TRANSPORT_ PRIVATE-GENERAL

1997

Taxi wars expo



THE TAXI WARS KNOW NO PITY . . . Yet another taxi burns in a South African street. Despite various campaigns waged against taxi hitmen, passengers and drivers alike still lose their lives – but recent police arrests are helping to thwart this continuing plague.

Alleged hitmen nabbed

CP 6/1/97 (332)

By DAN DHLAMINI

THE ARREST in Gauteng this week of three alleged North West taxi hitmen, has thwarted yet another planned attack by the trio, police said.

The apprehension of the three men, who police claim are linked to the faction fight between the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta) and the Letlhabile Taxi Organisation (LTO), follow the shooting of LTO member J Sobopha (28) on December 28 on the road between Mothutlung and Brits.

North West police spokesperson Captain Belinda Kleynhans told City Press yesterday the men allegedly fired five shots with an AK-47 rifle at Sobopha, who later died at Ga-Rankuwa hospital.

She said the North West taxi violence unit of the South African Police Services (SAPS) followed clues and arrested the three suspected killers at Hillbrow on December 31.

Kleynhans said police investigations led to Soshanguve, where they confiscated two AK-47 rifles, two full AK-47 magazines, a 9 mm pistol and a silver coloured Mazda 323 sedan, which the men allegedly used as a getaway car during the shooting.

"A stolen Cressida 2.8 which was to be used in another planned attack was also recovered, effectively thwarting the next move by members of their syndicate. Another suspect was arrested earlier in Jericho," said Captain Kleynhans.

Kleynhans said the arrest of the three suspects could be viewed as a breakthrough for the North West taxi violence unit of the SAPS, who are geared up to eradicate the roots of violence which has again reared its ugly head in the taxi industry in the province.

The men are expected to appear in court this Tuesday.

☐ Meanwhile, **VUKILE POKWANA** reports that award-winning City Press lensman, Tladi Khuele, was severly assaulted by a band of taxi drivers in the line of duty.

Khuele joins the ranks of photojournalists who are casualties of a growing senseless violence.

On assignment to photograph city-centre taxis at the corner of Noord and King George streets where commuters board taxis to Meadowlands, Khuele's attention was distracted when he saw a group of people running towards him.

"I took out my camera and began taking pictures. After several shots I found out that taxi drivers were hitting a boy for allegedly stealing," he said.

The boy, whose face was covered in blood, and whose hands were bound with strings, was being hit at random by the taxi drivers.

"I continued to take pictures, but while I was concentrating a man hit my back with a sjambok," he said.

The man continued whipping Khuele and shouting "why are you taking pictures?" While Khuele was attacked, another man stole his camera.

Khuele managed to escape and went straight to the Hillbrow police station to lay a charge of assault and robbery.

"I asked the police to rush to the scene and recover my camera. I was greeted with the usual story of a shortage of cars and police being understaffed. I waited for 45 minutes for police to take me to the scene," Khuele said.

"Finally we went to the scene with a police escort, but the men had already left," he said.

"No one has a right to violate the freedom of the press. It is equally important for anyone before taking action to establish the necessary information to help that person understand the situation," Khuele said.

Police set on taxi wa training c

By PHALANE MOTALE

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Police set to pounce on taxi war hit-squad training camps (332)

CP 5/1/97

By PHALANE MOTALE

SECRET training camps for hit squads allegedly deployed in the taxi wars countrywide have been uncovered by a special police team aided by National Intelligence members, it is revealed in confidential documents in the possession of City Press.

City Press understands that police are expected to pounce on the camps and that several arrests – including that of prominent people in the taxi industry – are imminent.

☐ A spokesman for the SAPS Serious Violent Crime Unit yesterday confirmed these facts.

☐ He also confirmed that one of the suspects had R3,4 million in his banking account.

☐ Seven members of the Lehlabile Taxi Organisation (LTO) and the Southern African Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta) – whose names are known to City Press – are allegedly responsible for training and deploying hitmen recruited from neighbouring Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

The LTO and Saldta are alleged to have been largely involved in the bloody taxi wars in Gauteng, Northern Province and the North West – in which 200 drivers and passengers were shot dead in the last year alone.

☐ Saldta chairman TP Kubheka and Jacob Ledwaba of the LTO denied the police claims that their organisations were training and paying hitmen.

"Why don't they make the names public so that the nation can see who these people are?" said Ledwaba.

"There are hundreds of askaris who were retrenched by the former government and the police keep on shifting the blame."

☐ It is alleged in the documents that former members of Apla, MK and the former Ciskei security forces and askaris have been employed as hitmen.

Two former Apla members and several former Frelimo soldiers are alleged to act as bodyguards and hitmen for one taxi group – especially in the Eastern Cape.

☐ The police spokesman said: "As prominent individuals are directly involved in the conflict between the taxi associations by means of Mafia-type activities, it was imperative that the grip of these individuals on the taxi industry should be broken.

"This has required strategic infiltration, surveillance, electronic interceptions and monitoring of bank accounts.

"We have also compiled detailed profiles of persons who are suspected to have engineered taxi violence."

☐ According to the documents hitmen are paid between R5 000 and R80 000 for a hit.

Details are given in the documents as to the sources of the funds for the payments.

☐ The police spokesman confirmed police investigations had revealed that policemen were also involved in the taxi wars.

Some had hired out their vehicles to hit squads or had accepted bribes to not investigate the crimes properly.

He cited the case of a woman police inspector of Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, who allegedly informed taxi hit-squad members about police investigations into taxi violence.

She apparently became involved in the taxi industry after the death of her boyfriend, an alleged Saldta hitman.

"She knows most of the hitmen – but does not report them because of threats to her life and the taxis she inherited from her boyfriend," said the police spokesman.

However, only one policeman has been charged in connection with taxi violence.

The police spokesman said investigations had not found that police corruption in the taxi wars, although a matter of concern, played a major part in the violence.

He said that the hitmen were professional killers because of their military training and the sophisticated weapons in their possession.

"Hit squads in the Northern Province evade the law by crossing the border to Zimbabwe. This hampers investigations and the identification of culprits."

The police also had to deal with people at grassroots level who acted in revenge – but these crimes were not part of the hit-squad activities which took place for profit, he said.

Mafia-type methods were used to exert power in an effort to control the taxi industry, he said.

These methods included attempts to force rival taxi associations from taxi ranks, threats of expulsion or damage to taxis if monthly subscrip-

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CP 6/1/97 (332)

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Police set to pounce on taxi war hit-squad training camps

(332) CP 6/1/97

FROM PAGE 1

tions were not paid, threats of attack if affiliated taxi organisations tried to resign from the mother body, and demands for exorbitant amounts of money for the maintenance of squad vehicles, condolence fees and legal costs.

The police spokesman said one of the taxi organisations had planned to destabilise the SAPS Priority Crime Unit by physically attacking its members.

☐ More than 250 people, including children, have died in taxi violence countrywide during the past year and hundreds have been wounded.

The taxi wars are among the major contributors to the high level of violence in South Africa – and attempts to eliminate rival organisations from the lucrative routes are on the increase.

The worst affected are the helpless commuters who get caught in the cross-fire on their way to or from work. This affects their work attendance and earning power.

The taxi violence also has a negative impact on local and international businesspeople – affecting investments, tourism and the security situation in South Africa.

"The failure of various peace initiatives can largely be attributed to the fact that taxi organisations have no control over their members," the senior police officer said.

☐ Speaking for the LTO, Ledwaba said: "We note with concern that members of our affiliates in Brits say 60 percent of Lehlabile Taxi Association members are policemen and are involved in the planning and aiding of the ongoing taxi feuds in the area."

He said Lehlabile, near Brits in the North West, was an area designed by the previous government for accommodation of the former askaris, who were disbanded under a veil of secrecy.

"We still demand to know what has happened to members of this terror unit. Are they redeployed in other police units?" he asked.

He said his organisation strived for peace in the taxi industry and would under no circumstances be part of the ongoing slaying of innocent people.

☐ Kubheka of Saldta said the police were doing nothing to combat taxi violence, but were instead pointing fingers at the taxi organisations.

"The main duty of the police is to prevent crime and protect citizens and property, but nothing is being done in this regard.

"After unsuccessfully asking for police protection we eventually employed a private security company to patrol certain ranks at a very high cost," Kubheka said.

The Goldstone Commission of Inquiry's Fifth Interim Report on Taxi Violence said the main causes of the ongoing conflict were:

☐ The failure of apartheid laws to make provision for effective transport facilities to the masses of people for whom it is a daily necessity;

☐ Commercial factors such as the lack of business skills among many operators, unfair competition from state-subsidised bus and train services and the effect of inflation on running expenses;

☐ The absence of transparency in the system of issuing permits, lack of communication with taxi operators and lack of planning;

☐ A lack of law enforcement had brought the legal system and the efficiency of the whole system of control into disrepute;

☐ Inadequate facilities; and

☐ Intolerance and power struggles.

Meanwhile, members of the South African Police Service's Taxi Violence Unit this week arrested four suspects in Hillbrow in connection with taxi violence in the Pretoria area.

Pretoria Taxi Violence Unit spokesman Captain Mercia Fryer said members of her unit had raided premises in Soshanguve and confiscated two AK-47 rifles, one 9mm pistol and a stolen minibus taxi on Monday evening.

"On further investigation, four suspects were arrested in Hillbrow and linked to several attacks in the Pretoria area.

"It was, however, not yet clear to which taxi organisation the suspects belonged," she said.

SAPS on trail of taxi hit squads

BD 9/1/97 (332)

Bonile Ngqiyaza

OPERATIONS to identify hit squads working within the taxi industry were to be launched soon with a view to gathering evidence for prosecution, the SA Police Service's detective branch said yesterday.

Detective service spokesman Snr Supt Sharon Schutte could not confirm the existence of secret training camps yesterday, but said a certain location linked to hit squad activity had been identified.

She declined to disclose the location, however, saying the intelligence report still needed verification.

Schutte would also not divulge details of the four operations and their time frames, saying the information was sensitive and disclosure would hamper investigations.

At the weekend, City Press newspaper reported police were poised to pounce on several secret training camps for hit squads allegedly deployed in the taxi wars, and that several arrests, including that of prominent people, were imminent.

The hit squad allegations prompted a strong response from long distance taxi organisations, with the Lehlabile Taxi Organisation (LTO), which was among those named, rejecting suggestions it was involved in the training and use of hit squads.

LTO spokesman Jacob Ledwaba labelled the report "provocative" and said it was calculated to scare millions of commuters off using LTO minibus taxis.

He said while the involvement of Azanian People's Liberation Army, Umkhonto we Sizwe and the former Transkei security forces in the violence would remain "mere speculation", threats had been made by all three to launch a campaign of crime.

Ledwaba blamed the African National Congress and Pan African Congress for neglecting these former combatants.

Schutte yesterday described the arrest on December 31 of three North West men allegedly involved in taxi killings as a "breakthrough" for the Serious Violent Crimes Unit, and expressed optimism that the operation would lead to more arrests.

She said a total of 838 cases of taxi-related incidents were reported between January 1 to December 31 last year.

The majority (386) were in the Eastern Cape, with the Western Cape second (216). Gauteng had 97 reported incidents.

Schutte said 311 people were killed and 630 injured in the same period with police arresting 383, including suspected hitmen.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for Eastern Cape provincial commissioner Colin Atwell said the Border Alliance Taxi Association and Uncedo Service Taxi Association were linked to hit squads. However, police in the province had no knowledge of the existence of training camps.

Atwell said 58 taxi violence-related arrests were made in the past three months and a large arsenal of weapons captured.

Sale of Sun Air cleared for take-off

CT (FOR) 10/11/97

THABO LESHILO

Johannesburg — Real Africa Durolink, BoE NatWest/Moseneke & Partners and Investec have been shortlisted from 18 bidders to advise the government on the sale of Sun Air, the government-owned domestic airline, Wandile Zote, a spokesman for the public enterprises ministry, said yesterday.

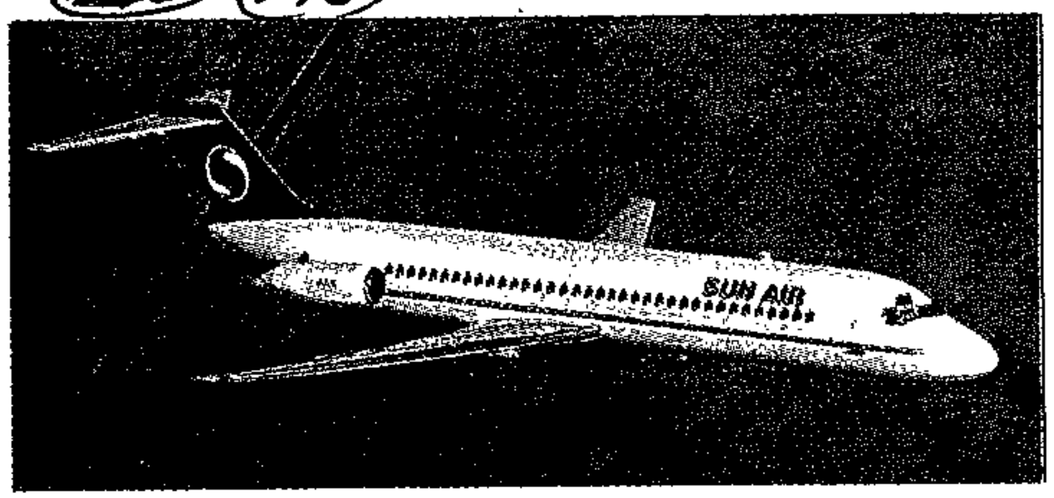
Sun Air, estimated to be worth about R200 million, has been scheduled to be sold by March, becoming the first state-owned company to be privatised. It was formerly owned by the defunct Bophuthatswana government and employs 320 people.

Zote said that Stella Sigcau, the public enterprises minister, and Mac Maharaj, the transport minister, would choose the successful bidder from among the three competitors this afternoon.

Peter Schlebusch, an associate director of Real Africa Durolink, said the bidders would make individual presentations to the evaluation committee on the privatisation of Sun Air this morning before the contract was awarded.

The evaluation committee is made up of representatives of government, labour and the company.

Zote said one of the responsibilities of the party that won the contract would be to determine the true value of the state-owned domestic airline.



SOARING AHEAD *Sun Air, scheduled to be sold by March, looks certain to be the first state-owned company to be privatised*

John de Villiers, an executive director of BoE NatWest, said its bid was a joint venture with Moseneke & Partners, the law firm that also specialises in privatisation. He said a team of aerospace experts was due to arrive last night to help with today's presentation.

The ministry would not reveal the names of the potential buyers for Sun Air. However, Zote said the buyer would have to a local majority shareholder. There is a 25 percent cap on foreign ownership.

Sigcau said last year that Sun Air and Aventura, the cash-strapped holiday resort company, should be in private hands by this March. It is not yet certain when an adviser on the sale of Aventura will be appointed.

This week, the minister repeated her commitment to speeding up the process of restructuring or privatising state-owned enterprises. Sigcau said her department would soon come up with a clear programme for the restructuring and/or privatisation of state assets.

She said the squabble between Eskom and the National Union of Mineworkers along with the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa was not expected to delay the restructuring process.

The two unions have withdrawn from Eskom's restructuring and transformation committee, accusing the management of the electricity utility of deciding its future without the unions' involvement.

Sigcau expressed the hope that the parties would resolve their differences soon and resume their partnership with the government on restructuring Eskom, which has assets of about R50 billion.

Bright second half for the JSE

NANCY MYBURGH

FINANCIAL SERVICES EDITOR

Johannesburg — The JSE is in for a tough first half this year, but share prices should start looking up in the second half, Adrian Allardice, Old Mutual Unit Trusts' senior portfolio manager, said yesterday.

Speaking at Old Mutual Unit Trusts' quarterly presentation, Allardice said: "While the first half of this year might be difficult for the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, prospects could improve considerably in the second six months. In fact, 1997 may yet turn out to be a good year for the stock market."

Company earnings faced an expected slowdown in economic growth as well as a heavy burden of high interest costs, which would probably weigh down share prices over the next six months, Allardice said. But expectations of better growth in 1998 should help lift shares later in the year.

Similarly, foreign investors were only likely to show greater interest in South African stocks in the second half of the year. "Offshore investors traditionally buy on a bullish trend in earnings and the currency," Allardice said, adding that the rand could remain volatile this year depending on how much progress the government made in the relaxation of exchange controls.

A correction in New York share prices might also rebound on local stocks should good US growth prompt the US central bank to raise interest rates. Although Wall Street had had an on-again, off-again correlation with the local shares prices, Allardice forecast trends in the US market to be "a major factor for the JSE".

One plus for the local share market was likely to be greater fiscal discipline by the government this year, helping to pave the way for an interest-rate cut. "We think the Budget will meet its target of 4 percent deficit (for 1997)," Allardice said, but added that increased revenue, rather than government spending cuts, was largely responsible for his outlook.

But an improvement in fiscal policy should take some of the burden for reining in inflation and supporting the rand off the Reserve Bank this year, he said. "If at the same time there is an improvement in the current account, this will allow a cut in interest rates."

Two more possible boons for shares this year were some progress by the government on privatisation, and a second year of good growth in agriculture, which looked likely given the heavy rains in past months.

Allardice forecast corporate earnings growth of about 25 percent over the next 18 months.

Regarding the company's unit trusts, Old Mutual's Gold Fund, one of just two gold funds in the country, slipped behind its competitor, Standard Bank, in the year ending December 31 1996 after beating Standard in the year ending September 30.

Old Mutual's Gold Fund recorded a return of 26 percent for the period and, although that handily beat the 15 percent performance of the JSE's all gold index, Standard on Wednesday reported a 31 percent return for its gold fund.

But Old Mutual described its industrial fund as the best performer in its sector for the period, with an 8,2 percent return. Its gilt fund also nearly doubled the performance of the all bond index, with its 12,9 percent return, against the index's 6,74 percent.

However, "with growth on the JSE generally subdued, unit trusts with offshore holdings were among the best performers", the company said. Its Global Equity Fund was up 19,8 percent. The fund has foreign asset holdings, achieved through asset swaps with international partners, of 8,94 percent.

Of its remaining funds, the Top Companies Fund showed a 13,3 percent return; the Sentinel Fund recorded 8,8 percent; the Growth Fund was up 9 percent; the Investors' Fund 8,9 percent; and the Mining Fund registered a return of 21,3 percent.

Bus operators speak out after Translux crash

'Taxis more dangerous'

ARG 11/1/97 (332)

PIETER MALAN
STAFF REPORTER

A passenger in a mini-bus taxi is nine times more likely to die or get injured than one travelling by bus, statistics have shown.

The luxury bus industry came under fire after the Laingsburg crash on December 28 in which five people were killed and 43 injured.

But luxury bus operators have hit back, saying the industry is far better regulated and safer than taxis.

Professor Jackie Walters, chief executive officer of the SA Bus Operators Association (Saboa) said poor law enforcement and bad road conditions were to blame for many accidents on South African roads.

Almost 90 percent of all commuter and long distance bus operators in the country are members of Saboa.

167 people died in minibus accidents as opposed to 43 in bus crashes

Professor Walters said the preliminary investigation into the Translux crash at Laingsburg showed that a brand new imported tyre on the front wheel had burst. This was something which was unavoidable, he said.

The tachograph, an instrument recording vehicle speed and driving patterns, had shown that the driver was driving within the speed limit.

Professor Walters said there was growing concern among bus operators about the deterioration of the country's roads.

At least two major bus crashes in recent years have been blamed on poor road conditions.

He said while bus companies were doing their best to lower the risks, the lack of law enforcement and the poor condition of roads were of concern.

This was something the association would discuss at future workshops and take up with the authorities, said Professor Walters.

Translux general manager Chris Brand said the lack of legislation and poor law enforcement had forced his company to implement their own standards and control measures. These included fitting vehicles with tachographs, regularly evaluating drivers, setting speed restrictions lower than the legal limit, establishing driver hours and sending drivers for regular medical check-ups.

Greyhound spokesperson Claudia Bidoli confirmed they have had to employ similar measures.

These self regulatory measures seemed to have paid off as statistics show bus transport to be much safer than rival taxis.

Central Statistical Services figures for the first 10 months of last year show that 9 337 people were killed or injured in minibus accidents, while 1 021 bus passengers died or were injured.

