999.00**
- ◉ Irene Makhavhu Designs Mashudu Tutu Ombre Skirt: **R1 499.00**



For more information, visit
www.thespace.co.za
 Instagram: @irenemakhavhudesign
 WhatsApp: 064 5540 612

About the designer

Irene Makhavhu is a Limpopo-born fashion designer with more than nine years of industry experience. A graduate of the Durban University of Technology, she launched her own label in 2015 after beginning her career by supplying a childrenswear range to a leading retail store.

Known for her sophisticated yet timeless designs, Makhavhu creates bridal, fashion and ready-to-wear pieces that celebrate individuality and craftsmanship. Her talent has earned her industry recognition, while her expertise now spans design, styling and production.

Her label is stocked at THE SPACE boutiques and BIG BLUE stores nationwide, bringing her distinctive designs to fashion lovers across South Africa.

** Prices correct at the time of publishing.*



Enjoy every spoonful **Thai Chicken prawn curry**

If you are looking for a dish that brings together bold flavours and contrasting textures, look no further than **Chef Tebogo Motsumi's** Thai Chicken Prawn Curry. Motsumi is a Chef de Partie at Maropeng Boutique Hotel.

In this edition, we feature a recipe that combines tender chicken and succulent prawns in a fragrant curry bursting with flavour. The chicken provides a rich, savoury foundation, absorbing the aromatic curry spices, while the prawns add a delicate sweetness and subtle seafood character that enhances every spoonful.

The result is a comforting dish that beautifully bridges the flavours of land and sea. Creamy coconut notes, colourful peppers and aromatic spices come together to create a meal that is both satisfying and memorable.

Follow the recipe below to prepare this flavour-packed Thai-inspired curry at home.



Ingredients

Thai chicken and prawn curry

- 1.5 kg chicken fillet, cubed
- 1.3 kg prawn meat
- 4 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon curry paste
- 1 Tablespoon chicken stork
- Pinch of finely chopped garlic
- Handful of red, green and yellow peppers, julienne
- 2 cups of coconut cream

Basmati rice

- 1 cup of basmati rice
- Chopped rocket
- Chicken stock
- Teaspoon Marvello butter

Method

Thai chicken and prawn curry

- Pan fry onions, garlic and curry.
- Add prawns and chicken after curry has been cooked.
- Add coconut cream and let it simmer for few minutes.
- Add curry paste and chicken stock.
- Add peppers to compliment your curry.

Method for Basmati rice

- Boil rice until it is cooked then mix chopped rocket and butter.

Wine pairing

This curry pairs beautifully with a chilled white wine, such as a Spier white wine. The fresh, fruity notes of the wine complement the aromatic spices and creamy coconut flavours of the curry, creating a balanced and enjoyable dining experience.



Exploring Witsieshoek: Adventure, heritage and mountain views

From thrilling mountain adventures and rare wildlife encounters to the rich heritage of the Batlokoa people, Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge offers visitors an unforgettable journey into one of South Africa's most spectacular landscapes.

Perched approximately 2 200 metres above sea level beneath Sentinel Peak and the iconic Drakensberg Amphitheatre, Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge offers visitors a gateway to mountain

adventure, rich heritage and some of South Africa's most spectacular scenery.

Located on the border of KwaZulu-Natal and Lesotho, the four-star graded lodge is more than a mountain retreat. It is a gateway to adventure, a window into local heritage and a place where visitors can experience the cultural landscape of the Batlokoa Ba Mota community that owns it.

