

Gibela celebrates completion of its 100th train set

Train manufacturer, Gibela proudly celebrated the high-profile handover ceremony of its 100th train set to the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) in Dunnottar, Ekurhuleni.



Source: Supplied

The event was attended by Minister of Transport Fikile Mbalula, Gauteng premier David Makhura, Prasa board chairperson Leonard Ramatlakane and other dignitaries in the transport and rail industries.

The event was lauded as an important milestone in the journey to reinvigorating the country's rail sector.

Rail industry revitalisation

In 2013, Gibela signed a R51bn contract to supply Prasa with 600 six-car trains for its Metrorail service. The company also has a contract to deliver post-delivery train maintenance and technical support to Prasa and to manufacture and supply spare parts.

Additionally, developing these trains will help to optimise the commuter experience and increase Metrorail's fleet volumes and its ability to meet commuter demand.

Speaking at the event, Gibela board chairperson Irene Charnley said Gibela is privileged to have the mandate to produce 600 trains for Prasa so that millions of commuters can travel comfortably from point A to point B on a daily basis.

"We're proud to be supporting the revitalisation of the rail industry and driving inclusive economic growth. We have an ongoing obligation that we take very seriously. Manufacturing these state-of-the-art passenger trains is a good-news story that every South African should be proud of.

"A key takeaway for everyone working on the manufacturing process is that the work you do matters. You're making a difference in people's lives who have to get up at 4am to go to work. They will now have comfortable trains with Wi-Fi that travel at 120km/h to take them where they need to go – this is no small feat."

She added: "As we celebrate train set 100, I am looking forward to marking the production of the 600th train set."

Rehabilitation of infrastructure

Ramatlakane congratulated Gibela on delivering on its mandate.

"The trains we're building here are for the people of South Africa. They are aptly named iSitimela saBantu, which means they're the people's train. The older Metrorail commuter trains will be gradually retired with the migration to the people's train.

Ramatlakane said Prasa is in a phase of rebuilding through an intensive rehabilitation of infrastructure across South Africa – except the Eastern Cape, which has a shared service with Transnet infrastructure," he said.

Through the rebuilding process, Prasa is preparing for the roll-out of the people's train – iSitimela saBantu – in South Africa.

Ramatlakane said, in Gauteng, Prasa will initially be focusing on deploying new trains to the transport corridors of Naledi, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Kaalfontein, Pienaarspoort and Leralla. Many more areas around Johannesburg will be targeted in time. The Western Cape will also receive new trains to be deployed on several routes.

Makhura said people are excited about the new trains because iSitimela saBantu is needed across the country.

"Today, we're celebrating a huge milestone – we're celebrating job creation and we're celebrating the transfer of skills. I am amazed to see the number of young people who have been trained in Paris, Brazil or India working at the Gibela factory. These young people were exposed to highly skilled individuals and upskilled in various ways and now they are building trains.



Source: Supplied

"Gibela is empowering young people, women, and small, medium and micro-enterprises. Young South Africans have built these trains for South Africa using local suppliers – this is a first in the country. The greatest dream I have is to see us use this factory to build trains for the continent. This will help us employ and train more people," he said.

Makhura also cautioned against the pillaging and vandalism of railway infrastructure.

"We have to protect the trains from the threat of theft and vandalism. It would be heartbreaking to see this railway infrastructure that has been rebuilt stripped bare again by common criminals."

Mbalula echoed these sentiments and also congratulated the Gibela team on reaching this significant milestone.

"This is the kind of project we want to take to the African continent. This project is a first of its kind in Africa and the first of many – it will not stop here. We're going to expand this to other regions, create more jobs and upskill more people in South Africa," he said.

Gibela CEO Hector Danisa added that the unveiling of the 100th train set showed the hard work and dedication of men and women at Gibela.

"We employ some of the sharpest minds in engineering and manufacturing who have been the backbone of our entire operation. They have worked tirelessly to reach our goals. We're so proud to create an environment where employees can grow and develop their skills in the industry," he concluded.

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