Figures for 1995 also show that nine times more minibus passengers were killed and injured than those travelling by bus. According to the Directorate of Traffic Safety, 167 people died during the past holiday season in minibus accidents, as opposed to 43 fatally injured bus passengers.

This includes the five people killed in the Laingsburg bus crash.

Statistics also show that 353 people killed on our roads were pedestrians, while 317 were travelling in cars.

BUS AND MINIBUS COLLISIONS



Wrong driver named after Laingsburg bus accident

STAFF REPORTER

In a report on the Laingsburg bus accident last week, Saturday Argus incorrectly named the driver of the bus as Luigi Angelo Mattei from Brackenfell.

Mr Mattei, the co-driver, was not behind the wheel at the time and died in the accident.

Laingsburg police confirmed this week that culpable homocide charges were being investigated against Translux driver Andries Matheatse.

Saturday Argus regrets the error.

Crackdown on bloody taxi wars

(332) CP 12/1/97

By PHALANE MOTALE and SAPA

A CRACK team of detectives is being deployed in the Eastern Cape in a clampdown on the continuing taxi violence, a government delegation led by President Nelson Mandela announced this week.

With more than 480 taxi organisations in the country and with three taxi associations allegedly involved in the taxi wars failing to resolve their disputes and denying any involvement in the violence, the industry is riddled with problems.

City Press reported last week that a special team of detectives aided by National Intelligence members had revealed the existence of secret training camps for hit squads allegedly deployed in the taxi wars countrywide.

Two former Apla members and several former Frelimo soldiers were alleged to act as bodyguards and hitmen for one taxi group – especially in the Eastern Cape.

☐ In an attempt to bring peace to the troubled Eastern Cape taxi industry, Mandela and Transport Minister Mac Maharaj this week met with Eastern Cape MEC for Safety and Security Dennis Neer and members of the Eastern Cape Taxi Council (ECTC).

It was announced that a team of top detectives would investigate taxi violence in the region.

The meeting was convened after the ECTC complained that they had been trying in vain to get the provincial government's support in ending taxi violence.

The ECTC welcomed the president's intervention and asked that the team of investigators immediately probe the "hand played by a dark force" and bring stability to the area.

With the February deadline for taxi registration drawing near, Mandela urged taxi operators to comply with the law to ease problems related to the industry.

Eastern Cape Safety and Security spokesman Luphumo Kebeni said the team of detectives would investigate allegations of third force involvement in taxi disputes.

Kebeni said this did not mean the province could not cope with the problem, but it welcomed outside expertise.

ECTC spokesman Howard Xabana said the involvement of a "dark force sowing confusion" in the taxi industry needed to be investigated.

"We suspect that people have been planted to sow confusion."

Xabana said the ECTC believed frustrated agents, perhaps from former military movements that had resisted apartheid, were seeking employment as assassins within the taxi industry.

"Our people are not violent monsters. It is people beyond our control who are fostering this violence."

Xabana added that some taxi operators, especially in northern Transkei, had alleged that men from KwaZulu-Natal were fuelling the taxi wars.

☐ At least 29 Eastern Cape police officers were being investigated for alleged involvement in taxi violence in the Eastern Cape, said provincial police liaison officer Captain Colin Atwell.

Atwell said no officers were being investigated for owning taxis, although this was against a directive issued by National Commissioner George Fivaz.

☐ City Press reported last week that police investigations had revealed the involvement of policemen in the taxi wars.

☐ Meanwhile, Umtata area commissioner Trevor Hayes this week denied that he had received a list from the ECTC of names of police officers allegedly involved in the taxi industry.

At a meeting at his Qunu home on Wednesday, Mandela asked the ECTC delegation to supply him with the names.

ECTC member Mcebisi Filtane said a list had already been given to Hayes' office.

Hayes on Thursday said police would apply for an order in terms of Section 210 of the Criminal Procedure Act to compel Filtane to supply such a list should he fail to hand one over.

Task team to make taxi violence priority crime

(332) BD 14/11/97

PRETORIA — The establishment of a national task team to deal with taxi violence as a priority crime was under way, President Nelson Mandela's office said.

While on holiday at his Qunu home in the Transkei, Mandela last Tuesday met representatives of Eastern Cape taxi organisations and discussed with them the possibility of establishing a task team on taxi violence.

Presidential spokesman Parks Mankahlana said yesterday that the establishment of the task team was being overseen by the safety and security, justice and transport ministries.

"The team will consist of hand-picked detectives to be assisted by a legal team attached to the justice department," Mankahlana said.

He said the national team would have provincial components.

The safety and security ministry should be able to give an update on the actions of the task team before the end of the week.

□ The chairman of a Pretoria taxi association was shot dead in his home on Sunday by 10 men who police suspect are members of a hit squad hired by a rival taxi body.

Police spokesman Capt Morne van Wyk said yesterday that the men, armed with AK-47 rifles, burst into the home of Diepsloot Taxi Association chairman Nataniel Ntuli at about 1am and opened fire.

He died on the scene. No arrests have been made. — Sapa.

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Transport officials vow to curb taxi anarchy

ARG 15/1/97 (332)

ANDREA BOTHA
STAFF REPORTER

National and provincial transport departments outlined their 1997 strategies at a public meeting in Cape Town.

Provincial Transport Minister Leonard Ramatlakana and Director-General of Transport Ketso Gordhan addressed traffic officials, councillors and other role-players in the transport industry at the Civic Centre yesterday.

Mr Ramatlakana said it would be a challenging year for provincial government as it continued formalising and regulating the taxi industry.

Mr Gordhan said the Department of Transport had two main goals this year: to promote traffic safety and reduce the Government's role in public transport, including the taxi industry.

He said new traffic legislation would be proposed this year. The department was studying the privatisation of public transport systems like municipal bus operations and the railways.

Mr Gordhan emphasised that this would encourage greater competition among public transport services.

He also stressed the importance of regulating the taxi industry and registering and legalising taxis.

(332)

Signs of hope for weary taxi industry

ARG 15/1/97

ARGUS CORRESPONDENTS

Durban – The long-awaited taxi registration process in KwaZulu Natal is due to be wrapped up by the end of the month – a move predicted to quell rumours of war in the industry.

And President Mandela has offered another sign of hope for battle-weary taxi operators and frightened passengers with his announcement of a national task team to deal with taxi violence.

He said the establishment of the team – to deal with what has now been categorised a priority crime – was already under way.

Authorities are confident the weekend killing of a taxi bodyguards and two others in an ambush on the road between Greytown and Kranskop will have no major repercussions.

But some taxi operators have been armed to the teeth since the ambush killed Gary Taylor, whose company protected the Durban and District Taxi Association.

Mr Taylor's business partner, Bradford Wood, said there was much talk that taxi mafia families were involved in the killing.

"All our men are armed and ready. There is tension caused by many rumours at this stage. We are on the alert," said Mr Wood.

Police have arrested one man in connection with the killings.

KwaZulu Natal taxi registrar George Mahlalela said of the latest killings: "We are trying to find out what happened. People don't want to talk. Police have made an arrest, and it's in their hands."

He said the latest incident was not likely to spark major violence, adding there had not been open conflict since July. Further violence could probably be averted by the finalisation of taxi registration which should end fiercely contested routes.

"I don't believe this is a start to violence again. When people have fought for a long time you will still have these isolated incidents," Mr Mahlalela said.

"We are wrapping up the registration process this month and we are going to succeed in containing taxi violence in this province."

An investigation into the taxi war is also due to be completed soon and is expected to be delivered to the provincial transport minister by the end of the month.

Meanwhile, reacting to fears that heavily armed security guards might be provocative in an already-simmering conflict, senior police superintendent Aaron Harry said guards were not a hindrance.

He said, however, they would not be called on to help the police.

As head of Reactive Policing in Durban, Superintendent Harry said the plethora of security firms had been cautioned to do no more than what they were hired for. He said they had been warned against vigilantes, especially after Mr Taylor's death.

"They are not to get involved in any type of policing activity, like searching people. We have the Visible Policing Unit and the Public Order Policing Unit."

Fellow policeman Willie Olivier, of the Serious and Violent Crimes Unit, said killings were more likely to occur on roads, now that ranks like Greyville were protected.

Mr Mandela's announcement signals the way for the formation of a crack squad. After a meeting with representatives of Eastern Cape taxi associations, Mr Mandela said the team would be overseen by the Ministry of Safety and Security.

Meter mercenaries ripping off unsuspecting customers

(332) Star 16/1/97

Government has proposed legislation covering the operation and standards of service from metered-taxi companies

By Rodney Victor

Taking a trip in one of Johannesburg's metered taxis could be an expensive business – if you catch the wrong taxi.

A ride from Rosebank to Sandton City costs about R16 with one of Johannesburg's more reputable taxi companies, but the same journey might cost as much as R25 if a different taxi company is chosen.

Similarly, a trip from Sandton City to Johannesburg International Airport could cost anything between R100 and R180 – depending on the taxi company used.

There are also many unlicensed taxis operating in Johannesburg, some of which do not even have meters. The drivers generally declare that their meters have "just been stolen", and they then negotiate a fare with their customers, which is usually at the higher end of the scale of fees.

Taxi charges vary from R3,20 a kilometre to R5,50 a kilometre, an investigation by The Star's Metro desk has revealed. Some taxis have meters that can charge different rates for different customers.

The driver might give a regular customer a favourable rate by pressing the meter's "Start" button once only, but he could also press it up to four times, which would result in the customer being charged a far higher rate.

> **"We don't want tourists to be charged double"**

Johannesburg's strategic executive for transportation, Karen de Beer, said she was concerned at the huge differences in the rates charged by taxi companies.

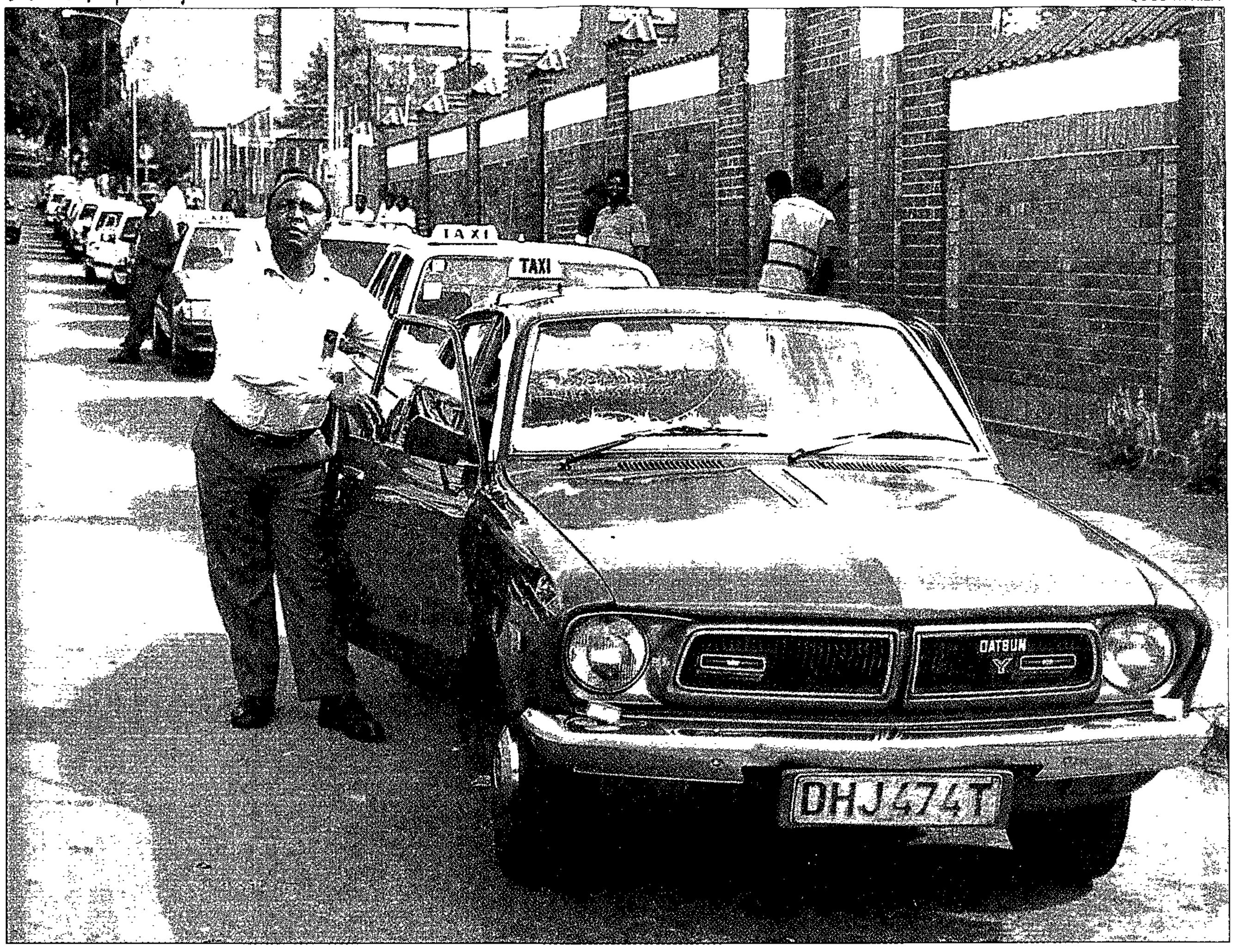
Metered taxis had been rather neglected in the past, but the Government had now proposed national legislation covering their operation and standards of service. A new Land Transport Bill was published in the Government Gazette in December, covering all modes of transport including metered taxis.

Ben Eybers, spokesman for the Minister of Transport, Mac Maharaj, said that the disparities in the rates charged by different taxi companies were a matter of concern to the Government also.

"Obviously we would prefer to have standard rates all around. Specially when there are tourists coming in, we don't want a situation where someone thinks: 'This is a tourist, let's double our charges'," Eybers said.

So if you need a taxi, it might be a good idea to phone around and get a few quotes, instead of just jumping into the first taxi you see. You might just get taken for a ride.

YAQOOB RYKILFF



Ticket to rip you off ... some of the taxis at the Yeoville rank could be taking passengers for a ride.

help the wheels go round

three or four in each province — administer ranks, control the competition and provide protection for their affiliate associations.

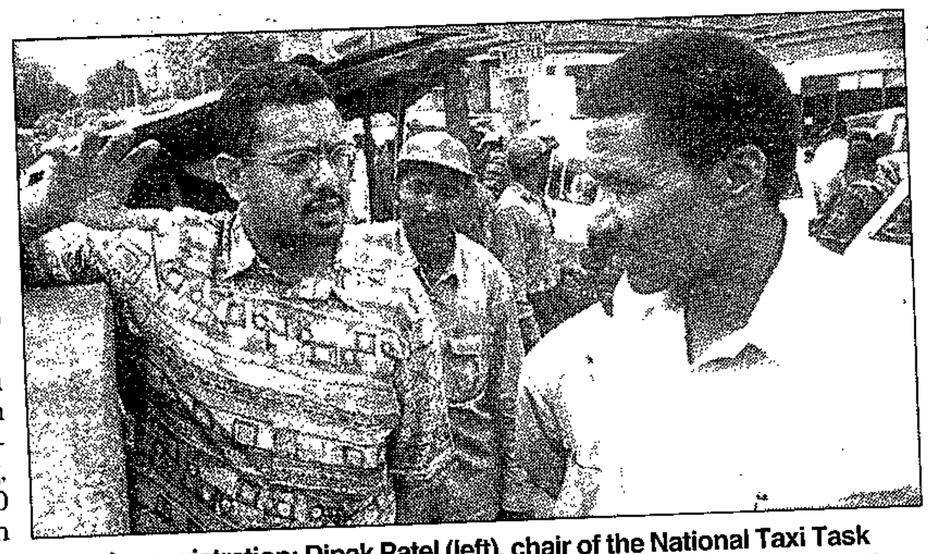
If the individual associations and operators register, it could take away a large part of their *raison d'être*. The head of one mother body reportedly has R3-million in his current account and pulls in a cool R60 000 a month from affiliates' fees..

It seems almost nothing can touch him. Charged with seven murders in Johannesburg, he had his case mysteriously transferred to Pietersburg, where he was released on R5 000 bail. Already one witness has been killed and another two are missing.

But for the lowlier members of associations, such as Nkosi, there is some sense in the government holding out the carrot of economic incentives to register. At least the security might be better, he thinks. Right now his association pays a private security company (the second one, after the first fled) R28 000 a month to patrol the rank with lethal-looking, but rather old-fashioned weapons.

The security guards walk the 20m of the safe territory on the rank with Nene and Nkosi. They shove their rifles into passengers' chests, pushing them away. No one — not even women with small children — is allowed to share this patch of pavement with the taxi bosses. There is not a police officer in sight.

Sizwe's kombi drivers don't dare take the N3 to KwaZulu-Natal alone. Three taxis go in convoy. But still, one has been hijacked in recent weeks, and another shot at.



Pumping registration: Dipak Patel (left), chair of the National Taxi Task Team, explains to Paulus Nene (right), chair of the Sizwe Taxi Association, why Sizwe should register. Duma Nkosi, vice-president of Sizwe, looks on

Traffic fines are another major overhead. Of Duma Nkosi's 10 taxis, only three have permits. He says he has paid more than R10 000 in traffic fines in the past few years.

But the demands from a dependent market on the peripheries of the city have made the risk worthwhile. And if bus services were inadequate from the townships there were none at all from the informal settlements. So the taxi business arose in response to these gaps.

Sometimes the response was more specific. Malofe Rapudile of the East Gauteng Taxi Association began his business in 1987 when the South African Railways workers went on a prolonged strike and their township compatriots boycotted the trains.

He ferried commuters between Germiston and Johannesburg. Since then, he says, he has paid "thousands and thousands in fines ... If you can't pay you get locked."

Stamping out the taxi industry was official government policy, a way of getting a market edge for their bus and rail services.

Rapudile is "very happy" that legalisation is part of the registration deal. Any taxi-owner who can prove he's been operating since before October 1994 will get a permit — part of a deal to keep out newcomers.

And on the East Rand, and in the Vaal association in Vereeniging, the taxi associations are talking real business: spare-parts co-operatives, takeaway franchises at the ranks and partnership-owned filling stations.

In Vereeniging the taxi offices smell of furniture polish. There are no bullet holes. Several associations and their members have already registered. The taxi rank is no litter-strewn, Gotham-city like jumble. Rows of taxis park under carport shade, and each destination is marked, reducing commuters' dependence on often bad-mannered "queue marshals" who bark orders to them in places like Soweto.

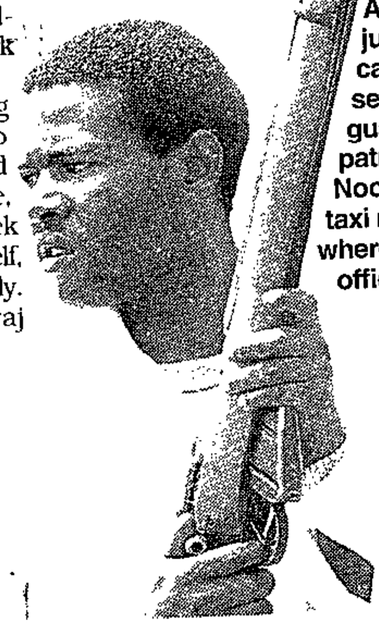
Here the associations are beginning to see a bigger future. Patel talks to them about the way apartheid planned its cities. Cities can change, he says. Now you usually run back empty. If we bring the city inside itself, you can use your taxis more efficiently.

Next time anyone asks Maharaj what he's doing about the taxi violence, he should take them to Vereeniging. Or to Germiston, where associations have not only registered but united into a forum. Its chair, Jabulani Mtshali, says: "The most important part of registration is that the individual will be formalised and then the violence will be less."

