



MINISTRY
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Private Bag X860, PRETORIA, 0001 – iParioli Office Park, 1166 Park, Hatfield, PRETORIA
Tel: +27 12 427 8000 – Fax +27 12 427 8016 – Email: Media@DCDT.gov.za URL: www.dcdt.gov.za

**ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES,
HON. KHUMBUDZO NTSHAVHENI, AT THE ILITHA TELECOMMUNICATIONS LAUNCH**

Date: 02 November 2022,

Venue: NU 10 Community Hall - Mdantsane, Eastern Cape

Bishop Mbetse (Retired) of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa;

MEC of Finance and Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism:
Cde Mlungisi Mvoko;

Deputy Speaker of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature, Cde Mlibo Qobishiyane;

The Chief Executive Officer of Ilitha Telecommunications: Mr Vuyani Jarana;

President, Black Information Technology Forum (BITF): Mr. Motse Mfuleni;

Councillor Jaxa of Ward 48, of the Buffalo City Metro;

Representatives of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA); and
the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC),

The Executives of Sentech and BBI (I need to disclose that when I received the invitation, I extended it extensively – in my language I would say “ndo ramba la tswuka”).

Molweni,

During the 2022 of State of Nation debate, I reported that Department of Communications and Digital Technologies will commence the roll-out the 2nd phase of SA Connect with an expand scope to connect communities.

In the next few years, when we are completing the connection of the outstanding 44 600 government sites (includes 18 036 schools, 3 873 health facilities, 949 libraries and Thusong Centres and 8241 tribal authority sites - through other people's money); we will in the same period rollout more than 33 000 Community Wi-fi and broadband to households.

I further explained during the SONA debate that to support economic transformation, the Department has revised the plan to include SMMEs and other network service providers such as ISPs, WASP, MVNOs and SMMEs who are in the network industry in the roll-out of both community wi-fi hotspots and the broadband to households.

So, with 5000 home passes and a target of 45, 000 homes connected in Mdantsane, Buffalo City and another 60, 000 homes in Kwa-Mashu (KZN) - my target towards ensuring that every South African home has access to the internet by ensuring access to broadband connectivity is on course.

I will therefore challenge the Executives of SENTECH and BBI who are present here to ensure that the model of executing SA Connect with partners entities such as ILitha Telecommunications and others not only to avoid duplication of network deployments but to improve the pace of connecting all South Africans. I am not saying this because I am addressing this occasion to switch-on ILitha Network in this township of Mdantsane (Buffalo City Metro) the second largest township in the Eastern Cape, but I have always maintained that for South Africa to meaningfully participate in the Digital economy, the government of South Africa and its entities must be the first procurers and consumers of technologies and technological services developed in South Africa.

So, to the DBSA, we look forward to the partnership in your funding of black-owned, women-owned, and youth-owned ISPs and MVNOs to roll-out connectivity in South Africa on the back of the SA Connect project. This will not only de-risk the businesses such as Ilitha Telecommunications, but it will help fastrack the pace of connecting South Africa.

Programme Director,

I would like to make a commitment that within the next 6 months, through SENTECH/ BBI, we are going to finalize partnerships with Ilitha Telecommunications and similar entities as part of the SA Connect roll-out model. This will not only benefit Ilitha Telecommunications and other ISPs/ WASPs, but it will bring to reality the commitment to have all of South Africans connected by 2025.

Connecting all South African households including those in rural areas at the same broadband speed and capacity can only happen when we invest in local companies. This is because it takes a Vuyani Jarana or his contemporaries who come from Mdantsane to know that Mdantsane is a viable investment if business people are willing to take on the opportunity.

Distinguished guests,

We have also made a commitment to rollout 4G and 5G to rural areas and townships. I have also indicated that the roll-out of 4G and 5G to rural areas and townships is not a government project, but it must be industry-driven. Therefore, South Africa cannot afford a telecommunications sector that is closed. Even when there are attempts to consolidate the sector, it is the national interest for government to continuously open the telecommunications sector. For this to work, the government must deliberately enable the entrants of new players, in particular those that are owned by South Africans, by willingly investing in them through establishment of partnerships. It must be an investment to those who are willing to bring ICT developments to places such as Mdantsane, eNgcobo, Flagstaff and others because they know the area enough not to only see the risks, but they recognise the massive potential and opportunities that lie in our rural areas.

Programme Director,

Our firm commitment to rollout 4G and 5G to rural areas is not only about the prestige of the network but it is about the services can be imbedded on top of those networks.

It is also about the ability of the women of the Eastern Cape who can be able to package the red soil and the white soil, which are amongst the best skin treatment, to sell overseas through E-commerce from the comfort of their homes. It is also because a young person who is writing their matric today but for first time in the history of South Africa is writing Biology in IsiXhosa in will also have an opportunity to package 'Umhlonwane' and sell online to an international market.

Programme Director,

The DBSA, IDC, and other funding institutions, and we will throw in the Postbank too (because we are on course to make the Postbank a state bank) have committed to fund companies like Ilitha to deploy fibre or rollout connectivity. However, we have heard about the challenges of the infrastructure deployment and approvals. We also have a responsibility as government to lighten the infrastructure deployment costs. There was no need for Ilitha Telecommunications to deploy new poles with this roll-out when there are government (municipal -owned) electricity poles.

As a Minister responsible for the Rapid Deployment policy, and we are going to ensure policy amendments to expand access to wayleaves to include electricity poles and other already deployed and relevant government infrastructure. This will reduce the cost of investing in township connectivity infrastructure in turn making connectivity affordable. The amendments to the rapid deployment policy will come in the next three months so that when you rollout Mdantsane and to the next wards you no longer have to be faced with the high costs of deployment.

I must say the package ranging from R3-a-day to R5-a-day, it is a good as free. However, we must make sure that as government we continue to set policy instruments that will enable companies such as Ilitha Telecommunications to continue to reduce the costs of data in this country so we could reach universal access to services.

We have indicated that our commitment to digital migration and universal connectivity for South Africa is not for the beauty of it. It is because it is key to access to basic services. The fact that we are switching on Ilitha network, it means a pregnant woman in Mdantsane who goes to labour in the evening will no longer battle to find the next ambulance services to take her to Cecelia Makiwane Hospital because they will be having data to access the next available ambulance services.

I am honoured to switch on the Ilitha network, and grateful that I am also reaching my targets of connecting all South Africans through you. I look forward to partnering with you on the SA Connect as we migrate this country digitally.

I thank you!!!

Enquiries: Tlangelani Manganyi 060 886-4670

Media@DCDT.gov.za

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