

Unsafe taxis 'on the way out'

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Overhauling South Africa's public transport system, including its minibus taxis, to ensure affordable and efficient commuting is a vital requirement for inclusive economic growth, says Trade and Industry Minister Mandisi Mphahlele.

Speaking to journalists in Cape Town this week, Mphahlele said the government was busy implementing its R7.7-billion taxi recapitalisation programme, which was "going as planned, with 20 000 old vehicles targeted for scrapping in the current year".

Mphahlele said over 7 000 old taxis had been scrapped to date, with R353.5-million having been paid out in scrapping allowances, enabling taxi owners to revamp their ageing fleets with newer, safer vehicles.

Owners who want to exit the industry or buy new vehicles are offered R50 000 for each unroadworthy minibus taxi that they send in for scrapping by accredited agencies.

New government regulations demand that minibus taxis be fitted with seatbelts for each passenger, have rollover bars, a type two braking system and commercially rated tyres of sizes 185R or 195R.

The government aims to have replaced up to 80% of the country's taxi fleet by 2010.

Mphahlele added that a draft plan to reform the country's current bus subsidy system to include minibus taxis had been approved in principle by stakeholders in the transport industry.

Improving passenger transport

In his State of the Nation Address in February, President Thabo Mbeki said the government would implement several public transportation programmes around the country in addition to the taxi recapitalisation.

These included the multi-billion rand Gautrain high-speed rail link between Johannesburg, Pretoria and the OR Tambo International Airport, the Moloto Rail corridor linking Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces, and the Klipfontein corridor in Cape Town.

He said the government would also be implementing detailed plans for improving passenger rail and road transport, including creating a bus rapid transit system in all metropolitan municipalities, and recapitalising Metrorail.

"These and many other initiatives form part of a comprehensive passenger transport strategy, combining both road and rail," Mbeki said at the time. "We will attend to the urgent implementation of these programmes to improve the quality of life of especially the working people."

Source: [BuaNews](#)