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Taxi trade, state to probe aid plans

'WE HEAR YOU': MINISTER UNDERSTANDS FRUSTRATIONS

» **Industry wants help with financing; meanwhile, talks with govt avert strike.**

Rorisang Kgosana

Various government departments, including Treasury, will be roped in to explore all possible funding mechanisms to help the taxi industry, which claims to be paying "exorbitant" interest rates when buying vehicles.

This was said at a media briefing in Pretoria yesterday, where Transport Minister Joe Maswanganyi announced alongside the South African National Taxi Council (Santaco) that Wednesday's planned strike by the taxi industry had been cancelled.

A meeting was held between the department and Santaco on Friday after the department committed itself to meet with transport industry roleplayers to discuss the transformation of the public transport industry, Maswanganyi said.

"Up front, we would like to indicate that we agreed with the industry to put on hold the planned strike for July 12 to allow for further engagement on issues that Santaco brought to the attention of government.

"Both government and Santaco agreed to work together to confront challenges that the taxi industry continue to experience on a daily basis as clearly articulated in the meeting," he said.

Last month, the province came to a standstill when Santaco members blocked all major routes and highways, protesting against the lack of subsidy by government and no access to financing.

The taxi council also voiced concerns about delays in the issuing of operating licences and paying exorbitant interest rates when purchasing minibus taxis.

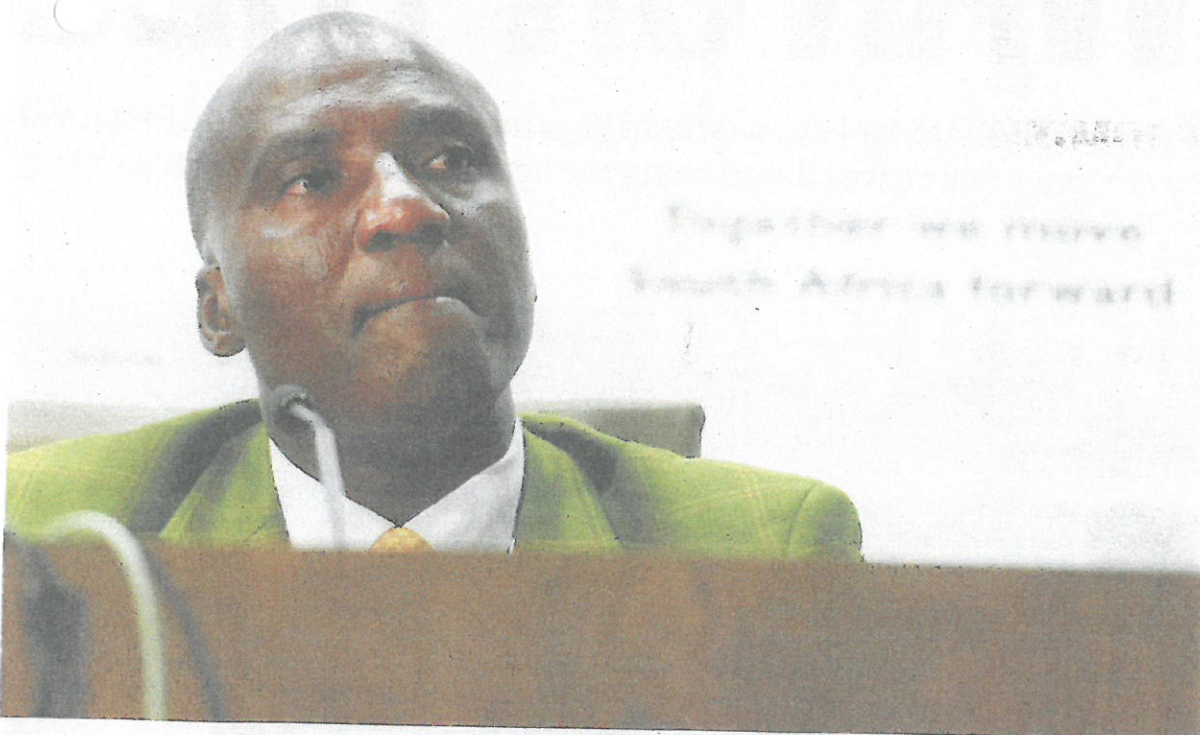
Santaco's deputy president Boy Zondi said Maswanganyi was the seventh minister the industry was engaging with regard to taxi industry subsidies.

"We agreed with the minister to set up committees to look into all these issues. If we get frustrated, we will inform the minister that we see no progress and therefore will march," he said.

As taxis were the most preferred mode of public transport in the country, accounting for over 68% of daily commuters, Maswanganyi said the issue of subsidy needed to be urgently addressed.

"As government, we note the frustration that the taxi industry is experiencing with regard to accessing finance," he said.

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COMMON GROUND. Minister of Transport Joe Maswanganyi and the South African National Taxi Council brief

Strike off, but taxi bosses still talking tough

GOITSEMANG TLHABYE

THE MASSIVE taxi strike planned for Wednesday is off for now, but taxi operators warned that they will take to the streets again if they don't see any action from the government.

