

Govt awaits ConCourt decision on analogue switch-off date

The Department of Communications and Digital Technologies Minister, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, says her department is eagerly awaiting the Constitutional Court decision on the analogue switch-off (ASO) date for them to conclude broadcast digital migration.



Image source: maksymyemelyanov – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

This comes after e-TV had appealed at the ConCourt the Gauteng High Court ruling that favoured the measures taken by the Minister towards the conclusion of the much-delayed broadcast digital migration.

This will allow the department to release spectrum in Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape.

The Minister said that unfortunately, until the analogue switch-off, the country's economic hubs of Gauteng and KZN will remain with poor network connectivity with a negative impact to the economy.

Ntshavheni was speaking during a media briefing on the progress of the Broadcasting Digital Migration (BDM) towards

South Africa's Analogue Switch-Off in Pretoria on Friday.

"We have concluded the analogue switch-off and migration for the SABC analogue Switch-off in the five provinces of the Free-State, Northern Cape, North-West, Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces. Therefore, ICASA will be able to release the high Demand spectrum in these provinces," she said.

The release of the spectrum will enable telecommunication operators to decongest the networks through the deployment of 4G and 5G networks across the country.

Ntshavheni noted that South Africans, irrespective of where they live, in recent days, have experienced poor connectivity including on voice calls due to increased loads on the networks.

Progress with the set top boxes installations

The minister announced the completion of Set Top Box (STB) installations in the Free State, Northern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Gauteng.

She said that the department is currently completing the mop-up for Western Cape and North-West to verify completion status because SAPO does not have additional addresses due for installations.

"The floods have severely impacted the STB installation rate in the Provinces of KZN and Eastern Cape. This is due to damages of beneficiary houses and road infrastructure that has led to inaccessibility of some communities. As a result, as of the 21st of June 2022, a total of 109,270 beneficiary households remains unconnected in the two Provinces," she said.



Work on digital migration project underway

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Minister Ntshavheni said that the department continues to coordinate with the Department of Human Settlements and other infrastructure departments to ensure installation to beneficiary households are resumed as and when the relevant infrastructure is restored.

The minister further extended the department's appreciation to the teams that continue with installations to areas where they must walk distances because of damaged roads and bridges.

"We have also commenced with installations for the end of September targets across the 5 Provinces that have completed 30 June 2022 installations, with Western Cape and North-West yet to commence. To date we have installed STBs to 44,424 households that are due for installations by 30 September 2022," the minister said.

Increasing capacity in installing STBs

Minister Ntshavheni said her department is continuing to increase its capacity to install more STBs per day to ensure the quickest rate of installations for post-ASO registrations in the event of a possible surge of applications after the analogue switch-off.

However, since the beginning of April 2022, the Minister said that the project continued to experience a decline in the number of new registrations.

"With the support of the DTIC and our complementary efforts, we continue to create a conducive environment for increased availability of appropriate digital television sets and STBs in the retail market. This means households not

qualifying for government support can self-migrate without relying on subscription TV.

“We also wish to remind those households earning below a total of R3,500 per month that applications for registration are still open,” the Minister said.

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