

More flights for Mahikeng – OR Tambo International route



Community Safety and Transport Management MEC, Dr Mpho Motlhabane, delivering his department's budget in the Provincial Legislature

Rebaone Moeng

Following a notable increase in passenger volumes utilising flights between Mahikeng Airport and OR Tambo International Airport, the Department of Community Safety and Transport Management's contracted airliner, SA Express, is considering an increase on the number of flights.

Delivering the departmental budget speech for 2018/19 financial year at the Provincial Legislature, Community Safety and Transport Management MEC, Dr Mpho Motlhabane, said this would be done by introducing scheduled flights on Tuesdays and Thursdays at no cost to the department.

"Our airports continue to provide scheduled passenger flights between Mahikeng and Johannesburg and between Pilanes-

berg to Cape Town as well as Johannesburg. At the moment the flights take place on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, in the mornings and afternoons.

"Since the re-introduction of the air passenger scheduled flights, we have realised a spike in passenger volumes utilising the flights from 9 508 (2015/16) to 14 909 (2016/17) and we are now sitting at 15 712 (2017/18)," said Motlhabane, who appealed to the province's communities to use these subsidised services.

With regard to the international license status, the MEC said the process to transfer the international license from the Pilanesberg Airport to Mahikeng Airport was underway.

"We anticipate a designation of Mahikeng Airport as a port of entry in the 2018/19 financial year. This will catalyse the process to designate Mahikeng Airport as an international cargo hub in Africa.

"We have set aside a budget for the refurbishment of two hangers at the Mahikeng Airport to establish the aviation academy," Motlhabane told the house.

Following the Premier's announcement on renaming the Mahikeng Airport during the State of the Province Address, Motlhabane said the department has embarked on the process of changing the name of the airport to George Dick Montshioa Airport, and stakeholder consultation has been concluded in this regard.

"The branding and the official launch of the new airport name will be conducted as soon as the South African Civil Aviation Authority has updated the Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP)," he said.

To further improve services at these airports, the MEC informed the House that the department had set aside an amount of R16 million to procure two airport fire trucks.

Two nabbed for drug dealing

ELFAS TORERAI

TWO men were arrested after police in Christiana received a tip-off that they were dealing in drugs.

The pair, aged 26 and 30, were arrested at different houses in the small town's Marikana section on Saturday.

North West police spokesperson Lt Col Adèle Myburgh said the first man was arrested at his residence after he was found in possession of 83.9kg of dagga.

"Further investigation led the police to the second suspect's place in the same neighbourhood," Myburgh said. "The suspect, aged 30, was found in possession of 40 tablets suspected to be Mandrax and was also arrested."

The two will appear in the Bloemhof Magistrate's Court today for being in possession of drugs.

Police commissioner Lt-Gen Baile Motswenyane thanked the community members for reporting the pair.

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Vigilant police foil plans to blow up ATMs

South African Police Service (Saps) officers this weekend arrested seven suspects in North West and Limpopo - in separate incidents - for possession of explosive devices and conspiracy to commit an offence.

In the process, they prevented potential automated teller machine (ATM) robberies, the Saps said yesterday.

Members of the Saps, acting on intelligence information, conducted operations in both provinces, Brigadier Vishnu Naidoo said.

"In the first incident, members went to Seraleng village in Brits [North West], where they arrested three suspects aged between 27 and 29 for possession of over 20 explosive devices," he said.

The team went to another village, Lekgaleng, to search for a black BMW with three occupants implicated in the planning of an ATM bombing at a local business centre.

The car was spotted and stopped. Police seized the car, along with potentially incriminating items. The three suspects

were arrested for conspiracy to commit robbery involving ATM bombings.

In the other incident, a 36-year-old woman aged was arrested by police at the SA border post at Beitbridge in Limpopo. When police conducted routine searches at the border gate, they discovered several components for explosive devices, including connector caps, emulsion explosives, and blasting caps, Naidoo said.

National Police Commissioner Lt-Gen Khehla Sitole had, since his appointment, pronounced as

part of his turnaround strategy that decisive action would be taken to "stamp the authority of the state".

"One of the ways of achieving this is to ensure an effective and efficient crime intelligence environment coupled with a dynamic organised crime threat analysis strategy," Naidoo said.

The suspects are expected to appear in court soon on charges of illegal possession of explosives and conspiracy to commit a crime, Naidoo said.

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