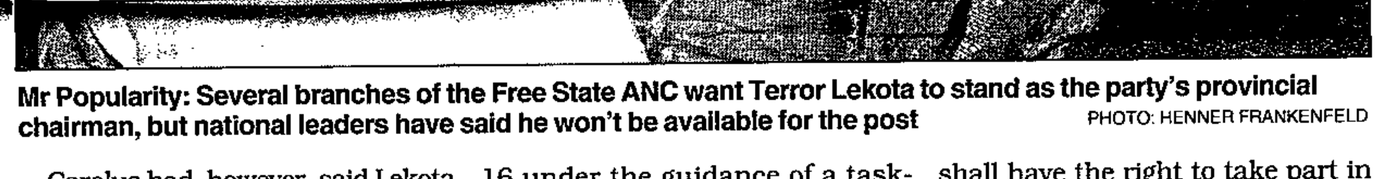
For Patel, it is classic political strategy. The dictum— although they don't put it this way in Pretoria — is to take the lieutenants with you and isolate the generals. Those who continue to resist registration, threatens Patel, will be dealt with once their colleagues have registered. "We need to take them out of the industry and out of circulation."

Perhaps then, carving out a niche in the market can be done without the use of armed men.

Pippa Green is SABC radio's political editor



Armed just in case: A security guard patrols Noord Street taxi rank, where police officers seldom visit



Mr Popularity: Several branches of the Free State ANC want Terror Lekota to stand as the party's provincial chairman, but national leaders have said he won't be available for the post PHOTO: HENNER FRANKENFELD

The run-up to the ANC's provincial conference has spawned new tensions, reports

Rehana Rossouw

MtG 24-30/1/97

IN another salvo fired at the African National Congress's leadership, the branch members in the Free State town of Bothaville this week condemned national leaders' "arrogance" and nominated former premier Terror Lekota for the position of provincial chairman.

The ANC's Bloemfontein branch had also nominated Lekota for the position last week. However, ANC Acting General Secretary Cheryl Carolus announced on Monday he would decline the nomination.

"The Bothaville branch nominates Lekota despite the statement of Cheryl Carolus that he will not contest the election. The arrogance, undemocratic and unconstitutional manner in which the top leadership has addressed the problem in the province makes a mockery of the ANC Constitution," said Bothaville ANC general secretary Aupa Ramaisa.

"Unlike the premier imposed on the Free State [Ivy Matsepe-Casaburi], the provincial chairman will ultimately be elected by branches at the conference. The branches will be voting, not Carolus."

Carolus had, however, said Lekota had informed the ANC national executive's lekgotla last Sunday that he had after "long thought and consultation" decided not to make himself available for the position.

She said two other nominees for the position, former Free State chair Pat Matosa and former MEC for economic affairs Ace Magashule — whom the ANC redeployed to the National Assembly — would also not stand for election to the top five positions but would be eligible for election as ordinary members of the provincial executive committee.

Carolus said this was a "gesture on their side" to try to ensure the province could start after its provincial conference without the tensions which superceded it.

'I would rather not deal with party matters at this stage' — Terror Lekota

Lekota was sworn in as a member of the Senate this week in a move which is certain to see him elected as chairman of the National Council of Provinces, which is to replace the Senate next month.

He refused to discuss his nomination as ANC Free State chair, saying "I would rather not deal with party matters at this stage".

The Free State provincial conference takes place from February 14 to 16 under the guidance of a task-group mandated by the ANC national executive committee (NEC) to restore political equilibrium to the province.

Task-group leader, Minister of Labour Tito Mboweni, said no disciplinary measures would be taken against the Bloemfontein branch, and that members acted out of ignorance when they nominated Lekota.

The ANC's Constitution dealt with grievance procedures to be followed by branches, Mboweni said. "In this case, they forgot the Constitution."

But angry Bloemfontein ANC members say their national leaders themselves have ignored the party's Constitution by denying them the right to nominate Lekota as their chairman.

"We have observed with utter disappointment and shock the growing tendency by the present ANC leadership at national level to dish out posts and positions undemocratically to favourites instead of following the democratic election route," said Bloemfontein ANC member Jones Bopape.

"Section 5.1 of the ANC constitution as adopted at the 1994 conference in Bloemfontein defines the rights of members and says among other things: 'a member of the ANC shall have the right to take part in elections and be elected or appointed to any committee, structure, commission or delegation of the ANC'.

"The undemocratic action of the NEC in the Free State has created the impression that it has become a law unto itself to the point where it is the major violator of the Constitution instead of upholding it ardently."

Lekota's supporters have also attacked their leaders for remaining mum on the auditor general's report into alleged corruption in the province. The report, released in December, found there had been unauthorised spending of R7,7-million in the provincial Department of Economic Affairs and Tourism while Magashule was in charge of its affairs.

"The contents of this report clearly documents substantial disregard for due process and proper procedure by individuals in positions of public trust," Acting Auditor General JAJ Loots concluded. "It is clear that the interests of the taxpayer and that of good government have not been served in this instance.

Bothaville ANC members are aghast that Magashule would be available for election to the provincial executive committee before the implications of the auditor general's report are considered.

with fund-raising and tried to assist in whatever else they needed."

Later, Ekon says: "I feel as if I have been betrayed by the people I tried to help."

The *M&G* reported last September on Ekon's R500 000 defamation suit — later withdrawn — against former ANC political prisoner Peter-Paul Ngwenya. In court papers Ekon claimed Ngwenya had told Swedish investors in an ANC-supported "black-empowerment" television consortium that Ekon "is a drug dealer; worked with [former security police chief] Basie Smit with a hit squad; and was associated with the Robert Smit murders". The deal in which Ngwenya, Ekon and Dali Tambo, among others, were partners, never got off the ground.

The *M&G* learnt at the time that information given to the Swedish investors had allegedly originated with a background check the ANC Department of Intelligence and Security had done on Ekon, and that the result of this check had been a warning to ANC leaders to stay "at an arm's length from Ekon".

In his letter Ekon asks Zuma, who is the ANC's former intelligence head: "Jacob, please can you let me know if in fact a secret report was done and the contents thereof as [these] drugs/hit squad allegations have really affected me and I am desperate to clear my name. I am not perturbed about the other allegations that the press are making as I believe those will be cleared by the ongoing police investigation."

Sacked Transnet executive fights back

MtG 24-30/1/97 (270)

Mungo Soggot

SACKED Transnet executive director Sipho Nyawo has launched a legal attack against the parastatal, Public Enterprises Minister Stella Sigcau and the retired judge who presided over an internal inquiry about him.

Nyawo was dismissed from his R830 000 job last year after Judge John Trengove found him guilty of 65 charges of credit card abuse, involving about R50 000.

Papers filed in court show Nyawo has applied to have his dismissal set aside for several procedural reasons. He does not broach the charges against him, but asks for his dismissal to be withdrawn and for his salary since his dismissal.

He says he currently has no source of income, making it "a matter of urgency that this application be determined".

Nyawo abused his credit card while he was Portnet's environment manager in Durban. He says Transnet chairman Louise Tager's assurance that the investigation into him was dropped when he moved to head office in Johannesburg — confirmed in a letter attached to his affidavit — meant the parastatal had no authority to reinstate the inquiry as it did.

The parastatal pulled the plug on investigations into widespread credit-card abuse among executives, but reinstated them when one of its employees' unions approached the public protector.

Nyawo claims he was denied his right to be heard, denied a hearing by the Transnet board and that neither Tager nor the Transnet board applied her or their minds to the question of his dismissal.

Matter of fact

LAST week the *Mail & Guardian* reported on research done for the Green Paper Task Team on Migration and Immigration, suggesting — owing to an editing error — that the research was done by the members of the task team. In fact, the research was commissioned by the task team, but done by an independent reseacher, and presented to the team for their comment.

MAIL & GUARDIAN
January 24 to 30 1997

An industry where guns still

(332) MHG 24-30/1/97



The violence-torn taxi industry is slowly changing, reports guest writer **Pippa Green**

DIPAK PATEL had waited half a year for this meeting. He'd sent messages, he'd made phone calls. No response. Finally a message came back: "Why do you want to talk to me?" Another message, more conversations with go-betweens, then the instruction: drive your car to such-and-such a place. The former Umkhonto weSizwe cadre did as instructed. He was met by three men armed with automatic weapons. They blindfolded him and drove him to the meeting place. He was not invited to sit down. There were few courtesies. The armed men didn't leave his side.

Now face to face with one of the most powerful men in the taxi business, Patel kept silent. "He lectured me," recalls Patel. "Asked me what I thought I was doing."

"Do you know who the two most important men in the country are?" asked his taciturn host. "The president is one of them. The other is me."

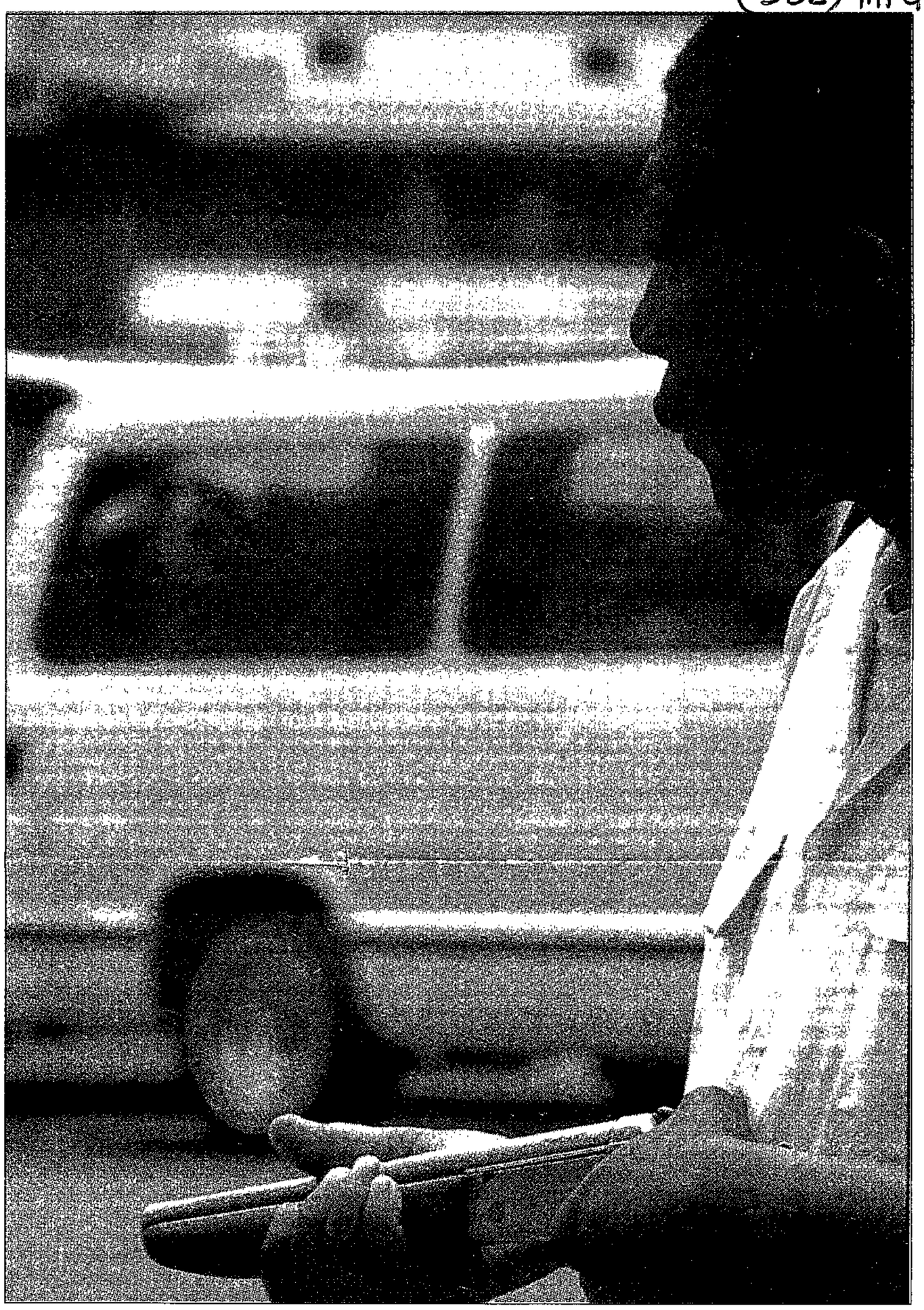
Patel is now a chief director in Mac Maharaj's Department of Transport. He tells me about the meeting on condition I don't name the taxi boss, or even the province where the meeting took place. In Gauteng, in discussions with taxi association bosses, the theme is the same: "Don't say I said that." "Don't say I told you this." "Don't say you saw me here." "Let's not talk about those people now. Anyway, they're deceased."

Unlike his Pretoria predecessors, Patel routinely relies on his political skills and his experience as an underground operative. For 18 months, he has chaired the National Taxi Task Team, the "N triple T", the taxi bosses call it, in this land that loves acronyms, although sometimes they mistakenly call it the "N triple three", as if it were some grand highway. The taxi industry from each province assigned representatives to the body. It took Patel about six months to figure out that some representatives had no power in their own ranks. When he began trying to see the real bosses, such as the important man at the secret venue, he was told to mind his nose or watch his back.

Instead Patel patiently counted his steps around the country, to the doors of the taxi associations, persuading them that the central recommendation of the NTTT, which is that taxi associations and operators should register, would be good for business. It is a task that has called for courage and political sleuth that was unlikely to have taxed his predecessors in the transport bureaucracy much.

Currently, there are about 150 000 kombi taxis in the country. Perhaps 70 000 people — maybe fewer — own them, and 30 000 others lease them — collectively they are known in the business as "operators". At least half the taxis on the road are illegal. "We're faced with the problem of how to integrate taxis into a public transport plan," says Patel. "The leverage which the government has over the industry is minimal. We have to resolve systematically the immediate mess in the taxi industry through a combination of incentives and economic assistance if they register."

The deadline for registration in Gauteng is February 28. Now Patel is dashing around the province, from rank to rank, office to office, to make sure that registration is on track. It's unrealistic, he says, to expect access to taxi operators unless you go through the associations. He knows what their role in the taxi violence has been. "But basically anyone in this business who has survived for more than a decade has dirty hands," he says.



Taxi security: At the long-distance rank in Wanderers Street in Johannesburg, the security guards' main job is to guard the association bosses. Passengers fend for themselves PHOTOS: SIDDIQUE DAVIDS

Late last year, Nelson Mandela lost patience with the taxi bosses. He phoned Maharaj, asked him to bring his "boy" from the taxi task team and come down to the ranks. Now.

With no fanfare, no announcement, no press statement, the president, the minister and the task team chair hit the Baragwanath rank in Soweto and the Noord street rank in central Johannesburg. It was days after a drive-by shooting in Johannesburg, and weeks after several taxis were set alight at the Bara rank. Mandela was angry. What had the task team being doing? But at the taxi ranks, association bosses greeted Patel. They knew about registration. Clearly someone had been working.

A few days later, Mandela called a meeting in Pretoria of the taxi association bosses. His fellow most-important citizen didn't pitch ("The big bosses never come," explains Patel), but his second-in-command and third-in-command were there.

"I cannot tolerate you killing one another," said Mandela. "The minister here is very generous, talking about development, and I have been saying to him that if this killing does not stop I am going to take very drastic action."

Three times Mandela threatened to close down the taxi ranks if the killing did not stop. Then, politic as always, he raised the question of registration, the lesser evil. "You cannot avoid registration, that you must understand."

The taxi men asked questions, politely phrased but aggressive in their content.

We are prepared to register, says one, but we don't know where to go. Also, the transport department has failed us in not providing training workshops about registration. Another asks: "But aren't you leading us to the taxman? We don't want to be taxed for what we don't know what for."

Mandela can scarcely believe his ears. These men are all equipped with cellphones and many have arrived in luxury cars. He sits at the table, grim-faced, taking notes, and begins his reply with a gentle buzz: "Whatever I say does not question your integrity. I take it for granted that you are asking genuine questions ..." Then the sting: "You say you want to be registered but you need a lot of workshopping. I don't accept that as an excuse at all. You buy cars, you know where to go, you license those taxis, you know where to go, why don't you know where to go to register?"

And as for tax: "*All* of us pay tax. And let me tell you that when we came into power we inherited a system where the president did not pay tax. I thought that was immoral so I offered to pay tax and I pay tax. Why should you not pay tax?"

In full stride, he turns to road safety. It's something the government has been trying to tackle. Patel swears he's seen a taxi with a monkey-wrench where the steering wheel should be.

"Before I went to jail," says Mandela, "I took a taxi from Orlando to town and there were three chaps — young fellows — sitting in front and one of them was driving. Here was the steering wheel ... he was looking this side," says the President turning his head at right-angles to his outstretched arms. "And with one hand. And he was extremely fast. So I said, 'Why do you drive like this?' and he said 'Toppie'. And I said 'Ai, toppie' ".

The laughter has now changed from nervous peals to guffaws. "In those days I was still much younger than I now am, but to them I was a 'toppie'. But I was sure that I was not going to reach town."

Duma Nkosi is still never sure whether he's going to reach town. He doesn't often take a taxi to town, although he owns 10, which do the dangerous run between KwaZulu-Natal and Johannesburg. "Our life is like that," he says rubbing an imaginary speck of dust between his thumb and forefinger. "If you come to work in the morning, you don't know whether you'll come back home. If you go home, you don't know whether you'll come to work."

Nkosi is the vice-president of the Sizwe Taxi Association, an affiliate of the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (Salta). His office is a small room in a petrol station, light on furniture but heavy with pink blinds. It faces onto the busy Noord Street taxi rank in downtown Johannesburg. The front of the office is entirely of glass, perhaps an unwise design choice as one of the windows has already been cracked into neat concentric ripples by a bullet.

A few months ago, eight taxis were set alight in this rank, says Nkosi. A few weeks ago, a man was shot dead here. "The same week we saw people running and just heard shooting. Then our security ran away and said they can't work here." And the window, I ask. Nkosi smiles sheepishly. "No, people were drinking here and there was an accident. It was not that type of shooting."

Last week, Patel visited the rank to discuss another of the of the NTTT's proposals — that a concrete cover be constructed on top of the station to become a new long-distance taxi rank.

The R25-million development is due to start next month. It will get taxis off the congested streets around the station, and provide more centralised security. Its success depends crucially on all the taxi associations agreeing to it, and registering so that the government can cater for the number of long-distance taxis that converge weekly in Johannesburg.

Today Paulus Nene, the chair of the Sizwe Taxi Association, has promised to take Patel around those parts of the rank he feels are safe for him.

"Have you registered yet?" is Patel's first question, and there's much laughter, shuffling of feet and talk of "we're waiting for the mother body".

The mother-bodies are the bane of Patel's life. These are the bodies to which individual associations affiliate. In the case of the long-distance taxis that use this rank, the mother-body is Salta.

The rival mother body is the Lethlabile Taxi Association. The bosses of the mother-bodies probably don't need any economic incentives to register. Most don't even own taxis. But the mother-bodies — there are eight national bodies as well as about

Nujoma eyes third term as president

Will Namibia's President Sam Nujoma change the Constitution to suit himself? **Graham Hopwood** reports from Windhoek



Looking ahead? Sam Nujoma, Nambia's 'father of the nation', has not fostered an heir apparent PHOTO: RUTH MOTAU

THERE is growing speculation in Namibia that President Sam Nujoma will not stand down as president in 1999 as demanded by the country's Constitution, but run for a third term in office.

Support for Nujoma to run for another term is believed to strong within the ruling party, the South West African People's Organisation (Swapo).

Nujoma is 67 and would be 70 when due to give up office, younger than other regional leaders such as Mandela (78) and Mugabe (72).

Nujoma himself has given conflicting signals about his intentions. He told the BBC World Service last year he would stand down to make [illegible] younger member of Swapo's elite. The theme is the same: "Don't say I said that." "Don't say I told you this." "Don't say you saw me here." "Let's not talk about those people now. Anyway, they're deceased."

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"I cannot tolerate you killing one another," said Mandela. "The minister here is very generous, talking about development, and I have been saying to him that if this killing does not stop I am going to take very drastic action."

Three times Mandela threatened to close down the taxi ranks if the killing did not stop. Then, politic as always, he raised the question of registration, the lesser evil. "You cannot avoid registration, that you must understand."

The taxi men asked questions, politely phrased but aggressive in their content.

We are prepared to register, says one, but we don't know where to go. Also, the transport department has failed us in not providing training workshops about registration. Another asks: "But aren't you leading us to the taxman? We don't want to be taxed for what we don't know what for."