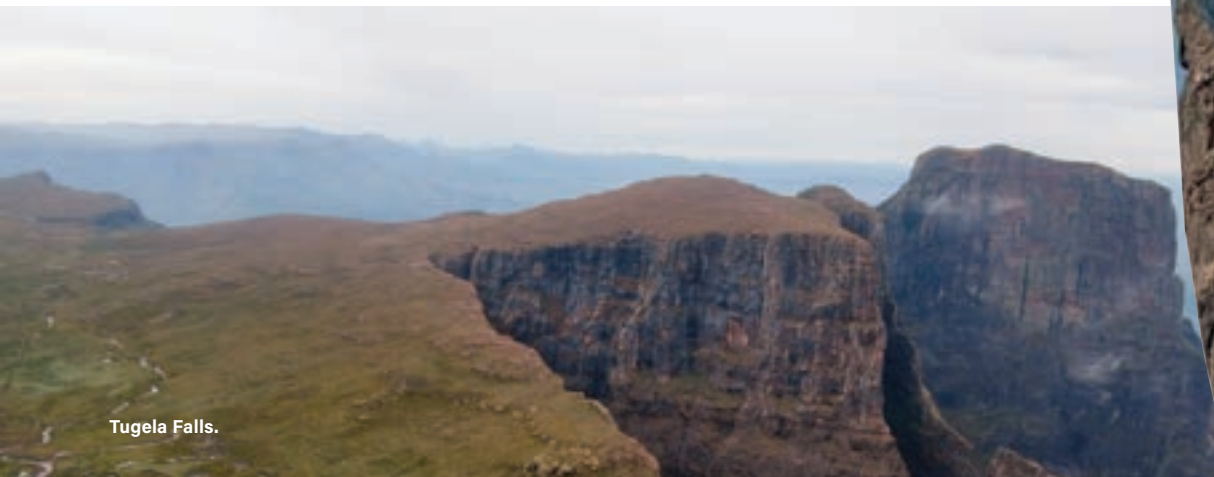
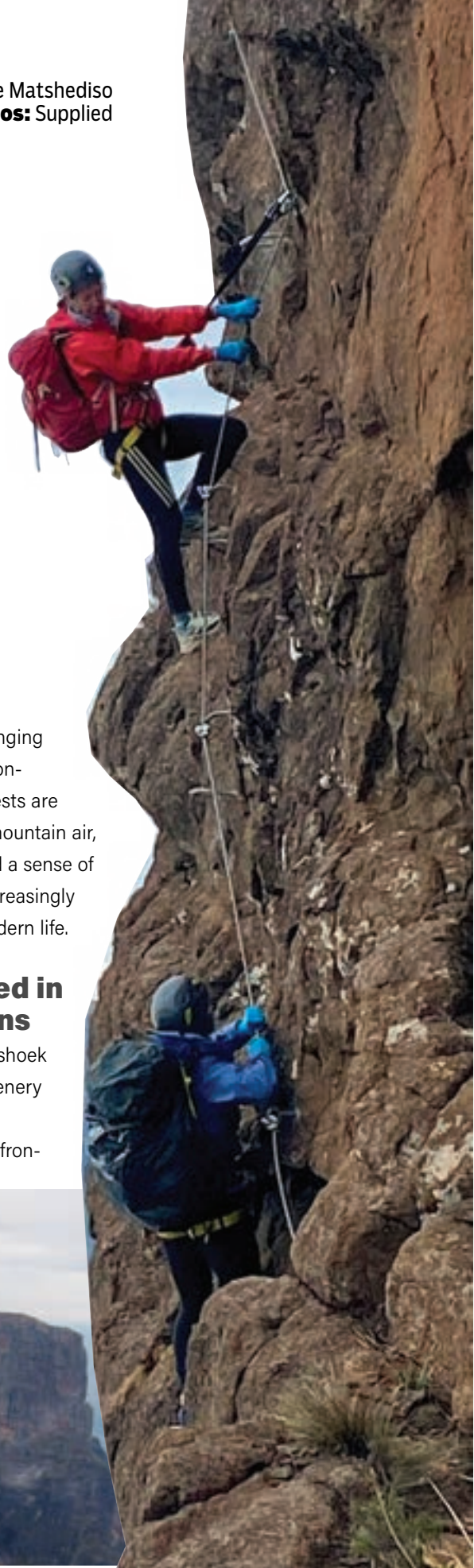
Whether arriving for a week-

end escape, a challenging hike or simply to reconnect with nature, guests are welcomed by crisp mountain air, panoramic views and a sense of tranquillity that is increasingly difficult to find in modern life.

