

Prasa gets ready for local train manufacturing

The Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa) recently received the last of the 20 new Metrorail trains which were manufactured in Brazil. The organisation is now preparing to manufacture the remaining 580 trains locally, bringing the total new Metrorail trains to 600 over the next ten years.



Ricardo Gomez Angel

The manufacturing activities in Brazil has allowed manufacturer, Gibela, to train the South African teams who are involved in the design, engineering, and manufacturing in preparation for local production of the remaining trains. Prasa, through Gibela, is now in the final stages of constructing a R1-billion local train manufacturing plant at Dunnottar Park, City of Ekurhuleni, which will also consist of a training centre and supplier park that will house suppliers who will manufacture various train components.

The targeted manufacture of the first car-body (train coach) shell at the local plant is the fourth quarter of 2017, with the delivery of the first locally produced Metrorail train anticipated by the end of 2018. The construction of the permanent local manufacturing plant will see the organisation reach and exceed the minimum 65% localisation as set out in the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP2).

Empowerment

Out of the 72 hectares of land set aside for the main manufacturing plant, approximately 30 hectares have been reserved

for a supplier park. This will house all the suppliers to the main manufacturing plant, made up of SMMEs specialising in various areas of rail-related manufacturing. There are several empowerment opportunities set aside to empower black businesses including preferential procurement spend with approximately R35.8bn set aside to empowered entities, R5.3-billion earmarked for SMMEs and R1.7bnn to black female-owned companies.

Furthermore, Prasa has earmarked a total of R892-million to enterprise development within the rail sector as well as R323-million to socio-economic development. Within the next ten years, the supplier park will become a centre of excellence for train manufacturing.

Job creation and employment opportunities

Approximately 1,500 people will be permanently employed at the manufacturing plant. Of the total number to be employed, 99% will be South Africans. Prasa has also prioritised historically disadvantaged individuals who will make up a total of 85% of the employees with 25% of these being women.

The organisation has successfully launched the first deployment corridor where the new trains are currently running between Pretoria and Pienaarspoort stations. It will continue to with its modernisation programme to upgrade its infrastructure and manufacture its new trains over the next 20 years as it strives to create a state-of-the-art passenger rail services.

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