Mandela can scarcely believe his ears. These men are all equipped with cellphones and many have arrived in luxury cars. He sits at the table, grim-faced, taking notes, and begins his reply with a gentle buzz: "Whatever I say does not question your integrity. I take it for granted that you are asking genuine questions ..." Then the sting: "You say you want to be registered but you need a lot of workshopping. I don't accept that as an excuse at all. You buy cars, you know where to go, you license those taxis, you know where to go, why don't you know where to go to register?"

And as for tax: "*All* of us pay tax. And let me tell you that when we came into power we inherited a system where the president did not pay tax. I thought that was immoral so I offered to pay tax and I pay tax. Why should you not pay tax?"

In full stride, he turns to road safety. It's something the government has been trying to tackle. Patel and other African leaders, who have been discredited by serving virtual life terms in office," Lister said.

Other Swapo members privately say that a third term for Nujoma may be desirable but could avoid again would mean changing the Constitution, which currently restricts the incumben t to two five-year terms.

Swapo has the political power to amend the Constitution with its two-thirds majority in the National Assembly, but the suggestion that the country's supreme law be changed to suit a third term for Nujoma is already meeting resistance.

Namibia's Constitution has not been amended since independence. Professor André du Pisani, a political scientist at the University of Namibia, said of the prospect of changing the country's supreme law: "The Constitution is the founding document of the new republic. To tamper with it Angula had any presidential hopes he might harbour dented when he was summarily moved by Nujoma last year from the finance portfolio after only a short time in the post.

Minister of Lands Pendukeni Witbooi as the party's presidential candidate for the 1999 election with Hamutenya as his prime minister.

Swapo's official position is that no decision about changing the Constitution to ~~accommodate a third term~~ on furniture but heavy with pink blinds. It faces onto the busy Noord Street taxi rank in downtown Johannesburg. The front of the office is entirely of glass, perhaps an unwise design choice as one of the windows has already been cracked into neat concentric ripples by a bullet.

A few months ago, eight taxis were set alight in this rank, says Nkosi. A few weeks ago, a man was shot dead here. "The same week we saw people running and just heard shooting. Then our security ran away and said they can't work here." And the window, I ask. Nkosi smiles sheepishly. "No, people were drinking here and there was an accident. It was not that type of shooting."

Last week, Patel visited the rank to discuss another of the of the NTTT's proposals — that a concrete cover be constructed on top of the station to become a new long-distance taxi rank.

The R25-million development is due to start next month. It will get taxis off the congested streets around the station, and provide more centralised security. Its success depends crucially on all the taxi associations agreeing to it, and registering so that the government can cater for the number of long-distance taxis that converge weekly in Johannesburg.

Today Paulus Nene, the chair of the Sizwe Taxi Association, has promised to take Patel around those parts of the rank he feels are safe for him.

"Have you registered yet?" is Patel's first question, and there's much laughter, shuffling of feet and talk of "we're waiting for the mother body".

The mother-bodies are the bane of Patel's life. These are the bodies to which individual associations affiliate. In the case of the long-distance taxis that use this rank, the mother-body is Salta.

The rival mother body is the Lethlabile Taxi Association. The bosses of the mother-bodies probably don't need any economic incentives to register. Most don't even own taxis. But the mother-bodies — there are eight national bodies as well as about

SUNDAY TIMES, January 26 1997

Cops 'linked to taxi hit squads

By ELIAS MALULEKE

(332)

FORMER Vlakplaas operatives were involved in a number of taxi hit squad activities, including the disappearance in 1992 of a taxi "mafia" boss, an ex-policeman has alleged.

The man, a former member of the security branch and military intelligence, who cannot be named for security reasons, said he had given the information to the office of Transvaal Attorney General Dr Jan D'Oliveira but it was not followed up.

Dan Mokaba, an executive committee member of the Big Six taxi association, disappeared from Pretoria's Burgers Park Hotel on New Year's Eve in 1992 with two men who had identified themselves as policemen.

The informant, who says the association had promised him firearms, a car and cash to kill its enemies, alleges that hit men whose services Mokaba had employed were linked to his disappearance. Money he was to have paid them had apparently not been deposited into his account by Big Six.

He said: "I introduced one of the askaris (former guerrillas who had turned on their comrades) to Dan and members of his organisation and he carried out the killings."

Mokaba's wife, Monki, confirmed that men posing as policemen had often visited her Soshanguve home. Her husband had introduced them as "friends".

Among those who were close to Mokaba was Joe Mamasela, who is under the state's witness protection programme and expected to testify in several police dirty-tricks cases.

Captain J C Scholtz of the taxi violence investigation task unit said the claims were under investigation.

Advocate Paul Fick of the Transvaal attorney general's office said the informant had visited the office but had not mentioned claims of police involvement in taxi hit squads.

ST 26/1/97

Govt role 'essential' for taxi industry viability

(332)

Edward West

TWENTY-seater vehicles or small buses were the taxis of the future, but were unlikely ever to be a feature on SA's roads without government intervention, taxi industry sources said yesterday.

SA Black Taxi Association (Sabta) spokesman Enos Makena said there were too many taxis on the road to be economically viable, a problem exacerbated by continuing violence in the industry.

Already a number of motor manufacturers had ceased production of minibus taxis because of low sales, he said. Toyota SA was the only manufacturer supplying vehicles to the industry in any appreciable volumes.

Local manufacturer TFM recently developed a 20-seater taxi designed to create small and medium-sized business opportunities, especially in production.

"Because many of the 150 000 minibuses are reaching the end of their lives, there's strong demand for replacement," said TFM project manager Trevor Stone.

Toyota SA too was investigating the possibility of a larger vehicle to serve as a taxi. However, with minibus sales plummeting, there was little to entice a taxi owner to buy a new, more expensive vehicle, a spokesman said.

Rand Afrikaans University academic Vaugh Mostert said vehicles with 20 seats or more had had only very limited success.

The taxi industry needed about R500m-R1bn to restore it to health. Bus and rail commuter services had received about R3bn in annual subsidies, he said.

About 15% of gross domestic product, or R100bn, was spent annually on SA's 5-million strong vehicle park, which provided transport to fewer than 20% of the population, he said.

SA Bus Operators' Association executive director Jackie Walters said promulgation of transport legislation on April 1 was expected to alleviate the problems of overcapacity. Larger, more efficient vehicles would become essential.

BD 28/11/97

Gauteng taxi operators now have to register before they get permits

(332) Star 29/1/97

By Bongiwe Mlangeni

Minibus taxi owners will now have to register with the Gauteng department of transport and public works to receive permits – a decision which may help end the violent taxi wars in the province.

MEC for Transport and Public Works Paul Mashatile announced yesterday that the provincial government would for the first time introduce laws to regulate the taxi industry.

A draft bill to regulate taxis will be submitted to the Gauteng cabinet today.

Mashatile said the registration of taxi associations would enable the government to control and plan taxi operations.

The registration process would also give illegal taxi operators a chance to obtain legal permits, he said, adding that half of the estimated 60 000 taxis operating in Gauteng may be illegal.

A total of 121 taxi associations have already applied for registration and about 28 more are expected to do so.

The closing date for registration is February 28.

"We will now know the exact number of taxis and also allocate routes. Hopefully this will stem the tide of taxi violence in the province," Mashatile said.

South African Long Distance Taxi Association chairman Thulani Kubheka said the association supported the process of transformation in the industry.

Director of public and urban transportation Lennox Magwaza said that after the registration deadline, he and his staff would work towards getting rid of all illegal permit holders and would introduce facilities that would be shared by taxi owners.

He said the new laws would make it easier for leaders of the taxi industry to introduce and maintain order and discipline.

Star 30/11/97

Fears of renewed taxi violence after Soweto deaths

(332)

By Tommy Makoe

The deaths of a Soweto taxi driver and an operator's wife in two separate attacks has sparked fears of renewed conflict between rival taxi associations in the township.

The wife of taxi boss Fredman Ndebele, 35-year-old Julia, was shot on Monday in an attack allegedly linked to conflict between rival operators in Eldorado Park's Freedom Park squatter camp.

Taxi driver Michael Siqubu was shot in the neck in Zola, Soweto, on Sunday night, police spokesman Inspector John Shiburi said.

The minibus he was driving is still missing.

According to reports, Julia Ndebele was gunned down on Monday by men who had followed her on her way back home from Meadowlands, where she had dropped a taxi driver after making a stop at a relative's home.

Her 2-year -old daughter was seriously injured during the shooting. A distraught Ndebele, fearing further attacks on his family, refused to comment on the whereabouts and condition of his daughter.

Ndebele is a member of the Meadowlands Doornfontein

Common practice for operators to take revenge

Noord Taxi Association, which was involved in a fierce battle for routes with the Meadowlands West Taxi Association last year.

Shiburi said police believed that revenge attacks may occur after both shootings.

"It is a common practice that other taxi operators will take revenge after an attack. We cannot rule that out," he said.

Shiburi appealed for calm and called on taxi owners to seek peaceful ways to settle their differences.

Siphiwe Thusi, chairman of the Greater Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan Council's transport department, was optimistic that despite the shootings, violence would not flare in Soweto because warring factions made peace a month ago.

He said his department was still engaged in talks with two taxi associations which operate at the notorious Baragwanath taxi rank.

"We are correcting all the route problems in the township with the help of the affected taxi associations," said Thusi.

The police's serious crimes unit is investigating 838 taxi violence-related incidents which were reported last year. The majority were in the Eastern Cape (386), followed by the the Western Cape (216) and Gauteng (97).

Forum aims to help graduates

(332)

Carolyn Esser

THE Unemployed Graduates Forum of SA, which aims to pay attention to their plight, was launched yesterday.

At present the forum consists of about 2 000 unemployed graduates who want to address the employment difficulties facing graduates after completing their studies.

The forum's chairman, Msindisi Mbalo, called upon government and the private sector to assist the forum in its drive to eradicate discrepancies in the attainment of knowledge and skills.

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BD 30/11/97



Taxi rank: Prominent operators are often shot on lucrative routes

'Third force fuels taxi war'

M+G 14-20/2/97 (332)

Angella Johnson

VIOLENCE in the taxi industry is being fuelled by sinister "third force" operatives who encourage the use of hitmen to kill rivals, according to a programme to be aired on the SABC next Thursday (February 20).

***Violence For Hire*, a 30-minute documentary looking at the bloodier side of the taxi business, shows that mafia-style contract killers can earn up to R10 000 or a taxi of their own for shooting prominent operators in the war over lucrative routes.**

The documentary says that police and other factions deliberately use violence as a destabilising factor in the same way that they once used it to get rid of political activists.

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj says in the documentary that the practice has become firmly entrenched. He claims he can name at least 50 individuals known to be involved, and says it is hard to believe that the police and security forces have not been active participants.

With more than 300 people killed as a result of taxi violence last year, it is one of the biggest problems facing the government. It is also a social issue with implications for the entire country — although Gauteng and the Cape have been particularly badly affected.

The taxi industry mushroomed following deregulation in the 1980s, and has been plagued by near anarchy since then — largely owing to competition for limited, and oversubscribed, profitable routes.

Most drivers in the Cape carry firearms, allegedly provided by corrupt police officials, who are also said to collude with different taxi associations to offer protection. There are also claims that some police actually own vehicles.

Ingrid Gavshon, the programme's producer and director, says she was given unsubstantiated information that former Umkhonto weSizwe fighters, askaris and Inkatha Freedom Party members had also drifted into this lucrative killing industry as "killing is what they do best".

The Transport Ministry seems unable to stop the outbreaks of bloodletting — often involving innocent passengers — opting instead to blame both the ministries of Justice and Safety and Security for not being tough enough on those arrested.

Gavshon, who did all her filming in the Cape, suggested that one way to start cleaning up the industry is for transport inspectors to impound vehicles which are clearly not roadworthy and fine their owners. "Getting tough even with minor infringements sends a clear signal that the government will not continue to sit idly by while these people turn our roads into killing fields."

She said another problem was that police officers often became too close to those involved. "Moving the police around with more regularity would lessen the chance of corruption forged through close ties."

— at the time had

3 die in renewed taxi violence

Sowetan 14/2/97 (332)

By Themba Sepotokele

THREE men, shot dead on the N12 highway near the Soweto off-ramp on Wednesday afternoon, were yesterday identified as members of the Bara-Meadowlands Taxi Association.

Johannesburg police spokesman Captain Johan du Toit said the men were travelling in a white Honda Ballade which was found along the road. Police found spent 9mm and .45 special revolver cartridges at the scene.

Du Toit said the names of the three would be released after their next-of-kin had been notified.

He said the shooting was related to taxi violence between feuding associations. The shooting occurred at 5:30pm.

Du Toit said three vehicles, including a brown BMW, forced the Honda off the road and fired several shots at it. Two passengers and an driver died instantly.

On Monday Mr Mkhombiseni Sithole, an executive member of the Baragwanath City Taxi Association and his wife Elizabeth were gunned down in Pimville, Soweto.

The renewed killings have sparked fears that taxi violence might escalate rendering the peace pact signed by the warring Soweto taxi associations last month a failure.

Taxi violence on the boil yet again

By DAN DHLAMINI CP 16/2/97 (332)

THE BRUTAL slaying of high-ranking taxi officials this week could spark off an explosion of taxi violence in Gauteng.

Three officials, including the chairman of the Bara-Meadowlands Taxi Assiciation, J Khumalo, were mowed down in a drive-by shooting along the N12 Highway near Soweto this week.

Another leader, Phari Phillip Kgarejane (40), chairman of the long distance Carletonville United Taxi Association (Cuta), was gunned down by unknown assailants on Friday.

Kgarejane's son, Mpho, told City Press that he had seen the BMW of a well-known member of the rival taxi association dropping off three men near his home.

He said he alerted his father, but he seemed not to have taken the matter seriously because he left with his mother.

"A few minutes later I heard gun shots and ran to the scene, where I found my father slumped in the car.

"I called for help and my father was taken to hospital, where he was certified dead," said an angry Mpho.

According to West Rand police spokesman Captain Gerry Van Rooyen, Kgarejane was with his wife when the incident happened in Khutsong township near Carletonville.

Van Rooyen said after Kgarejane was shot, he lost control of his vehicle and it collided with a tree, injuring his wife slightly.

He said the unknown gunmen fled on foot, leaving behind some 9mm cartridges.

Van Rooyen said as violence spiralled in Khutsong, a minibus belonging to a member of the UNCEDO taxi association was set alight yesterday morning.

Taxi men told to register by tomorrow or be prosecuted

(332) Star 27/2/97

By Patrick Phoshi

Gauteng minibus taxi operators who failed to meet tomorrow's deadline to register with the department would face prosecution, Gauteng public transport and roads MEC Paul Mashatile said yesterday.

He told The Star that there would be no extensions because the operators had had enough time to register since the start of the process in December.

He said those who did not register would be operating illegally, and thrown out of the industry. There were 60 000 taxi operators in Gauteng, and half of them were illegal.

SA Black Taxi Association president Joe Mabaso said his organisation supported the process, but appealed to the department to leave the door slightly open for those lagging behind.

"Many operators will be left out of the process unless something is done. The government should make an allowance for those who have not yet registered to come aboard," Mabaso said.

He said his association was excited about the registration as it would stem the tide of the taxi violence caused by conflicts over routes and ranks. Mabaso said the government would also know how much funding was needed to subsidise the taxi industry.

Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association president Sam Manganye said the registration of his members was on track and he was confident they would finish by tomorrow.

Manganye said the process was initially stalled by the operators' fears that the government wanted to organise the industry only in order to tax it.

He added that the process would help to stamp out the scourge of violence that continues to plague the industry. He said those taxi operators without permits would be flushed out because the government would have records of every legal operator.

Lehlabile Taxi Organisation spokesman Jacob Ledwaba said his organisation was battling to wrap up the registration, adding the deadline should be extended.

Crisis hits 'one city' tax plan (332)

M+G (BM) 14-20/2/97

As the recent riots have shown, cross-subsidisation between black and white areas has failed as a policy. **Aspasia Karras** reports



Social upheaval: Riots last week reflected the looming financial crisis at the local level PHOTO: SIDDIQUE DAVIDS

THE senseless death of young residents in Eldorado Park was not part of the transformation agenda of local government. What the chaos reflected was the latent social upheaval precipitated by the democratisation of institutional South Africa.

Ivor Chipkin of the Centre for Policy Studies, who recently completed a study on the eastern sub-structure of the Greater Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan Council, maintains that the "one city, one tax base" concept that informed the new political unification and joint spatial planning in local government is in crisis.

"The political unification implicit in one city thinking has manifested itself unevenly in terms of spatial infilling," he says. The slogan captures the intention to correct the imbalances between black and white areas through cross-subsidisation, but in real terms this has not happened.

Chipkin explains that the capital expenditure required for massive infrastructural development in the former black authorities was to be recouped through the cross-subsidisation theory. The study shows that despite a clear need to change spending patterns, levels of expenditure in former white areas have remained the same.

A further problem is that the Budget was formulated to support the massive capital expenditure on the premise of 100% payment in all areas, but the Masakhane campaign is having little impact: Soweto is paying less than 25% of its rates bill and Orange Farm less than 0,1%.

This implies that cross-subsidisation is not happening as envisioned, and as a result local government expenditure is far greater than anything it can actually afford. Many councils now face a serious shortfall.

'It is an irony that the apartheid financing system is still impacting at the local level'

"Sandton subsidises the rest of the metro to the tune of something like R450-million, which is why non-payment is an added crisis," says Chipkin. "It is an irony that the apartheid financing system is still impacting at the local level."

The system, such as it was, established common regulations for rate collection, which governed white local authorities. These were, however, applied unevenly from council to council, so that what they charged bore little relationship to the services received. The rates payment was and is calculated in terms of a ratio of cents to every rand that a property is worth.

Because of uneven practices, Sandton paid one cent to the rand, while an area like Roodepoort paid eight cents. Using this imbalance, the Sandton council lured big business from the inner city, and began the process of unbundling the urban sprawl.

The rate has now been standardised using the principle of equity. For every rand a property is worth, one is now required to pay 6,45 cents across the board, while a rebate to the value of 60% applies for domestic properties. This clearly accounts for the dramatic 300% increase that has brought Sandton rate-payers and the Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan Council to a courtroom stand-off.

Meanwhile, the black local authorities were kept afloat by inter-governmental grants (IGGs). The rates and service boycotts of the 1980s made the flow of IGGs a crucial element of financing what little infrastructural development took place. The flat rate was introduced to areas like Soweto in the 1980s as a means of inducing payment.

But, according to African National Congress councillor for Eldorado Park José Coetzee, the flat rate debate is an inherited conceptual problem rather than a reality, since it is not currently being practiced within the greater Johannesburg TMC.

"The confusion arises from another apartheid inheritance, the provision of electricity. Soweto council payments do not fluctuate because they pay their electricity bill directly to Eskom. Areas like Eldorado Park pay directly to the council as the service provider."

Nevertheless, the tensions exist, and the looming financial crisis at local level bodes badly for delivery, which has now been placed squarely in the domain of local government.

The IGGs have been replaced by direct subsidies from national and provincial government, but they are much less than before. Ralph Daskaurdt, chief director, development planning and local government in Gauteng, explains that the province gives local authorities R160-million for operational and capital costs.

"But in light of the impact of the growth, employment and redistribution strategy [Gear] and the low percentage of rate payment, local authorities are facing a financial crunch."

He explains that estimates point to a reduction in government expenditure after interest in real terms by about 15% in the next two years — unless economic growth accelerates.

The Gauteng Growth and Development Plan: Progress Report for 1996 points out that the sharp decline in real budgetary allocation in Gauteng, due to national fiscal restraint and increased redistribution of fiscal resources away from Gauteng, is leading to a "structural deficit".

"Continued non-payment of rates, services and bonds in many areas in Gauteng is resulting in problems maintaining existing, and providing new, infrastructure and services."

If the problem is so acute in Gauteng, where local government is generally stronger than in other provinces, and characterised by a number of large metropolitan councils with substantial capacity and budgets, what are the prospects for the rest of the country's local authorities?

Attempts are being made to deal with the fiscal crisis. Dominique Wooldridge of the Graduate School of Public Policy and Development Management (Wits) explains: "Broke local authorities need capital for infrastructure. Some are borrowing from the private sector, others are pursuing the public-private partnership route, while the capital budgets and service council levies are tidying most councils over."

