

Billions for Eastern Cape infrastructure says Zuma

Transnet intends investing R26bn on expanding infrastructure in the Eastern Cape over the next seven years, according to President Jacob Zuma.



President Jacob Zuma. Image: GCS

In a speech prepared for delivery in Uitenhage at the launch of Transnet's new dedicated wagons to ferry cars, Zuma said the Eastern Cape was central to the government's plans to strengthen South Africa's freight transport and logistics structure.

"It is also central to the support we want to continue providing to our manufacturing sector, especially the automotive sector," he said.

Zuma said the Eastern Cape's Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage areas were high priorities for such support, given the existence of the region's manufacturing cluster and high levels of unemployment.

"The Eastern Cape automotive cluster is one of the most important drivers of growth in this region. South Africa's automotive manufacturing sector is one of the country's key foreign revenue earners," Zuma said.

"In 2012, automotive exports comprised 12.1% of South Africa's total exports. A total of R86.9bn in vehicles and components were shipped to 152 countries," he said.

"The role that Transnet will play in terms of providing railway transport with its new wagons will be an essential part of that," he said.

Moving cars off the roads

"When I met auto manufacturers here a year ago they expressed their concerns and frustrations regarding the transportation of cars. We agreed that a joint solution must be found," Zuma said.

"I am proud to say that these new wagons, which have been developed and built in Uitenhage, are the outcome of those discussions. It shows you what we can do if we put our minds together," he added.



Transnet is training welders to work on the new

wagons being built to carry cars. Image: Transnet

About 180 wagons are currently in service and at least 350 new wagons are to be built in the coming months.

"These units will mostly serve on the route between Kaalfontein, near Esselen Park, and Durban," Zuma said.

"Although Transnet has been operating a fleet of car-carrier wagons for many years, these units had become out-dated, and industry requirements had changed," he said.

Old carriers were open-sided, posing theft and maintenance problems and were not big enough to carry cars such as 4x4

"This development also contributes positively to our campaign to promote the move from road to rail in the transportation of goods," Zuma said.

He said the government was encouraged by the fact that about 90 young welders had been employed and 34 male and female students were being trained as welders.

Source: Sapa via I-Net Bridge

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