



communications  
& digital technologies

Department:  
Communications & Digital Technologies  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, HONOURABLE MONDLI GUNGUBELE AT THE LAUNCH OF SITA CYBERLAB IN NTAUFUFU SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, LUSIKISIKI, EASTERN CAPE (20 JULY 2023)**

*Programme Director,*

*Premier of the Eastern Cape Province, Mr Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane*

*MEC of Basic Education, Mr Fundile David Gade*

*Executive Mayor of Port St John's Municipality, Cllr*

*Traditional Leader, Nkos' Umditshwa*

*Councillor of Ward 12, Cllr Ngozi*

*Acting Director-General, Ms Nonkqubela Jordan-Dyani*

*SITA (SOC) Ltd*

*Executive management of SITA, led by the Managing Director, Dr Bongani Mabaso*

*State Owned Companies (USAASA, NEMISA, FPB, Sentech, BBI, SAPO)*

*Provincial Education Department, Dr Soyisile Nuku*

*Principal, Mrs Mandisa Nqakwana*

*Chairperson of the School Governing Body, Mrs Patricia Nokuzola Zozi*

*Educators and Learners of Ntafufu Senior Secondary School*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

Thank you for the invitation to join and celebrate with you the launch of this Cyberlab in Nelson Mandela Month, whose legacy and dedication to education remains an inspiration to all of us.

The founding father and first president of our democracy, President Nelson Mandela gave us a moral compass that still guides us today with his vision for change for all South Africans. As we gather here today - we are reminded of his words: *"Giving children a healthy start in life, no matter where they are born or the circumstances of their birth, is the moral obligation of every one of us."*

As a DCDT collective, we are committed to bringing change and assist our nation through the ICT sector, to develop and grow. This is a journey to bigger and greater things. We want our kids to live for something that is relevant for the future. We have a responsibility as a department leading one of the fastest growing economic sectors (ICT) to contribute in creating better living conditions for all.

### **SITA: A Leader In ICT Transformation**

The State Information Technology Agency (SITA) is the leading Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Agency of the state. It is one of the 11 entities that constitutes the DCDT portfolio of public entities.

SITA's work has gained momentum, in re-asserting itself as the leading expert on ICT matters in government and in changing the realities of service delivery for our nation.

I have called upon SITA to re-establish itself as the leading expert on ICT matters in government, rather than just being an IT procurement shop. I am happy that the Agency has taken the call positively and is making its presence felt on the ground where it matters most. Improved public service delivery through the provision of ICTs that benefits our people, is befitting Mandela's legacy.

SITA's vision to leverage ICT and transform communities through access to ICTs, is the reason that we are here today.

Our investment and particularly the love for the youth and learners and schools is driven by our desire to create a digitally empowered society. We want to see a multitude of ICTenabled learners, harnessing ICTs for the development of interventions and other solutions that contribute to a better way of life.

This school is an inspiration to all of us. You worked to invest in your school; and today you have buildings and an ICT cyber lab. Your matriculant pass rate of 75.4% achieved last year, will surely just increase now. We are proud of you.

As learners you must use this Cyberlab well... work really hard and excel. IT gives students confidence, it gives them self-belief, it gives them something to grow into. This Cyberlab gives students tools to learn new ways of learning, show skills and to be able to compete with other countries, because other countries are way ahead of us. As we hand over the Cyberlab, we are giving keys to the future to you. The future is cyber.

We hope to produce from this school engineers, ICT advisors and leaders who will take this Department and SITA itself forward. There will be no better fulfilling return on investment than that. We came here to serve you with this contribution of a Cyberlab and then you will come back and serve the nation, through working with us.

We also want to see this entire schooling community grow and develop: its learners, teachers, school management and SGB's – so that this Cyberlab's contribution becomes the vehicle and tool that you all use to improve your community and realise your dreams.

You must all know that SITA is doing this Cyberlab rollout this year – with five (5) other high schools, across the country: North West, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and KZN.

I am told by SITA that they will be coming back here in the future and challenging these five schools to have an in-house competition – to see which schooling community used their Cyberlab to its best advantage.

And right now, in this marathon race for development – Ntafufu Senior Secondary School, situated in a rural Eastern Cape, situated between small towns of Lusikisiki and Port Saint Johns, has gotten a head start in 2023, as the second school to receive a Cyberlab this year.

You have an incredible foundation and baseline. We hope that this school, through the support it receives from partners like SITA, will produce many astute business leaders with much needed entrepreneurial skills who will contribute to a better life for yourselves, your communities, and our nation.

## **SA Connect and SITA's National Broadband Project**

Our South Africa Connect national broadband policy of 2013 is envisioned to achieve universal internet access by 2030. Our goal is to provide a meaningful future for our youth that goes beyond employability, as simply getting children through matric is not enough. This is what your school has done through the use of this Cyberlab, is a good start.

We applaud the principal, the school governing body, the management team, teachers, and learners for creating avenues for our youth to develop the skills they need to survive, and thrive, in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Learners who are comfortable using everyday technology and devices to access content and to self-learn are far better positioned to build a life outside of school.

Embedding information and communication technology (ICT) into our schools and curriculums is critical for any form of economic participation post-secondary school. Young people who do not have digital skills and who cannot access the internet, will not be equipped to participate in the digital economy. This is but one dimension to the South Africa Connect policy objectives.

It is also important to consider teachers' – especially teachers in rural schools - adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for teaching and learning in schools. Research using the Technology Readiness Index (TRI), found that the vast majority of the teachers surveyed were optimistic about the use of ICTs for teaching and learning, despite the existing financial, technical and digital skills challenges at their schools.

The smart use of the internet improves the quality of education in so many ways. It opens doors to a wealth of information, knowledge and educational resources, increasing opportunities for different approaches to learning in, and beyond, the classroom.

In the Department's 2023/24 budget speech, we announced interventions to ensure increased access through SA Connect to the value of R1,3 billion – and SITA plays a role. To complement the SA Connect programme, I added that SITA will launch a National Broadband Project to the value of around R6 billion. These are all aimed at making the lives of our people better.

The Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (PC4IR) has identified and recommended to us specific areas of focus as a country to ensure that we are not left behind as the world takes advantage of advances in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. We must become more advanced when it comes to artificial intelligence, robotics, etc. The digital economy is the economy of the future. It is young people's economy. Young men and women must lead the way.

## **Conclusion**

We are driven by a vision announced by the President, HE Cyril Ramaphosa in his 2023 State of the Nation Address - the *vision of an affordable, high-speed internet access for all*. We are working tirelessly on policy and regulatory frameworks that will drive down the cost to communicate and leapfrog our country to be on par with the best economies in the world.

I therefore call upon the community of Lusikisiki and Port St. Johns Local Municipality, to take good care of this investment and protect it from vandals and thieves. It is an investment into the future of all our children of Lusikisiki.

I thank you!

**-End-**