News of loans to local councils through a fund set up by Southern Life, First National Bank, Thebe and other investors, is one way to go. The problem here is that a fifth of all government spending is absorbed by interest payments; more loans will exacerbate the situation, and impact on Gear.

The other route is the one of partnerships. Daskaurdt is pushing this line in Gauteng, where two major meetings between province, business and local authorities, to establish partnerships for service delivery have been held.

But the issue that may be central to the financial crisis, argues Wooldridge, is the "spatial pattern of apartheid urbanisation, with the poor on the peripheries, which are very expensive to service".

Local authorities are faced with a planning crisis: Either they buy into the apartheid spatial plan, maintain the status quo, provide infrastructure at a loss while exacerbating the expensive urban sprawl; or they challenge the inheritance and begin slotting people into existing services while developing alternatives.

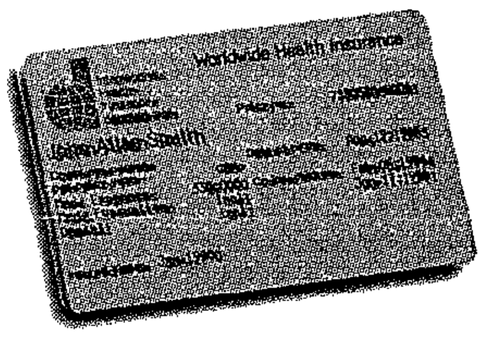
The Development Facilitation Act, as well as the Gauteng project of setting land development objectives, are planning instruments that begin to deal with the issue. They also provide the opportunity for creative thinking about the role of urban governance in the globally competitive economy.

The fiscal restraint imposed by Gear will catapult South Africa into the global economic paradigm of neo-liberal orthodoxy. Says Wooldridge: "The impact of globalisation will be greater decentralisation and cutbacks in social spending. Local government will be required to do more with less. But globalisation also weakens the nation state and strengthens the local state, in the form of the competitive city.

"Increasingly, city-to-city agreements will become more common; businesses already relocate to cities and not countries; while the vision of technopoles as nodes of the global economy is being realised."

The point is that the future is in local government; if Gear is to be realised, urban governance is integral to its success. But the rates crisis should act as a warning. We face a trade-off between services for the poor and the facilitation of global competition through hi-tech services and infrastructure.

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GW 16/2/97

Calling all foreign investors

M&G 14-20/2/97

The first stop for Investment South Africa is South-East Asia and interest is strong, Rafiq Bagus tells Madeleine Wackernagel

RAFIQ BAGUS'S new job is persuading foreigners to invest in South Africa. No easy task given the fear of crime, but in his previous incarnation at Wesgro, he was instrumental in bringing Levi Strauss to the Western Cape. Now, if he could only persuade his wife to move to Johannesburg ...

But as chief executive officer of Investment South Africa (ISA), newly launched by Minister of Trade and Industry Alec Erwin, Bagus is looking beyond the headlines.

"It's all relative," he says. "For Asian companies, crime is not an issue when compared with Latin America, for example, whereas Europeans do worry about it. But the more foreign companies — big and small — we can encourage to set up shop here, the more others will follow.

"Obviously, there's no point in denying the problem. We have to be realistic and upfront, and the sooner we are seen to be tackling crime effectively, the easier my job will be. There is an enormous amount of interest in South Africa — it's just a question of being able to harness it productively."

ISA operates under the auspices of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), in close harmony with the department's other development agencies, including Khula, which provides financing, and Ntsika, which offers technical assistance, in a bid to include small, medium and micro-enterprises in building backward linkages. It's not just about the Fortune 500 companies — they come anyway; the smaller businesses are equally important.

Communication, stresses Bagus, is vital if his venture is to succeed. There is no point in going on a roadshow if the participants are not informed and co-ordinated.

"Before we can start talking to the South-East Asians about inward investment, we have to find out what should be done, where the gaps are, and how best to tap their expertise.

"So we called on the South African Chamber of Business, the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, the National African Federation of Chambers of Commerce, various government departments and labour representatives to give us their views. The government is always blamed when people complain that nothing is being done to boost investment. But it is up to the other constituencies to get involved and make their voices heard. We may not agree politically but if this country is going to work, we have to work together."

Getting the private sector on board is a priority — "preferably done yesterday", he says. "We're looking at ways of involving their expertise — is it a matter of seconding someone, for instance? We can't do the job on our own, so building coalitions and networks is paramount."

By the same token, developing foreign networks is also important. Bagus points to the international figures who are already *au fait* with South Africa, such as Richard Branson of the Virgin Group. "Our top-level politicians and business figures should leverage those relationships to encourage more people to invest here. That way we can build a network of the top foreign companies, which in turn bring others in."

Bagus is accompanying the president as part of the DTI and business delegations on a trip to the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore at the end of this month.

"South-East Asia is enjoying a boom period — the potential investment opportunities are enormous. The Asean countries are also very keen on building South-South relations and they are keen to expand in Africa."

With an annual budget of R5-million for the next five years, Bagus has sufficient funds to tap that goodwill. The organisation is not as unwieldy as some foreign counterparts, with a staff of only 16, but it intends to expand into branches abroad when the need arises and the interest justifies it.

Bagus, for one, is optimistic — always something new into Africa could well become its motto.



Rafiq Bagus: Always something new into Africa

R3,4m tender to market eight provinces

Marion Edmunds

KMMT BREY, a black Cape Town-based accountancy firm, has won a R3,4-million contract to market eight of South Africa's nine provinces abroad in a drive for direct foreign investment.

According to Rafiq Bagus, chief executive officer of Investment South Africa, which awarded the contract, KMMT Brey is working with a United States-based consultancy, The Services Group. The two groups together had the capacity and experience to do the marketing necessary to target and attract direct foreign investment.

He described KMMT Brey as a "black Deloitte & Touche" with offices and personnel in most provinces.

Bagus said that a similar marketing drive was under way in the Western Cape through Wesgro, and that it had provided a model for projects for the other provinces. Bagus said that about half the cost of the project would be borne by foreign donors, and the other half by the government. The contractors would be working with provincial government officials and the provincial MECs of Finance to work out what each province had to offer foreign investors.

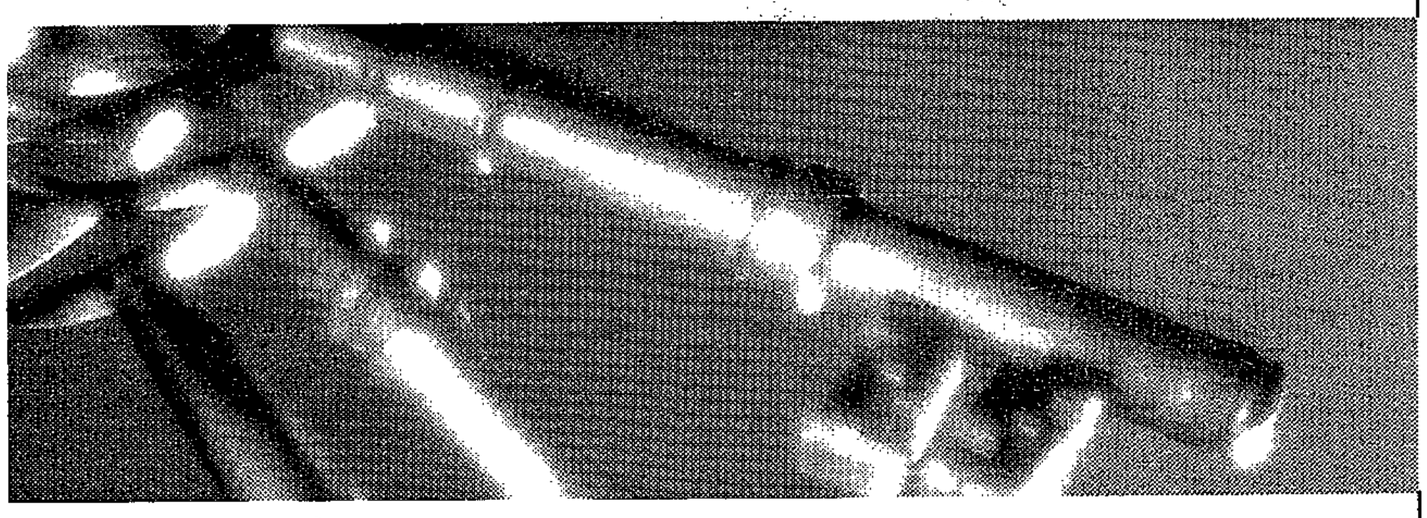
It was hoped that the consultants, particularly those with international experience, would transfer skills to their provincial counterparts through the project, which should be completed by June this year.

The reports released will comprise information on each province's strengths and will draw on other government studies about investment opportunities around the country.

KMMT Brey beat more than 20 other proposals tendered at the end of last year to win the contract. The cheapest tender was less than R300 000, and, according to Bagus, hopelessly inadequate given the task at hand. The team that evaluated the proposals comprised top-ranking government officials in the Department of Trade and Industry, representatives from small and big business, the nine provinces and Investment South Africa.

Bagus said that the awarding of the tender was kept deliberately low-key.

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The Star ... Wednesday February 5 1997

Police protect workers from taxi drivers

Star 5/2/97 (332)

Midrand commuters using private transport threatened by members of Alexandra Taxi Association

By Anna Cox

Police were yesterday called out to protect Midrand commuters who claim they are being harassed and threatened by drivers of the Alexandra Taxi Association (ATA) because they are no longer using their services.

Police escorted commuters using private transport on to the freeway after threats of violence from taxi drivers.

About 300 commuters from Eldorado Park, Lenasia and Ennerdale who work in Midrand said they had been warned yesterday not to leave their work premises or they would be killed.

The commuters said that until three weeks ago, they had taken a taxi from their homes to Johannesburg's Noord Street, and from there another into Midrand.

Because of the assaults and muggings in Noord Street, and long delays in getting into taxis, they had decided to arrange their own private transport directly to Midrand – particularly as they were on the verge of losing their jobs.

Since then, ATA taxis had been converging outside their place of work every afternoon. Commuters claim the drivers of private cars have been assaulted and threatened, and passengers forcibly put into their taxis and taken to Noord Street.

Over the past few days, police have had to escort cars out of the work premises on to the freeways, said a commuter.

ATA secretary Mike Yende said problems occurred when taxi operators transgressed on other operators' routes.

"We follow very simple procedures in the industry. We all have our own routes and no one should go on to others' routes. If they do this, trouble is caused.

"We are a very disciplined industry and we know that we have to consult one another if we are going to operate on other associations' routes. Operators from Eldorado Park and Lenasia are now coming on to our routes and have not consulted us, and this is why there has been this trouble," Yende said.

Midrand SAPS spokesman Captain Hannes Lombard said police maintained a heavy presence yesterday to protect commuters and had accompanied several private vehicles on to the freeway out of Midrand.

He said contingency plans were being formulated for the rest of the week.

Two killed in KwaZulu taxi violence – army called in

(332)

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

ARG 12/2/97

Maritzburg – Police and army reinforcements have been promised to help quell violence in the Kranskop area here after taxi-related clashes left two dead and four wounded.

A suspected assailant, who was also wounded, was arrested and an AK-47 rifle loaded with 18 rounds was recovered soon after the incident yesterday.

One of those killed, Bee Buthelezi, 25, was also believed to be among the attackers. The other fatality was a bus driver, Nkwenene Shezi, 40, who was caught in the crossfire.

A woman passenger, Fikelephi Nzama, 37, and a taxi owner, Mfaniseni Mngoma, 33, were among four people wounded in the shoot-out and admitted to hospital. The other two were not identified.

At least five vehicles were damaged and windows of two businesses were shattered by bullets. Police recovered 59 spent AK-47 cartridges at the scene, 16 9mm cartridges and five .357 cartridges, police spokesman Henry Budhram said.

A businessman, who wished to remain anonymous for fear of his life, said yesterday the area resembled a scene from the Wild West as gunmen, "armed to the teeth" with AK-47 rifles, pistols and other weapons hung out of vehicle windows, firing randomly.

"This is what we find so frightening – no-one can stop them any more. The law is doing nothing and its getting us down," he said. "The scene was just shocking."

It was alleged that army and police patrols were not deployed in the area in spite of being police called in to step up searches for illegal guns.

Superintendent Budhram said police and army reinforcements would be deployed at the taxi rank with immediate effect.

A source said the violence was largely the result of a feud between two powerful factions within the industry.

Four killings strain Soweto taxi peace (332)

Star 12/2/1997

By Tommy Makoe and Mike Masipa

The deaths of two taxi operators and their wives in Soweto have sparked fears that more revenge attacks may follow.

The killings, just 11 days after taxi operators in Soweto signed a peace treaty, have once again heightened the bitter conflict between rivals in the township.

Meadowlands, Doornfontein and North Taxi Association member Fredman Ndebele (52) was killed one day before his wife's funeral in KaNgwane, Mpumalanga, on Friday.

His wife was shot dead by unknown assailants in Eldorado Park a week ago. Their two-year-old daughter was seriously wounded during the attack.

Ndebele was shot while sitting in his vehicle during a vigil service for his wife.

On Monday, Baragwanath City Taxi Association executive member Mkhombiseni Sithole and his wife Elizabeth were killed after he was stopped by two men who asked him for cigarettes in Pimville, Soweto.

Soweto police spokesman Superintendent Govindsamy Mariemuthoo said Sithole died on the scene and his wife at Baragwanath Hospital.

"While we cannot say that taxi violence has flared up, we do suspect that the attacks are taxi related," said Mariemuthoo.

Baragwanath City Taxi Association chairman Siphiwe Mtambo said the news of the death of Sithole and his wife came as a shock to his organisation.

"We do not yet know the motives for the murders but we suspect it is related to the taxi violence. It is bad," said Mtambo.

Siphiwe Thusi, spokesman for the Johanneswburg council's transport department, attributed the attacks to people who were not aware of the peace pact.

"While the leadership is committed to the agreement, some taxi operators are not aware of the conditions. But soon we will meet with the different associations' operators and inform them."

He added his department and the Gauteng government would make sure the pact was honoured.

No arrests have been made.

Taxi operator killed in ambush

By Patrick Phosa

West Rand police investigating violence which claimed the life of a taxi official and left several others injured in Khutsong, near Carletonville, at the weekend believe it may be related to an ongoing taxi feud.

The violence broke out on Friday and continued into Saturday.

The chairman of the Carletonville United Taxi Association, Phillip Kgarejane, and his wife were fired at on Friday night by three men as the couple drove past their house in Khutsong.

The couple noticed three men at a corner near their house, and the men fired at them when they left home in their car.

Kgarejane (41) was shot in the body. He lost control of the car, which crashed into a tree. He died on the way to hospital.

His wife sustained bruises as a result of the collision and is in a satisfactory condition, according to the police.

Police said the assailants fled on foot after the shooting. Several 9mm cartridges were found at the scene.

In another incident on Saturday morning, an Uncedo taxi driver and his wife were fired at near their Khutsong home, police said. The driver was shot in the ankle and his wife in the legs. Their car was set alight by the assailants.

In the third incident on Saturday, an Uncedo taxi was burnt outside a house in Khutsong.

Nobody was injured.

(332)

Death after signing peace pact

Star 17/2/97

By Tommy Makoe

The three taxi officials who were shot dead on the N12 near Soweto on Wednesday last week had just minutes before their deaths signed a peace agreement aimed at ending violence which has claimed eight lives in less than two weeks.

Siphiwe Thusi, chairman of the Greater Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan Council's transport department, confirmed that the trio belonged to the Meadowlands Baragwanath Taxi Association.

The victims were the chairman of the association, A Khumalo, Boy Mahlaba and S Sibanyoni.

Thusi, whose department has been mediating between the feuding Soweto taxi organisations, said the three died after a meeting with his department and other associations to see the final part of the peace pact concluded.

Thusi said the officials were killed on their way to brief their members on the conditions of the agreement.

"We are deeply saddened by the deaths. This is a setback to the peace initiative we have made. The pact was agreed upon to end the violence."

He said the attack was a well-planned move to destabilise the peace initiative by people who did not want to see peace prevail.

"But we are not giving up. We are going to go ahead and implement the agreements. It is the only way to bring peace and stability," he said.

PROVINCE	BUDGETED COSTS 1996–97
Eastern Cape	R 66 496 000
Free State	R 81 736 000
Gauteng	R 13 478 000
KwaZulu–Natal	R 86 619 000 "
Mpumalanga	R 25 774 000 "
Northern Cape	R 3 962 000
Northern Province	R150 097 000 "
North West	R 1 300 000
	R 25 700 000 "
Western Cape	R 4 349 000

" Line function activities which fall directly under the office of the premier concerned included.

QUESTIONS

†Indicates translated version.
For written reply:

Taxi violence (332)

1. Mr M T MAFOLO asked the Minister for Safety and Security:

(1) What is the success rate in respect of the arrest of perpetrators of taxi violence;

(2) whether the issue of taxi violence is being addressed under the Sword and Shield programme; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(3) whether there has been an escalation in the incidence of taxi violence; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, (a) why and (b) to what extent;

(4) whether there is an adequate number of intelligence personnel to deal with taxi violence; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(5) whether the police took approximately two hours to respond to a blockade between Mabopane and the GaRankuwa township in the Province of North West on Tuesday, 15 October 1996; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, why?

N1E

The MINISTER FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY:

(1) 47%

(2) Yes.

A project was registered in Gauteng under the name "HI ACE". This project deals with the taxi problems and is also a part of the Sword and Shield programme. Three investigation units situated in Heidelberg, Soweto and Pretoria are part of this project.

(3) Yes.

(a) The escalation in incidences of taxi violence could be attributed to the initiative of the Government to regulate the taxi industry. Not all the role-players in the taxi industry are willing to participate in the Government initiative. Others again are broadening their interests in an already saturated market before the registration deadline, causing conflict amongst the role- players.

(b) A 19,5% escalation in taxi violence incidents between the years 1995 and 1996 was experienced. 562 Incidents occurred in 1995, and 689 incidences occurred in 1996. The following Provinces reflect the highest increases and decreases:

	1995	*1996*
Western Cape	14	220
Eastern Cape	114	119
Gauteng	264	120
Natal	41	61
Free State	30	20
Northern Province	44	38
North West Province	25	38
Mpumalanga	18	37
Northern Cape	12	3

(4) No. The available intelligence personnel have to serve a large number of investigation units. Only a small number of members is allocated to assist the taxi investigation capacities. These numbers are totally inadequate.

(5) No. The De Wild Public Order Police Unit was operational in the area. A Captain Phatlane of the De Wild Public Order Police visited a blockade along the public road near Marula Sun Hotel, at 14:30. Captain Phatlane and Inspector Tsele confronted the crowd and addressed them. They reached a solution, saying that it was better for them to be arrested by the MEC, Star Vilakazi.

Captain Phatlane phoned the MEC, Mr Vilakazi. The MEC promised to see the taxi delegation on the coming Friday, 18 October 1966. The crowd then dispersed. Captain

Phatlane then phoned and reported the blockade to De Wild Public Order Police operational room. Occurrence Book No 1126/10/96 refers. The report was made at 16:15 on 15 October 1996.

SAPS members: stress-related symptoms

33. Mr P C McKENZIE asked the Minister for Safety and Security:†

(1) (a) How many members of the South African Police Service displayed stress-related symptoms in each of the provinces in 1996 and (b) in how many of theses cases did it lead to resignation from the SAPS;

(2) whether he will make a statement on the matter?

N43E

The MINISTER FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY:

(1) (a) This statistics are not available due to the fact that many members are treated by private psychologists and general practitioners.

(b) PROVINCES	TOTAL
Gauteng	98
Western Cape	28
Free State	18
KwaZulu–Natal	12
Eastern Cape	11
Mpumalanga	5
Northern Province	4
North West	3
Northern Cape	3
TOTAL	182

(2) No.

Upgrading of police stations in KwaZulu-Natal

46. Mr D H M GIBSON asked the Minister for Safety and Security:

With reference to the plan announced in August 1996 to improve conditions at South Africa's 100 neediest police stations, (a) which of the police stations concerned fall within KwaZulu-Natal and (b) what specific action has been taken at each of these police stations following the announcement of this plan?