A story rooted in the mountains

The beauty of Witsieshoek lies not only in its scenery but also in its history.

According to Transfron-



Tugela Falls.

tier Parks Destinations (TFPD), the company responsible for the commercial management and marketing of the lodge, the destination's identity remains deeply connected to the Batlokoa Ba Mota cultural community of Tsheseng in Phuthaditjhaba.

The relationship between the community and the surrounding mountains stretches back generations. Among the community's most celebrated historical figures is Queen Mmanthatisi, remembered for leading her people through the upheavals of the early 19th century.

The story of the lodge began in 1957, when King Wessels Mota envisioned a place where travellers exploring the mountains could find shelter and hospitality. Assisted by community elders, Batlokoa schoolchildren built a simple hut for hikers and visitors.

From those humble beginnings emerged the destination that today welcomes guests from across South Africa and beyond.

During the 1970s, the site was expanded into a tourism facility under the apartheid-era Bantu Investment Corporation and was subsequently managed through the QwaQwa Development Corporation. Although it was intended to create employment



and economic opportunities for Batlokoa, the community did not control the tourism business for many years.

Ownership of the lodge was eventually returned to the community in 2000. Today, Witsieshoek stands as an example of community-owned tourism, where the success of the destination contributes to local employment, skills development and economic opportunities.

Exploring the amphitheatre

The lodge is best known as the gateway to the Sentinel Peak hiking trail and the Chain Ladders route, which provide access to the summit of the Amphitheatre and the source of the Tugela Falls. The journey rewards hikers with dramatic views across deep valleys, rugged cliffs and open high-altitude grasslands.

Those seeking less demanding walks can explore trails leading to Mahai Falls, while more experienced hikers can venture further afield to destinations such as Gudu Falls.

Witsieshoek has evolved into far more than a hiker's stopover. Adventure enthusiasts can tackle the Dragon's Tale Via Ferrata, an assisted climbing route that combines the thrill of mountaineering with the security of fixed cables and ladders. Guided hiking experiences, abseiling, quad biking, archery and overnight expeditions on the Amphitheatre provide a variety of ways to experience the mountains.

Nature's quiet spectacle

Not all visitors come for adrenaline-filled activities. Some arrive simply to watch the light change across the cliffs as the sun rises,



Conquering the hike to the top of the Drakensberg Amphitheatre

Witsieshoek Mountain Air Spa



enjoy a meal overlooking the mountains or relax beside a crackling fire after a day outdoors.

Nature lovers are also drawn by the area's wildlife, particularly the rare Bearded Vulture. On suitable days, marrow bones placed at the lodge's informal Vulture Restaurant attract these magnificent birds, offering visitors and photographers an opportunity to observe one of southern Africa's most endangered avian species.

For those seeking relaxation, the Witsieshoek Mountain Air Spa provides a chance to unwind while surrounded by one of the country's most scenic settings.

More Than a Destination

A visit to Witsieshoek is also an opportunity to experience the culture and hospitality of the Batlokoa people.

Guests can explore nearby communities, discover local arts and crafts, or attend cultural and religious gatherings that provide a glimpse into local traditions.

The lodge's success also benefits the surrounding community through employment, local procurement and investment in community-owned assets, demonstrating how tourism can contribute to local development while preserving heritage. Perhaps that is what makes Witsieshoek truly memorable. Beyond the dramatic cliffs, challenging trails and spectacular views lies a living cultural landscape shaped by generations of Batlokoa people. ❖

Guests can relax beside a crackling fire at the lodge.



Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge beneath Sentinel Peak.



For more information: www.witsieshoek.co.za