

First of Prasa's 600 new trains will be ready to roll later this year

The first train in the Passenger Rail Agency of SA's (Prasa's) new R51bn fleet will hit the tracks later this year, the agency says. It is among the 600 trains ordered from the Gibela Rail Transport Consortium that is 61% owned by French power and transport multinational Alstom.



Col André Kritzinger via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The Gibela contract is one aspect of Prasa's R172bn, 10-year fleet renewal programme that will see the rail agency modernise its ageing and unreliable urban service Metrorail, which ferries more than 2.2-million passengers daily.

Prasa has gone on a charm offensive to assure the public that it is getting its house in order after suffering a series of public relations blunders centred on the procurement of its new rolling stock and the fact that it was behind schedule in the rollout of infrastructure.

Piet Sebola, Prasa's head of the fleet renewal programme, told Business Day yesterday they were working around the clock to make sure the Wolmerton depot near Pretoria, where the trains will be housed, and a test track were ready in time to take in the new stock.

Infrastructure upgrades and manufacturing

Prasa was busy with infrastructure upgrades and would issue tenders for the programme. Prasa chose Brazil as the manufacturing destination for the first 20 Alstom trains to speed up the renewal programme.

Two of the first trains are already in SA undergoing testing. The rest of the 580 trains will be built at a factory near Nigel in Ekurhuleni once its construction is completed in June next year. "The third train, which will arrive in the middle of this month fully fitted, will begin operation in October," said Sebola. The rest are expected to arrive by the end of this year.

The first train from Brazil arrived in November but Prasa did not have a suitable depot to house it at the time, nor a test track. Sebola said Prasa had built a new station in Greenview on the priority line where the first trains would run between Mamelodi and Pretoria.

Prasa had previously earmarked the Joburg-Pretoria line as a priority and identified Braamfontein as its key depot. Bids for the Braamfontein depot were under evaluation and the contract would be awarded in June, Sebola said.

Source: Business Day

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