N81E

The MINISTER FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY:

(a) Seventeen (17) stations in KwaZulu–Natal are involved in Operation Lifeline i.e

— Richmond
— Bulwer
— Cato Manor
— Mariannhill
— Umkomaas
— Babanango
— Emathimatholo
— Mbhimulo
— Richardsbaai
— Nongoma
— KwaMasane
— Empangeni
— KwaNdabeka
— Port Shepstone
— Esagalweni
— Madadeni
— Osizbeni

(b) The purpose of Operation Lifeline is not primarily to improve conditions at stations, but to upgrade their ability to render a service to the community. This is done through a thorough analysis of 12 service areas i.e.

Core Tasks
–Proactive policing activities
– Requests for emergency service
– Investigation of crime
– Administrative requests
– Processing criminals
– Policing programmes for reducing crime

Support Process
– Community relations
– Development of Human Resource programmes to build skill and morale
– Handle administration
– Infrastructure and vehicle fleet management
– Allocate resources to maximum effectiveness
– Procurement of resources

This analysis is an inclusive process which involves each and every member of the station, as well as representatives from the CPF. A major principle in Lifeline is that the station faces a challenge in order to mange existing resources in an improved manner, and to render a better service with existing resources.

The result of the process at each station is a set of action steps which impact on each of the twelve service areas. This action steps differ from station to station according to the uniqueness of each station. These action steps number approximately 60 per station. Implementation is managed at station level, but is supported from provincial and, if necessary, from national level.

The *pro bona* services of the consultancy firm McKinsey Inc., made this project possible and they allocated substantial resources to this project. Business Against Crime also supports the project in various ways and its involvement at national level, as well as those of McKinsey, are highly appreciated.

Upgrading of police stations in Western Cape

47. Mr D H M GIBSON asked the Minister for Safety and Security:

With reference to the plan announced in August 1996 to improve conditions at South Africa's 100 neediest police stations, (a) which of the police stations concerned fall within the Western Cape and (b) what specific action has been taken at each police stations following the announcement of this plan? N82E

The MINISTER FOR SAFETY AND SECURITY:

(a) Twelve (12) stations in Western Cape are involved in Operation Lifeline i.e.

— Grassy Park
— Nyanga
— Bishop Lavis
— Guguletu
— Manenberg
— Ravensmead
— Woodstock
— Langa
— Philippi
— Khayelitsha
— Bellville South
— Pacaltsdorp

(b) The purpose of Operation Lifeline is not primarily to improve conditions at stations, but to upgrade their ability to render a service to the community. This is done through a thorough analysis of 12 service areas i.e.

Core Tasks
–Proactive policing activities
– Requests for emergency service
– Investigation of crime
– Administrative requests
– Processing criminals
– Policing programmes for reducing crime

Support Process
– Community relations
– Development of Human
– Resource programmes to build skill and morale
– Handle administration
– Infrastructure and vehicle fleet management
– Allocate resources to maxi mum effectiveness
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This analysis is an exclusive process which involves each and every member of the station, as well as representatives from the CPF. A major principle in Lifeline is that the station faces a challenge in order to manage existing resources in an improved manner, and to render a better service with existing resources.

The result of the process at each station is a set of action steps which impact on each of the twelve service areas. This action steps differ from station

Bid to improve image of sedan taxi

ARG 1/4/97

Industry undermined by corruption

service (332)

CHENÉ BLIGNAUT
STAFF REPORTER

Internal politics and poor communication are dividing the ranks of sedan-taxi drivers and owners in Cape Town, with serious implications for the city's burgeoning tourism industry.

Sedan or metered taxis are the international mode of transport for tourists, but locally this highly personalised service is being undermined by piracy, overcharging, bribery and corruption.

This emerged at a meeting of about 30 concerned drivers and owners in Mowbray last week to discuss "the way forward" in the fragmented and poorly regulated industry.

The meeting was called by the so-called Interim Sedan Metered Taxi Committee of Cape Town, which was appointed in January by a group of about 50 drivers and owners who had become "frustrated with the status quo". There are believed to be between 200 and 400 sedan taxis operating in the metropolitan area. A consultant was appointed by the Cape Town Municipality to attend the meeting as an observer.

Problems facing the industry include high levels of piracy (about half of the industry operates without licences), overcharging and competition from tour operators and buses who the drivers say are "taking away our bread and butter".

Bribery and corruption at hotels has also been identified as a problem. Porters reportedly act as middle-men, charging taxi drivers for every customer "referred" by them.

The committee has identified the need for a unified body accepted by the majority of drivers and owners to communicate the industry's needs to the various tourism and transport authorities and businesses in the city. They also suggested creating a company in which owners and drivers could become shareholders for R100 per month and which, they say, would provide industry members with more security.

Other proposals include:

- The establishment of a metro taxi office with a toll-free number;
- The grading of taxis;
- Standardising tariffs;
- A training school for drivers; and,
- The implementation of a code of conduct.

R300m boost for taxi industry

(332)

CT(BR) 3/4/97

FRANK NXUMALO

The taxi industry is poised to benefit from a refreshing initiative that will see 25 multipurpose facilities built in Gauteng and Mpumalanga at a cost of R12 million each.

The facilities will include spares shops, filling stations, tyre shops with balancing and alignment equipment and motor workshops with engine exchange and gearbox repair functions.

These workstations will be known as Self Fit Auto Centres (Selfa) and will eventually be extended to cover every taxi rank in the country over a period of five years.

According to Elijah Phali, Selfa's national director, the private sector has formally committed itself to guaranteeing 80 percent bonds to cover the costs of construction.

The taxi industry will repay the loans over a period of 10 years on attractive terms. However, each local association will have to provide 20 percent of the money upfront by selling shares to its members.

Construction of the first Selfa in the country is scheduled to begin soon at Roodekop on the East Rand. Each Selfa will service between 1 000 and 1 500 taxis.

Phali said the Katlehong People's Taxi Association, the local association that runs Roodekop, will sell tranches of 1 000 shares at R1 each to its 3 400 members, with an upper limit of 5 000 shares an individual.

The rest of the Selfa centres will be funded under similar arrangements and profit will be ploughed back to benefit local association members. One of the benefits is a R100 000 life policy for each operator and his family, a first for the industry.

The premiums for the life policy will be on contributory basis between Selfa and the individual, who will be required to buy an average of 30 litres of petrol a day for 25 days in a month from a Selfa filling station. This will guarantee his contribution.

However, Selfa members yesterday made an impassioned plea to the government to facilitate the growth and success of the project by ironing out historical imbalances in the public transport sector.

They said that historically, the government had subsidised other forms of public transport by up to 70 percent, whereas there was not a single subsidised taxi route in the country.

TRANSPORT *Minibus industry's R24m plan for KwaZulu Natal*

'Taxi city' drive to empowerment

ET(BE) 4/4/97 (332)



IMPORTANT CROSSROADS *The KwaZulu Natal minibus industry is gearing up to make history on Monday*

SHIRLEY JONES

Durban — At least R24 million is to be invested in 12 "taxi cities" dotted around KwaZulu Natal in a bid to empower the local minibus industry, the project consultants said yesterday.

Skhonza Nxasana, the manager of Nkonki Sizwe Ntsaluba Chartered Accountants, said the venture, which might go national, would be presented to the private sector on Monday at a minibus investment conference.

The first architectural model of the basic taxi city would be unveiled. The general concept provided for loading and offloading areas for passengers, together with services to the minibus industry such as petrol and service stations, a spare parts and accessory dealer, a motor dealership and an office which could provide insurance and finance to minibus owners. The concentration of passengers would also make the inclusion of a shopping centre feasible, he said.

Nxasana said it was hoped business would invest in the concept. So far there had been a positive response, especially from oil companies.

There had also been a favourable response from the bosses of the still unregulated minibus-taxi industry, he said.

Nxasana said KwaZulu Natal had been divided into 12 regions, each of which would get a taxi city. He said that each taxi city would probably be run by a co-operative owned by the various minibus associations, with a Section 21 company as overall supervisor for the region.

He explained that a broad transport policy framework was in the throes of being formulated. This aimed at restructuring and empowering the minibus industry on a sustainable basis. The taxi city project, which would probably go forward to the national taxi task team, had run parallel to the national white paper on land passenger transport.

Nxasana pointed out that the government could not subsidise the minibus industry. "But we believe this industry can fund itself through diversifying into related industries," he said. This could increase profits which would offset the need for fare increases.

Taxi industry to form nonprofit company

BD 8/4/97 (332)

Farouk Chothia

DURBAN — A section 21 company was to be formed in KwaZulu-Natal to administer a taxi development fund to transform the taxi industry into a professional and economically viable entity, Sizwa Nxasana, a consultant to provincial transport MEC Sibusiso Ndebele, said yesterday.

Addressing a conference in Durban aimed at attracting investments into the industry, Nxasana said that the private sector should give financial support to the company, which would be known as the KwaZulu-Natal Taxi Development Company, so that the fund could be established.

The fund would help in capacity-building for the industry, the registration of trading co-operatives which would be operated by members of the industry, and the creation of a support fund for venture capital and credit guarantee.

Ndebele intended to ensure that the private sector, taxi industry and government would have equal representation as directors of the company, Nxasana said.

KwaZulu-Natal transport department taxi registrar George Mahlalela said that investors who throw their weight behind the transformation of the industry would have "opportunities" in, for example, vehicle sales and dealership and short-term insurances.

Ndebele said "desperadoes" were trying to derail transformation of the industry.

"The problem we are now facing rises from the fact that many of the agents who tried to sabotage the future of our province and country made themselves a home in the taxi industry. Its chaotic nature provided a smokescreen for their operations," Ndebele said.

Parties in the industry were forging ahead with unity to end the violence, Ndebele said.

Sarhwu pensions won't bankroll Sun Air bid

ARG 8/4/97 (332)

ALIDE DASNOIS
BUSINESS EDITOR

SA Railway and Harbour Workers' Union members' retirement money will not be used to bankroll the bid for Sun Air by the Bhekilanga consortium, consortium chairman Sandile Zungu has said.

Mr Zungu heads the investment arm of the SA Railway and Harbour Workers' Union (Sarhwu), which as part of Bhekilanga is bidding for a stake in the airline with Virgin Atlantic.

The five other members of the consortium, which announced at the weekend that it would bid for Sun Air, are the National Empowerment Corporation, Ukhozi Investments, Women in Capital Growth, Bophirima Investment Holdings and African Renaissance Holdings.

BUSINESS INTERVIEW

'For us this is a portfolio investment. We are looking for investment value, not for control of Sun Air'

Mr Zungu told the Cape Argus in an interview that Sarhwu's stake in Sun Air would be relatively small.

"Our share could be as little as 6%," he said.

He expected that Sun Air workers would get up to 10% and the National Empowerment Fund up to 20%, leaving a 70% stake in the airline up for grabs. The six members of the consortium would share this with Virgin Atlantic if their bid was accepted, he said.

"For us this is a portfolio investment. We are looking for investment value, not for control of Sun Air. We will not be running it on a day-to-day basis."

Mr Zungu said Bhekilanga would go to the market for financial backing, "like any other black empowerment fund".

Sarhwu did not have its own pension fund, like the National Union of Mineworkers, for instance. Members contributed to the Transnet pension fund.

Absa Merchant Bank, which had been retained by Bhekilanga to look for financial backing for the bid, might choose to approach the R30-billion Transnet pension fund, he said. "But this fund has its own trustees and its own investment guidelines and they might tell us to move on. The Transnet pension fund has nothing to do with this bid," he said.

Asked about possible conflicts of interests if Sarwhu members were both employees of Sun Air and investors in the airline, Mr Zungu said: "We don't pretend there can never be conflict, but we think we can manage it better."

Sarhwu Investment Holdings' brief was to get the best investment returns for its shareholder, the Sarwhu Enablement Trust, he said. The union had a different brief.

"We pick investments on certain criteria which can be different from those of labour, so there can be conflict. We are not saying we can resolve this, but we have a better way of managing it so no-one loses out."

Soldiers mobilised for Monday taxi showdown

ARG 10/4/97 (332)

ANDREA WEISS
METRO CORRESPONDENT

The long-awaited crackdown on minibus taxis begins on Monday when Cape Town traffic officers team up with the army and police to enforce a law requiring them to display stickers showing their approved routes.

The aim is to end strife over lucrative routes after violence flared again this year.

The temporary stickers are the first step towards regulating the strife-torn industry and will be followed by permanent markings on the sides of taxis, and possibly on roofs, to allow for helicopter observation.

The crackdown follows a strongly worded statement from provincial Transport Minister Leonard Ramatlakane to traffic departments as they had yet to enforce the law, which was passed in December.

But city traffic manager Mark Sangster said an enforcement programme was in its final planning stages and D-day was Monday, when taxis would be fined R150 for failing to display the brightly coloured stickers that show the start and end points of approved taxi routes.

Drivers had until the end of January to register, but Mr Sangster said there had been delays because the Department of Transport did not have enough stickers.

Mr Sangster said the enforcement programme would be finalised at a meeting at the Castle today.

He said he had instructed his department that the regulation would have to be enforced by Monday – "that is the bottom line".

However, because of the problems in the issue of stickers, application of the law would have to be done with discretion.

Mr Ramatlakane said he wanted to see "action from traffic police without any reservation, as they are employed to perform this function".

Honeymoon over for taxis

Traffic police to enforce new law from tomorrow

ST(CM) 13/4/97 (332)

CHARL DE VILLIERS

THE honeymoon is over for Cape Town's blood-drenched taxi industry — from tomorrow, taxi operators who break the rules can expect little mercy from law enforcers.

In the toughest clampdown yet on fighting over taxi routes, provincial transport MEC Leonard Ramatlakane has demanded "unreserved" action from traffic authorities in imposing a law which compels local taxis to display official route markers.

Traffic police will be backed by police reservists and soldiers when they begin enforcing a law that marks the first major step towards regulating the city's chaotic mini-bus taxi sector. Three mayors have thrown their weight behind the move.

Operators who do not have stickers showing their approved start and end points risk R150 fines, and those who do not yet have these signs have been urged to get them immediately.

The new legislation, pioneered by Ramatlakane, has come as a major relief for Cape Town's police service which, until now, has been virtually defenceless to act against taxi miscreants, Western Cape police spokesman John Sterrenberg said on Friday.

"We now have legislation to give us the authority to act. This joint operation will entail co-operation between the police, SA National Defence Force and the various traffic departments," he said.

And according to police spokeswoman Virna Simon, much of the police service's recent success against taxi violence could be attributed to tip-offs from a "fed-up" public.

"It's the innocents who get injured and killed in the crossfire. Witnesses are assured absolute confidentiality if they contact the police services with information," she added.

Mark Jansen, spokesman for the Urban Monitoring and Awareness Committee, said the new stickers should minimise conflict at certified ranks.

"When taximen see a vehicle they don't recognise on their routes, they don't negotiate. They either take the tresspasser's money, or take him out.

"The new system should bring peace because it will clearly state which vehicles work which routes," Jansen added.

The Chief Magistrate has determined that transgressors must be fined R150 if their vehicles are not properly marked, "and all that is now left is for the traffic police, with the support of the SAPS and the army, to implement this measure", said a spokesman for Ramatlakane's office.

"I now want to see action from traffic police without any reservation, as they are employed to perform this function," Ramatlakane said.

Crackdown on city taxis

(332)

ERIC NTABAZALILA

CT 14/4/97

IN a second attempt to get taxi operators to comply with a new regulation compelling them to carry route stickers on their taxis, traffic officers will crack down on offenders today.

The stickers are part of a peace pact with the warring taxi associations to try to make operators stick to their routes.

The crackdown was ordered yesterday by Western Cape Transport MEC Mr Leonard Ramatlakane.

It comes in the wake of an order from the minister last week that fines of R150 were to be levied on operators of taxis without stickers identifying their routes.

But according to Mr Dumisa Ntuli, the minister's spokesman, the order was ineffectual.

He said taxi associations had agreed to carry the stickers on their taxis, but there were still individual operators who were trying to cut in on other taxis' territories and refused to use the stickers.

Thousands of traffic fines have not been paid by taxi drivers and other township motorists.

Asked if it were possible to collect fines in the townships, Ntuli said: "The minister and the department of transport played their part by putting the regulation in place. Now the traffic department must ensure there are stickers on each taxi operating in the region. We hope from now on there will be visible enforcement of the regulation."

He said traffic officers would get support from the army and police if they needed it.

Ramatlakane said yesterday the traffic department had thought the violence in the taxi industry had abated.

"They therefore felt there was no need to enforce the regulation, as it might have led to further violence.

"What we are striving for here is peace, a long-term solution to the killing."

He said he had talked to the new Cape Town traffic chief, Mr Mark Sangster, who promised to institute an immediate crackdown.

He said Sangster was unaware that traffic officers were dragging their feet.

Taxi crackdown nets scores of offenders

ARG 14/4/97 (332)

JOHAN SCHRONEN
AND ANDREA BOTHA
STAFF REPORTERS

A clampdown aimed at ending taxi violence in the Peninsula began today when scores of minibus taxi drivers were stopped and fined for not displaying stickers showing their approved routes.

The Cape Town traffic department concentrated on the Cape Town station deck taxi rank.

The operation, which began at 7am, will carry on indefinitely. It follows a government announcement of stringent measures to regulate the taxi industry.

A traffic officer said minibus taxi operators had had ample warning and had been given two grace periods in the past two months.

Several drivers who were fined said the stickers were not fair. They threatened to disrupt the public transport system.



ROY WIGLEY

Routed out: traffic officers at a roadblock on the Cape Town station deck fine operators for failing to display stickers showing destinations

But the traffic officer said all operators with roadworthy vehicles and the required permits had been issued with stickers.

Days were numbered for illegal operators who tainted the minibus taxi industry by creating chaos and strife, he said.

Police, the army and traffic police are teaming up to enforce the law requiring minibuses to display the stickers. Operators without stickers were fined R150 but those without permits got fines up to R600.

Minibus blitz a 'huge success'

ARG 15/4/97

ANDREA BOTHA
STAFF REPORTER

Police have called the first day of the long-awaited crackdown on Peninsula minibus taxis "a huge success".

Yesterday was the first day of the operation by police, traffic officers and the army to enforce the new law requiring taxi operators on specific routes to display route stickers. Taxis failing to display the stickers are fined R150.

Taxis were also checked for roadworthiness and contraventions of other laws.

Police spokesman Wicus Holtzhausen said five roadblocks were set up in Bellville but figures of how many operators were fined or arrested were not yet available. The operation had been a major success and would continue for "quite some time".

Head of Police Communications John Sterrenberg said the response of most taxi drivers had been positive, although some felt they were being fined unfairly.

Taxis operating from the most dangerous ranks in Bellville, Wynberg, Mowbray, Langa, Nyanga, Cape Town and Khayelitsha are now required by law to bear stickers showing which routes they have the right to use.

The law was passed in December and operators were given four months to obtain stickers.

Provincial Department of Transport spokesman Dubisane Ntuli said the stickers would play a vital role in combating violence in the taxi industry.

"The taxi organisations fight over who controls which ranks. The stickers now clearly identify the routes."

Mr Ntuli said his department had so far had three complaints about people who felt they had been treated unfairly.

"Anyone who feels he has been unfairly treated must lodge an official complaint with the department."

Service back to normal after three shot dead in taxi-war violence

(332)

By Gill Gifford

Star 15/4/97

Taxi services in Soweto returned to normal this morning after three people were killed and another injured in what police believe was a taxi-war shooting yesterday.

Police said the incident occurred in White City, and the victims were in a car owned by a senior member of the Witwatersrand African Taxi Association.

Central Johannesburg taxi commuters were stranded during peak hours yesterday afternoon when taxis did not arrive to ferry them to their destinations.

Police said today that a unit assigned to monitor taxi violence said that no incidents had been reported in Soweto since 4am.

However, commuters from Soweto into the city centre said the situation was still tense and services disrupted.

Jacob Ledwaba of the Lehalbile Taxi Organisation said although taxi operators were not expecting more violence, his organisation planned to contact police about the continued shootings.

"Three of our drivers were shot dead in Mabopane yesterday evening. Adequate steps are not being taken to stop these random killings," Ledwaba said.

axi war erupts again

(332)

Sowetan 15/4/97



The bodies of two of the three men believed to be members of the Witwatersrand Taxi Owners Association-Johannesburg Taxi Association (Wata-Jata) lie sprawled on the road while police forensic experts conduct investigations at the scene of the shooting. PIC: PAT SEBOKO

By Themba Sepotokele

SOWETO taxi violence yesterday resurfaced with the slaying of three people believed to be members of the Witwatersrand Taxi Owners' Association-Johannesburg Taxi Association (Wata-Jata) between White City Jabavu and Mofolo.