After failing to find resolution to their problems following years of negotiations with a host of previous ministers of transport, the South African National Taxi Association (Santaco) vowed it would not put up with any further "delaying tactics" from the Department of Transport.

Santaco, during a joint media briefing by the department and the association in Pretoria yesterday, confirmed the massive national strike by taxi operators scheduled for Wednesday had been postponed.

The organisation said the strike would be postponed while meetings with the relevant stakeholders were still under way.

"We will put pressure on stakeholders to commit to addressing our issues timeously during meetings. But we will not carry on with meetings that are getting us nowhere," said Santaco deputy president Boy Zondi.



TAXING TROUBLES: Minister of Transport Joe Maswanganyi briefs the media on developments in the taxi industry.

PICTURE: OUPA MOKOENA

owned by blacks and we need to seek to bring equity to those formerly excluded so they can join the economy. Charging exorbitant rates will not help our aim," he said.

The department said it would enlist the assistance of other government departments, including the Treasury and its agencies.

Taxi operators were urged to work towards transforming the industry to become more modern and technology savvy rather than resorting to attacking Uber drivers.

"If we can transform the industry technologically and provide a safe mode of public transport, it will become a choice for the young and the old," said the minister.

Previous strike action saw operators blocking key transport routes and causing widespread disruption.

Major routes affected by the strike included the N1 highway at the Allandale off-ramp in Midrand and the N12 and Soshanguve Highway.

The strike disrupted emergency health services, schools, airport services, traffic and many other economic activities.

reasonable finance agreements were among the issues raised.

Acting director-general Mathabatha Mokonyama said committees would be created to deal with issues hampering the sector and assist in looking for individual solutions that each province was battling with.

Mokonyama said the taxi recapitalisation programme was another matter that was under review.

Maswanganyi said he supported the view of ANC treasurer general Zweli Mkhize that the taxi industry be brought into the mainstream of radical socio-economic transformation.

"The taxi industry is largely

Zondi added: "We have been dealing with the department for years, and have decided we can't stay in boardrooms anymore discussing these issues."

Transport Minister Joe Maswanganyi said meetings held with Santaco highlighted three integral issues to be resolved in the short and long term; the first relating to calls for the industry to be subsidised.

Maswanganyi said considering that the sector accounted for 68% of the daily commuting public, the issue of subsidies needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The operating licence administration backlog and access to

THE NEW AGE Pg 1 Depmt of transport (National) (Pos)

Meeting about taxi strike

10/7/17
A MEETING to be held tomorrow between the South Africa National Taxi Council (Santaco) and the transport department will determine whether there will be a taxi strike in the near future.

Yesterday Santaco announced that the planned nationwide taxi strike that was due to take place on Wednesday was cancelled for now.

"We agreed to give the government the opportunity to address our issues. We are prepared to continue to engage.

"However, should we feel that the meetings are not producing results, we will not hesitate to go on a national march," Santaco deputy president Boy Zondo said.

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THE NEW AGE Pg 1 SARS (NW) 10/07/17 (Pos)

Two arrested for murders

ELFAS TORERAI

TWO men will appear in the Molopo Regional Court and the Ganyesa Magistrate's Court respectively after they were arrested for separate murders at the weekend.

North West police spokesperson Brig Sabata Mokgwabone said a 37-year-old man was arrested in connection with the death of his girlfriend in Lomanyaneng, near Mahikeng.

"Police in Lomanyaneng nabbed a suspect for allegedly killing his girlfriend, 37. It is alleged that the victim was found lying dead inside a house with a stab wound in the neck," he said.

Mokgwabone said in Ganyesa, a 29-year-old man will appear in the local

magistrate's court tomorrow in connection with a murder that occurred in the small town's Barolong section.

"The suspect's court appearance follows his arrest on Saturday after he allegedly stabbed a 21-year-old victim. It appears that the suspect and the victim were at a local tavern when an argument broke out between them.

"The suspect took out a knife and allegedly stabbed the victim. The latter was taken to the Ganyesa clinic where he died," he said.

After the incident was reported, the police successfully traced and arrested the suspect.

Both men will face murder charges in court.

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THE NEW AGE Pg 1 SARS (NW) P05 10/7/18

Officials up for corruption

ELFAS TORERAI

EMPLOYEES of the Rustenburg local municipality officials will appear in court today after being arrested for corruption.

The two men, aged 36 and 57 work for the municipality's infrastructure and electrical engineering department in Rustenburg.

The pair were arrested after a member of the public tipped-off the Hawks.

Apparently, the two men had demanded R3000 in exchange for shielding a homeowner from paying a hefty fine for an illegal power connection.

Hawks provincial head, Maj-Gen Linda Mbana said: "Information was received from a complainant alleging that the pair had visited his house in Rustenburg north, where they informed him that they were conducting an inspection.

They then informed him that his meter box had an illegal connection and he would be charged R19 000. The suspects allegedly demanded R3000 from the complainant saying they would make a plan for him not to pay the R19 000," she said.

Mbana said the Hawks had a zero tolerance towards corruption.

She urged whistle-blowers to report crimes happening around them.