Soweto police spokesman Inspector John Shiburi said the three – aged 24, 27 and 30 – were travelling in a car along Roodepoort Road when a group of men attacked them.

The driver of the car escaped unhurt after pleading with the attackers that he was disabled.

Shiburi said police believed the killings were taxi-related because the assailants were identified as members of the Nancefield and Dube West Taxi Association (Nanduwe).

He said the men came under attack after stopping at a robot. Two of them had bullet wounds in the chest and one was shot in the neck. Their names will be released after their next-of-kin have been informed.

Police found spent 9mm cartridges at the scene of the shooting, said Shiburi.

There was pandemonium when forensic experts were conducting investigations, as shooting erupted on the same road a short distance away from the scene of the incident.

Scores of police and witnesses scuttled for cover when shots were fired.

A police Casspir went to where the shots were coming from near the Soweto Petrol Services Centre. Police immediately cordoned off the area.

Police found spent 9mm cartridges, a private car and a minibus taxi with bullet holes.

Petrol attendants were removing the bloodstains of a man injured during the shooting. Taxi operators who had converged on the petrol station claimed that Wata-Jata was responsible for the shooting.

Sowetan later learnt that taxi operators known as Network 1 had mobilised against a splinter group which is refusing to co-operate with the guidelines of the Gauteng department of transport to bring all taxi associations under one umbrella body.

Taxi operators said the splinter group had taken routes by force and refused to allow others to operate on them.

According to witnesses, trouble started last Thursday with sporadic shootings between feuding associations on the major taxi routes in Meadowlands, White City Jabavu and Zola.

However, no casualties were reported.

The latest violence comes after plans by the Transport Ministry, the Justice Ministry and the Ministry of Safety and Security to root out violence in the trouble-torn taxi industry.

Taxi violence has not abated despite the Government's initiatives to become tough on perpetrators of taxi violence.

Representatives of Network 1 were meeting Gauteng MEC for safety and security Mrs Jessie Duarte to seek solutions to the problem.

Police tribute to operators after taxi blitz

Combined op nets 59

(332)

ARG 16/4/97

JOSEPH ARANES
STAFF REPORTER

Peninsula law enforcers fined 59 minibus taxi drivers for various offences during a six-hour blitz by traffic officers, the army and police.

The operation was part of the campaign to enforce the new law requiring operators on specific routes to display route stickers.

Several roadblocks were set up in the Bellville area yesterday and forces checked taxis for unroadworthy condition and other contraventions.

Of the 159 fines issued, 43 were for unroadworthy vehicles, 40 for drivers not carrying their licences and 23 for drivers who could not produce their public drivers' permits. Only seven were fined for not displaying route stickers. Other fines were for a range of offences.

Police spokesman Wicus Holtzhausen said the operation had been a great success and he praised taxi operators and drivers for co-operating.

All taxis operating from the Peninsula's eight most troubled ranks – Bellville, Wynberg, Mowbray, Langa, Nyanga, Cape Town station and two in Khayelitsha – are now required by law to bear stickers on their vehicles showing the routes on which they have the right to operate.

Anyone without a sticker is fined R150. The law was passed in December and operators were given four months to get the stickers.

Superintendent Holtzhausen said the operation, which would continue on an ad hoc basis, was an important step towards stamping out taxi violence.

He said the authorities were serious about the campaign and taxi drivers and operators who failed to pay fines or appear in court would be arrested.

NEWS NATIONAL



Monday's taxi violence in Soweto which claimed three lives yesterday forced many commuters to resort to use trains. *Sowetan* photographer Veli Nhlapo captured these commuters forcing their way into an already overcrowded coach at Langlaagte Station during the afternoon rush hour yesterday.

Feuding taxi men meet tomorrow

(332)

Sowetan 16/4/97

Commuters take to the trains as situation remains tense

By Themba Sepotokele and Muzi Mkhwanazi

FEUDING Soweto taxi associations will meet with the Gauteng transport department and the ministry of safety and security tomorrow to find solutions to the resurgent taxi violence in the area.

Safety and security spokesman Mr Mongezi Miya said a follow-up meeting was scheduled for tomorrow because nothing concrete was discussed at Monday's meeting.

According to Soweto police spokesman Inspector John Shiburi, the situation was tense after the slaying of three taximen on Monday. Scores of commuters were left stranded with few taxis operating.

Contacted for comment yesterday, members of the Witwatersrand Taxi Owners' Association-Johannesburg Taxi Association (Wata-Jata) said the three men who were killed were not taxi operators but mechanics. They were driving a car belonging to an executive member of Wata-Jata.

A Wata-Jata spokesman told journalists: "Leave us alone because this does not concern you. We are losing lives."

A 32-year-old taxi driver was shot dead and two passengers injured when gunmen opened fire on their car in Pretoria on Monday night, police said yesterday.

Meanwhile, efforts of the Gauteng government to restructure the taxi industry have been dealt a blow by the withdrawal of the South African Long Distance Transport Association (Saldta) from the Gauteng taxi summit currently being held at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park.

Saldta development chairman Mr David Mofokeng said yesterday his organisation was only invited on the eve of the summit.

"We are a national body not an organisation and as such the invitation did not allow us enough time to consult with our members."

Mr Sibusiso Buthelezi, personal assistant to the Gauteng MEC for transport, refuted the allegations that Saldta had not been informed and said they had been part of the stakeholders which formed the structures. He said he was surprised by their action.

Bad service is harming city's image for visitors

STAFF REPORTER

Poor service from many sedan taxi operators in Cape Town is harming the city's image among foreign visitors, who say this international mode of transport is often not up to scratch.

This is according to a report on a service measurement pilot project undertaken for the Cape Town municipality as part of an initiative to jack up service in the tourism industry.

The project identifies an urgent need for corrective and preventive measures to close the "service gaps".

Sixty foreign visitors from more than 10 countries were asked about their experiences in metered taxis.

Half said they had had service-related problems, ranging from attempts to overcharge, deliberately taking people to the wrong addresses and unnecessary detours, to difficulty hiring taxis from certain places and having to make use of "pirate" (illegal) taxis. Eight percent of participants would not advise others to use sedan taxis in Cape Town because of dissatisfaction with the service or prices.

The visitors interviewed had, on average, made more than four trips by metered taxi in the city and some had made as many as 20.

The average participant spent about R3 000 on accommodation, meals, tours, transport, entertainment, shopping and sundry expenses during his or her stay, and some spent as much as R8 500.

More than 50 percent were professionals, many in management positions. Older visitors and younger women are two important groups who used taxis.

The report stresses the "increasingly important role of meter taxis" as traffic flows in the inter city increased and streets get more congested during the Olympics, if Cape Town hosts the 2004 Games.

Metered taxis form a vital part of inner-city transportation networks world-wide.

There are believed to be about 400 sedan taxis in Cape Town, many of which operate illegally. In many instances poor service is the result of "deep-seated economic problems", increasing competition from tour buses and problems arising from illegal operators, the report says.

The situation is further compounded by low morale, lack of skills and poor communication with other tourism industries.

The taxi test: h-

Argus 'tourist' on the roc

CHENÉ BLIGNAUT
STAFF REPORTER

How do foreign visitors rate Cape Town's rag-tag fleet of sedan taxis, their drivers and the fares they charge?

Not very highly, according to a survey of 60 tourists from overseas, half of whom said they had had problems ranging from overcharging to simply not being able to find taxis when they needed them.

In an attempt to find out what sort of service taxi companies and drivers offer visitors, I armed myself with a rucksack and a phoney German accent and took to the tourist routes.

One of the first things I discovered was that taxi drivers seem easily duped. As many as five fell for the accent which I believed would not fool anyone. Not even my obvious questions and feverish note-taking alerted them to the fact that they might not be dealing with a well-heeled German tourist.

My first stop was the Plein Street taxi rank next to the Grand Parade where I timidly approached a Magicab Radio Taxi driver and asked to be taken to "ze" Bay Hotel in Camps Bay.

I was told it would cost me "thirty-something"rands but that the price would be determined by the meter. The car was neat, but very old, the driver casually dressed and, at first, not very talkative or friendly.

But my inquiry about good shopping venues in the city sparked his interest. He assured me N1 City or Cavendish Square would be my best bets and strongly advised against the Waterfront because it was "too expensive".

He started warning me about unscrupulous taxi drivers who were giving the industry a bad name but in the same breath offered to take me to places of scenic interest for a "special price" in his own car.

On a short trip such as from my hotel to the Waterfront, this could save me R10, while I would pay R150 less for a trip to Cape Point or Stellenbosch which normally cost around R400, he said. (A bus trip to Cape Point or Stellenbosch costs between R145 and R185, including entrance fees, leaving at 8.30am and returning at 5.30pm.)

I paid R35 for the trip along Plein Street and over Kloofnek although the meter reading was closer to R31.

On formal inquiry to the Magicab office later, I was told a trip from Plein Street to the Waterfront cost R50 and to Cape Point in the region of R350.

My rating for this company is "fair".

My next trip was with a Marine taxi from the Bay Hotel to Captour's offices in Adderley street, roughly the same distance as the first trip.

After waiting for 25 minutes, a very polite and neatly dressed driver collected me, opening the passenger door and apologising for the delay. The car was clean and in a very good condition. I was told that the trip would cost me in the region of R50. When asked if I would prefer the scenic or mountain route, I played dumb, asking for whichever would be the quickest. He assured me the distance was exactly the same. Naturally, we took the scenic route.

Again I was advised not to go near the Waterfront. "You won't find what you are looking for there, it is very touristy." His recommendation for shopping was Tyger Valley. The trip would cost me R150.

His tariff to Cape Point was R850, but for me he would make a special price of R600.

After assuring me that crime was no longer a problem in the city, the talkative driver proceeded to tell me he never travelled without a gun, had been involved in seven shoot-outs with criminals and had survived as a taxi driver for so long only because of his combat training.

"But that's part of life here," he tried to reassure me, warning me not to walk around alone at night.

A spokesman for the Marine Taxis office told me a trip from the Bay Hotel to Adderley Street cost R55 and he estimated a trip to Cape Point at R750.

This company deserves no more than a "fair" rating.

From Captour, I went to the Waterfront in a Waterfront bus at a cost of R1,10.

A taxi ride over a similar distance, from the Victoria and Alfred Hotel to the Cape Sun Hotel, cost me R14 in a run-down, rusty old car. The driver, dressed in jeans, T-shirt and cap ,was not in the mood for conversation, apart from advising me to steer clear of the Waterfront.

We travelled along Coen Steytler Avenue, around both circles in Adderley Street and right into Strand Street to the hotel. When I wanted to pay, he had no change for a R50 and could offer no alternative. I eventually "found" the right amount in my purse.

No company name was displayed on the side of the car and the driver refused to give me a card or telephone number.

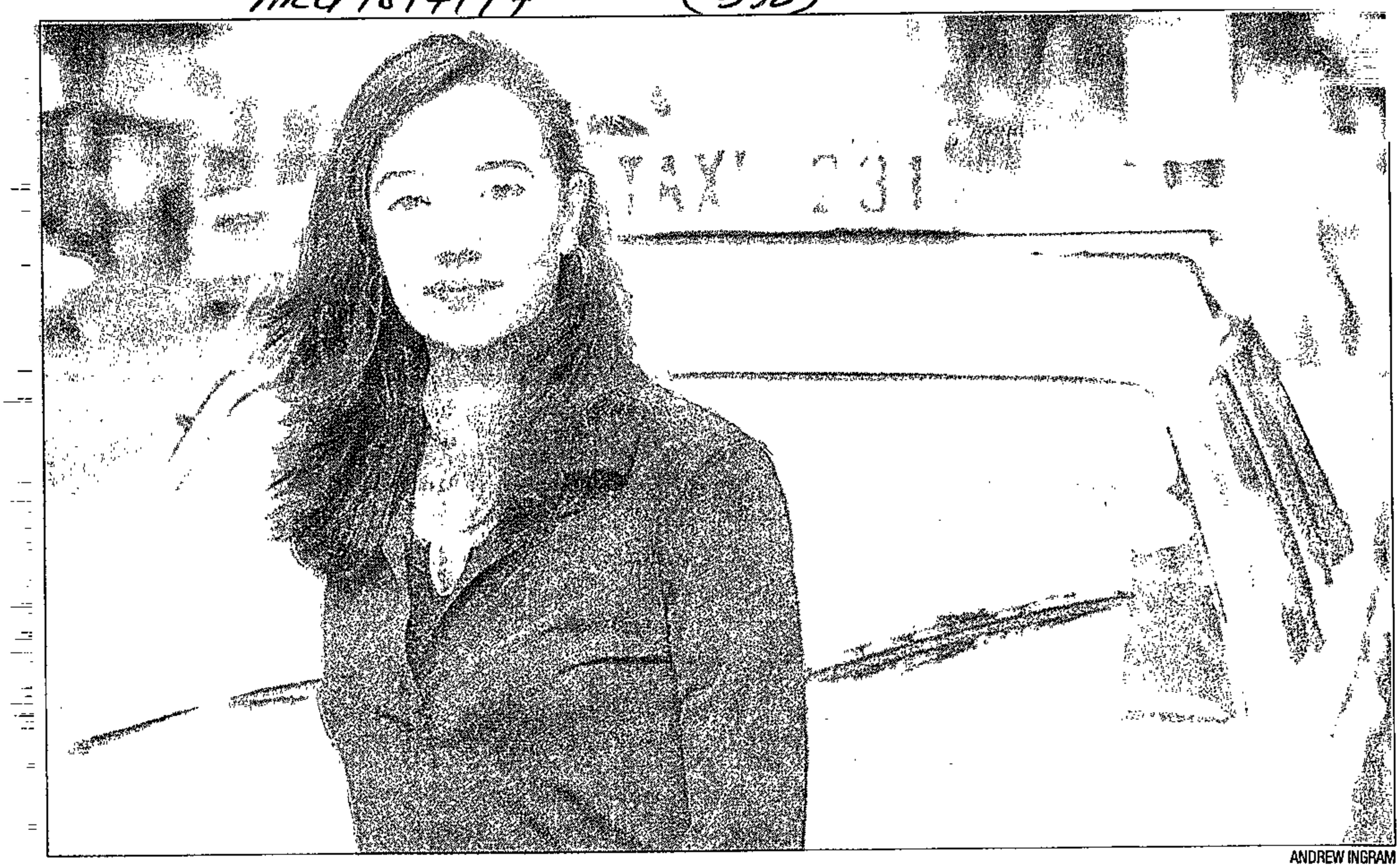
Naturally, I have to rate this taxi as "poor".

The next expedition was from the Peninsula Hotel in Sea Point to Cape Town International Airport on a Saturday night with my German husband in an attempt to make my performance more credible.

·w do passengers fare?

·d in search of ripoffs and good deals

ARG 18/4/97 (332)



ANDREW INGRAM

Under cover: Cape Argus reporter Chené Blignaut takes to the tourist routes to experience the service provided by sedan taxis

For this trip the Intercape airport shuttle charges R30 a person.

A Sea Point Taxis driver arrived within two minutes of my call and we were greeted by a friendly, elderly woman in a white uniform in a neat, clearly marked car.

She said the trip would cost us about R90. Her rate to Cape Point was R500, but she recommended we rather take a bus because it would be cheaper and more enjoyable.

She chatted all the way to the airport, answering all our questions and doing her best to promote the city and the country.

"The Waterfront is really a blessing because you can go there any time, even at night and when the weather is bad," she said.

Crime in Cape Town simply was not a problem, except in the townships where people still killed one another, she assured us.

The best place for shopping in town was the Green Point flea market where you found the best bargains but the Waterfront also offered a good selection of shops, she told us. She advised us not to use minibus taxis "unless you are really desperate".

The trip cost R106 but she asked if she could make out the receipt for R110, to which which my husband agreed.

My official inquiry to Sea Point Taxis owner Ernest MacDonald confirmed the rate to the airport as between R110 and R120 and to Cape Point as about R500.

We both agreed this company's performance was "very good".

At the airport we flagged down another taxi to get back to the Peninsula Hotel and to our surprise the driver was also a woman.

No name was displayed on the side of the car but we were told the company was called J S taxis. The driver, dressed in a casual track suit, told us the trip would be between R120 and R130.

Her rate to Cape Point was R600, but she advised us not to take a taxi but a bus or a rented car.

Her recommendations for shopping included the Green Point flea market and Tyger Valley centre. She said the Waterfront was expensive for shopping, but the restaurants were quite reasonable.

Crime was not a problem, apart from pickpockets "who are among the best in the world", she said.

She warned us against unscrupulous taxi operators, adding that her own boss would rather drive a long route to try to make more money out of tourists. Other drivers would activate their meters from the time they received a call and, in one instance she knew of, a driver charged a couple R150 from the airport to Bellville, which should cost no more than R50.

"But I don't believe in cheating people," she said.

We paid R150 for the trip.

I could find no trace of JS Taxis in the telephone directory and nor could Telkom's directory inquiry service.

My rating for this company's service is "fair".

Although most drivers appeared helpful and friendly, my experiences clearly illustrate the need for training, standardisation of rates and services and proper control over the industry from the authorities.

Gamble with injury or death in a taxi

Star 19/4/97 (332)

The taxi industry is once again in upheaval. Drivers and others associated with the industry are being 'assassinated' as rival groups vie for business. Ultimately, it is the commuters who daily run the gauntlet and pray they will reach their destinations alive. CRAIG URQUHART investigates

There is a fine line between arriving at work on time and ending up as another victim of Gauteng's dynamic and dangerous taxi industry.

Hardly a day goes by when minibus taxis are not involved in horrific accidents, or their drivers are targeted in the seemingly senseless ongoing disputes over routes and ranks. And yet, more than half of South Africa's population use this mode of transport.

Grace Molefe, who commutes from White City, Soweto, into Johannesburg by minibus taxi each day, says she is simply making the best of a bad situation.

"This is not the best way to travel, but it makes sure that I get to work and back home again quickly and without the problems of the buses," she says.

Despite this efficiency, Molefe says travelling by minibus comes with its own set of problems. She says she is constantly frightened of being involved in a taxi violence-related shooting, while the recklessness of many of the drivers constantly puts the lives of passengers at risk.

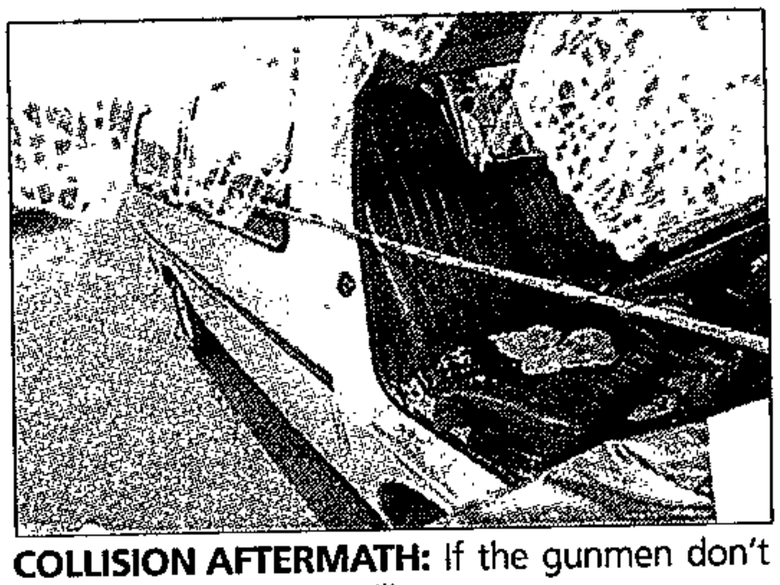
"They want to get from A to B as quickly as possible because the money is so good, so there is always the risk of being involved in an accident," she says.

It takes between 25 and 35 minutes for a minibus driver to get from Soweto to Johannesburg and, with hundreds of taxis operating on the same route, the ingredients are all there for open conflict.

June Nkanyane, who commutes from Katlehong, on the East Rand, to Johannesburg's CBD, has witnessed the escalating violence in her township in recent weeks and wonders whether she will be caught in a minibus that is targeted.

"There is no way we can tell who is going to be next. The only time I relax is when I reach work in the morning and when I get off the minibus at night," she says.

Minibus drivers operating in two of Gauteng's current hotspots, Soweto and Midrand, say the solution to the ongoing violence is simple: drivers must be restricted to their designated routes and they must all be registered.



COLLISION AFTERMATH: If the gunmen don't get you, wild driving will

"Anyone operating a pirate taxi knows he will be found out very quickly – and he can die for that," according to one driver.

At least 14 people have been killed and 16 injured in taxi-related violence in Gauteng over the past month, and police are battling to keep the lid on the pressure cooker which could see a return to widespread "mafia-style" violence.

And at least 40 people associated with the industry have been murdered and 27 injured in Gauteng since the beginning of the year.

The growing number of pirate taxis and disputes over taxi ranks and routes – particularly on the long-distance hauls – have resulted in an escalation of bloodshed in the highly lucrative and volatile industry.

Tensions are growing in Midrand, on the East Rand, at Hammanskraal and particularly in Soweto.

"What the hell can we do? We are trying to conduct proactive policing, but the (affected) areas are so large and we don't have the resources to deal with it effectively," says Senior Superintendent Eric Roos, acting provincial head of serious violent crimes in Gauteng.

Midrand has seen a sudden upsurge in taxi-related violence over the past month, with three people killed in two separate incidents. Two weeks ago, gunmen fired more than 20 rounds at two people in a car near Glen Austin Extension 3, killing them instantly.

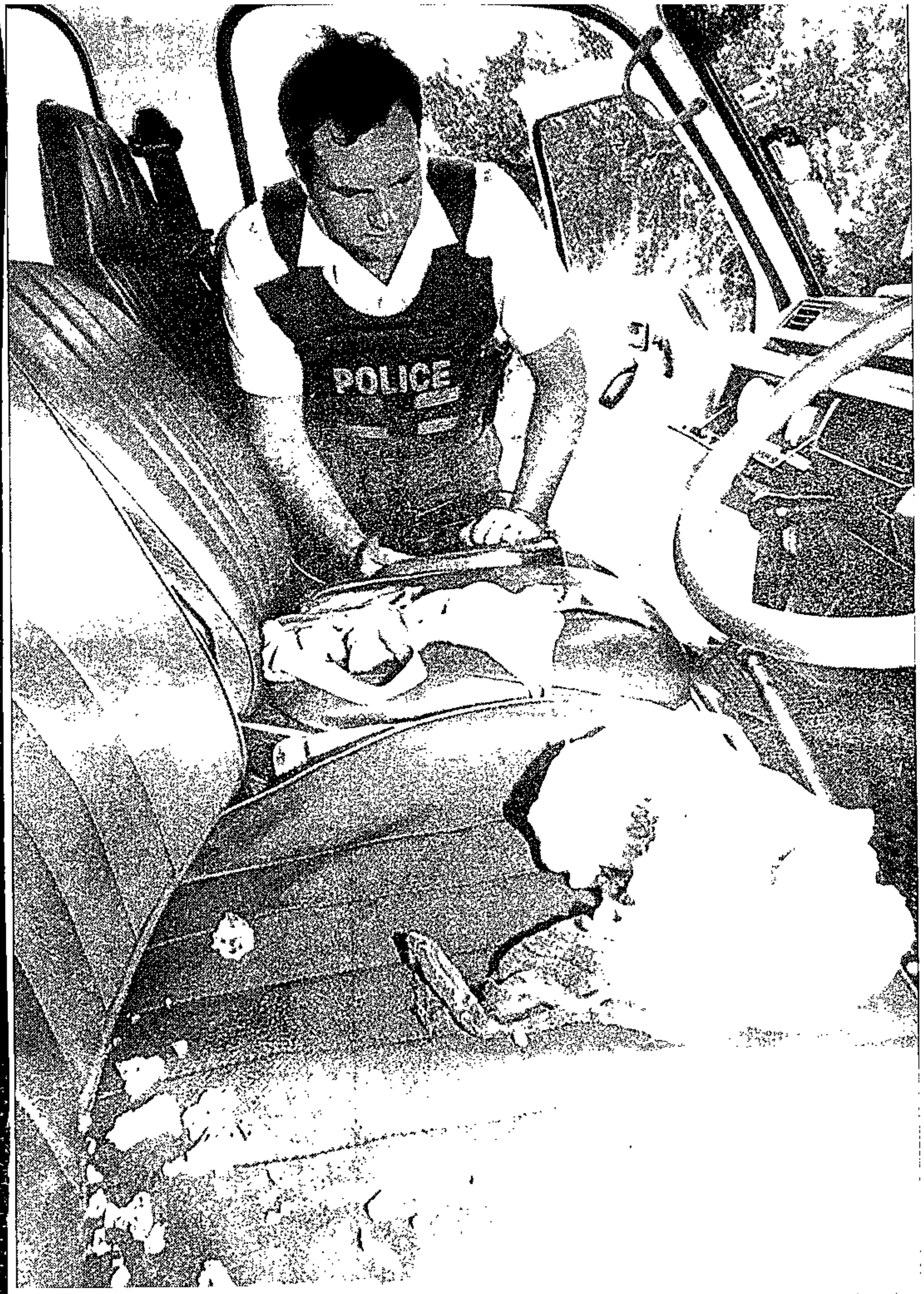
Police say that apart from a few "isolated" incidents in Johannesburg, there are no indications of a return to the bloodbaths of 1994 and 1995, when there were hundreds of shootings in and around Johannesburg. However, last Friday, one person was killed and four others were injured in a shootout at a taxi rank at the Eastgate shopping centre in Bedfordview.

Jacob Ledwaba of the Lehlabile Taxi Organisation says the situation in various parts of Gauteng is still tense and it would require an enormous amount of mediation to resolve all the differences between all the operators.

Claiming there is a general malaise in the entire taxi industry, Roger Oxley, a provincial taxi mediator, says that apart from the long-distance taxi industry "which is still a huge problem", there are only individual conflicts fuelling tensions in Gauteng.

"Wherever we have sustained the process of conflict resolution, we've had success, but we can't afford to leave any of the role-players out the process," he says.

Dipak Patel, head of the National Taxi Task Force, says



END OF THE ROAD: A police officer looks at the aftermath of yet another taxi shooting: the familiar bloodied clothes and shattered glass that tell the sad tale

it is evident that elements within the taxi industry are continuing to use violence as a means of generating income for themselves.

"In Soweto, the problem is more complicated. It boils down to a commitment to perpetuate conditions of chaos as well as an attempt by a few to use the current opportunity presented by legislation to 'usurp and colonise' routes which are being legitimately operated by other groupings," he says.

Although the Gauteng government is finalising its moves towards regulating the industry this month, it will not be issuing minibus taxi permits until September, in order to pave the way for the special legislation regarding existing taxi associations and operators.

The legislation is aimed at formalising, regulating and controlling the taxi industry with a view to making it more effective and efficient. Once it is in place, no taxis will be allowed to use routes without permits, and the government will allocate and regulate the use of the routes.

In the good old days a taxi ride was a treat and the drivers gents

(332) CP 2014197

By OBED MUSI

"DON'T bang my doors" taxi driver-owner Mike Makgoke would admonish anyone entering his 1948 chev taxi which strictly sat six - three in front (including the driver), the rest in the back.

He was not only stricter than a convent nun about banging doors, but would also not accept a fare from a passenger that was filthy or drunk.

"This is not a bathroom," he would mutter. "Find your own way home and sober up."

Mike was typical of the taxi industry of yore, when sedans - mostly Ford, Chevrolet, Packard and Chrysler models were the rave.

There was something chic or sophisticated about taking a taxi to town or hiring a "special" to ferry you and your girlfriend to a party.

The fare was equal to the amount which a full load of passengers would have paid. The ride was not accompanied by a cacophony of blaring trumpets set against the background of throbbing drums.

Drivers were usually elderly, careful and experienced men of the road who knew almost every leading character in the township.

Thus a bewildered passenger off the Springs-Pretoria train would, on getting off at Pollack Park station, ask the driver: "I am going to visit the Mnguni's..."

To which that worthy gentleman would reply: "Which ones: the wealthy ones who own a shop in so-and-so street or the church-loving ones at the end of the township?"

The cars themselves were kept spotlessly clean and in peak condition so that any traffic officer stopping them for a check-up had better have known what he was about.

That was why old Makgoke had this phobia about banging doors.

As for the number of passengers a taxi was allowed to carry, this varied from province to province, but generally the number was five for sedans. The more dare-devil drivers used to pile an extra passenger in the boot for half-price. I'm not sure if they all survived the journeys.

Not long after came the eight-seater minibuses. Some say that was when the rot set in, because in no time other far-sighted car manufacturers came up with a ten-seater – and the "pirate taxi" came into being. These were guys who did not have a licence who, in some cases, drove without even knowing the basic rules of the road. But there was something exciting and dramatic about the fact that one was breaking the law by riding in a "pirate taxi".

There was a sort of romantic glamour about being a taxi-driver, because this implied being involved in high-speed car chases with the cops firing wildly and guns blazing.

As I say, this was just romantic nonsense.

Oddly enough one of the most popular taxis on the East Rand was one driven by a buxom fast-talking girl named Daisy of Benoni.

With a stump of chewing gum forever in her cheek she would break speed records as she tried to show she was better than her male counterparts – and nothing pleased her more than the screams of her woman passengers when they saw what they feared was an accident looming.

Then came the age when the Japs flooded the market with their post-war industrial revivals and there were suddenly a lot of Toshibas and Toyotas on the market.

With them came the phantom industrial revolution of the late "fifties and early sixties and the black market was suddenly discovered by white entrepreneurs. That's when every darkie who had saved a few bob got a taxi on the rank and was numbered among the "six mabone tycoons".

Today the taxi industry seems to be in the hands of a few syndicates – but the days when it was peaceful and respectful are definitely over.

Every day there's news of war . . .

Taxi bosses on hit list – police

(332)

CP 20/4/97

By ANDILE NOGANTA

AS VIOLENCE between rival Soweto taxi associations intensified this week – claiming eight lives – police warned taxi bosses of possible assassinations, allegedly by other taxi owners.

It emerged that police have information about plots to assassinate leading figures in the warring taxi associations.

City Press has a letter, written by the Soweto Taxi Unit, alerting a prominent Soweto taxi boss of a plot to kill him.

The letter says police were acting on information received on March 3 from an unidentified source.

☐ Sources close to one of the warring taxi associations told City Press the trouble started when an alliance of six taxi associations apparently tried to evict Witwatersrand African Taxi Association (WATA) taxi drivers from a taxi rank in Dobsonville.

It is alleged that WATA had taken over routes belonging to the six associations.

Police would not name other taxi owners they had warned, but said there were several taxi bosses on hit lists.

The latest disclosures by the police again raise the question of hired death squads operating in the taxi industry.

It appears the taxi boss whose warning letter from the police is in City Press's possession has become the main target.

Police confirmed an attempt had been made on his life outside his Diepkloof, Soweto home on March 15 – 12 days after they had warned him.

A Volkswagen Golf, abandoned in the attack, was seized by the police.

The commander of the Soweto Taxi Unit, Superintendent Louis Muller, said a man arrested last week in connection with the incident had appeared in court.

Muller said police could do nothing beforehand about possible attacks – except warn the targets.

Joint police blitz on taxis nets nearly 1 000 offenders

(332)

JOHAN SCHRONEN
CRIME CORRESPONDENT

ARG 21/4/97

Police arrested almost 1 000 people in the first few days of a crackdown on Peninsula minibus taxi operators.

Charges include murder and the possession of suspected stolen goods.

But from today, police will concentrate their efforts on gangs in the Elsies River area, although minibus taxis will still be blitzed.

Western Cape police spokesman John Sterrenberg said that on the first three days of the crackdown last week, police supported by soldiers issued 459 summonses for various offences including failure by drivers to carry their drivers' licences.

Eighteen stolen vehicles were recovered and 21 illegal guns confiscated.

Drugs, including 61kg of dagga, 194 Mandrax tablets, 300g of heroin and 32g of cocaine were seized. Among stolen goods worth more than R172 000 seized, police even confiscated livestock.

Superintendent Sterrenberg said that the new focus on gang activity in Elsies River and surrounding areas did not mean the clampdown on minibus taxis would be put on the back burner.

Star ... Tuesday April 22 1997

'Stop the taxi war or face the full wrath of the law'

(332) Star 22/4/97

BY TOMMY MAKOE

The Gauteng transport department has warned feuding Soweto taxi associations to stop the violence – or face the wrath of the law.

The warning follows eight deaths in one week in 10 taxi-related attacks.

And the department has appealed to the public to help as it is not getting support from associations because of their "involvement".

Superintendent Louis Muller of Soweto's serious violence criminal investigation unit confirmed the fighting was over taxi routes.

In one attack three vehicle mechanics, employed by Soweto's Witwatersrand African Taxi Association, were shot dead while travelling in one of the association's official vehicles. Mandla Zithole, Amos and Masadladla Sikhode were gunned down at an intersection in White City, Soweto.

Department of Transport spokesman Sibusiso Buthelezi said taxi operators had failed to report and identify those responsible for the violence.

"They have not been able to do as requested because they are involved. We are now appealing to the community to report the perpetrators."

27 murdered, 28 arrested in Gauteng taxi conflict this year

Taxi-related violence in Gauteng had claimed 27 lives and left four people injured in separate incidents since the beginning of the year, police announced yesterday.

Gauteng police spokesman Captain Sipho Ngubane said Gauteng police had received 25 complaints related to taxi conflict and arrested 28 suspects in connection with the violence since January.

The suspects are facing charges of murder, possession of unlicensed firearms and intimidation. Ngubane said a number of weapons and firearms that the suspects allegedly used to commit the offences had been seized.

In the most recent incident, five people were wounded yesterday when three gunmen driving in a gold BMW shot wildly at commuters, taxi drivers and taxis at a Benoni taxi rank.

Ngubane said taxi ranks were prime targets.

"The perpetrators have targeted most of their victims at taxi ranks, at their homes and on public roads in drive-by shootings," he said. Three taxis were damaged by the bullets.

Police spokesman Superintendent Eugene Opperman said the Benoni rank shooting appeared to be related to ongoing taxi violence.

"We owe it to our people to protect them and to win back the streets, but it is impossible to be at all places at the same time. Unless people give us more information to crack down on the culprits, this will continue unabated," he said.

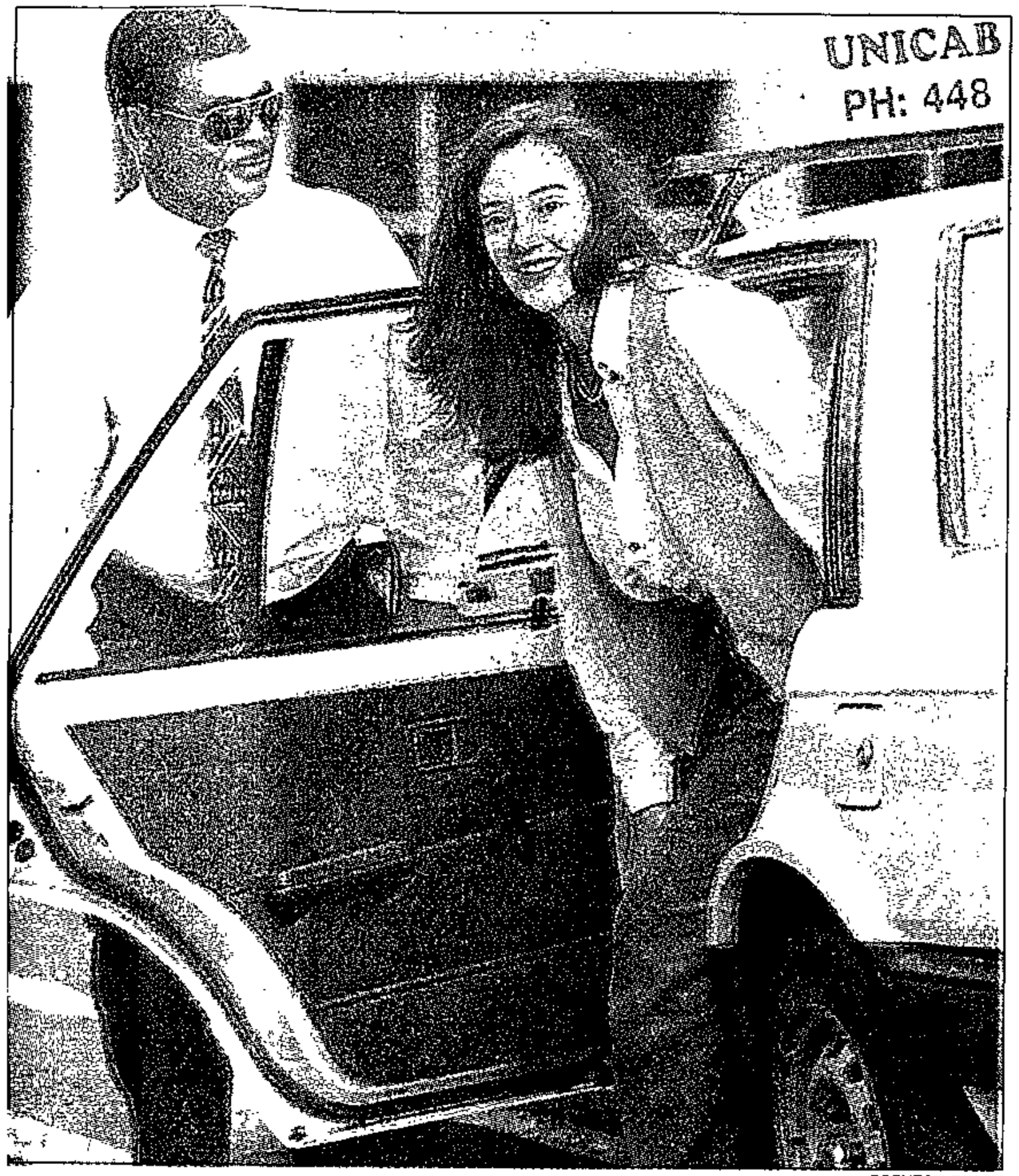
North Rand assistant commissioner Ebrahim Beetha condemned the violence as "senseless", adding that everything would be done to catch the culprits. He urged commuters and the public to rise up against violence. No arrests had been made and police were investigating. An extra patrol had been sent to the taxi rank to monitor the situation.

The police suspect that the recent attacks emanate from disputes over the use of taxi routes and ranks by taxi associations.

Anyone with information should contact Taxi Violence Unit provincial co-ordinator Senior Superintendent Eric Roos at (011) 407-0152. – Staff Reporter.

▶ Stop taxi war
Page 8

(332) Star 22/4/97



BRENTON GEACH

Test drive: Cape Argus reporter Chené Blignaut on her way to Unicab's headquarters

Taxi boss slates council

Permit system in city 'curbing business'

ARG 24/4/97 (332)

CHENÉ BLIGNAUT
STAFF REPORTER

One of Cape Town's biggest pirate sedan taxi operators has accused the authorities of thwarting his attempts to make an honest living by limiting the number of permits they issue.

Unicab taxi owner Unis Khan says he is more than willing to contribute to improving service standards in the industry, but he is not getting any support or co-operation from the authorities.

But Mr Khan has been accused of flooding the market illegally, taking business from the small legal operators and using the media to pressure the authorities.

All applications for sedan taxi permits have been frozen pending the outcome of a Cape Town city council investigation.

Mr Khan was reacting to a Cape Argus investigation that found the service offered by sedan taxis in the city was often poor.

"We don't deserve the bad name we are getting. We can come up with the goods, but we are not being allowed to," said Mr Khan, who operates a fleet of about 100 vehicles, including 45 sedan taxis, from his company's headquarters in Woodstock. Only half of these vehicles have permits. The company has exclusive transportation rights with several hotels, including the Mount Nelson, Cape Sun and the Ritz, and some companies.

"I have applied for permits (to the Road Transportation Board) on numerous occasions, but they are always refused because of objections by the traffic department and other operators," said Mr Khan, adding that his application for 45 permits had been pending for more than a year.

He accused the authorities of being "verkramp" and other taxi operators of trying to hang on to the monopoly they had enjoyed for many years.

They were "jealous" of his "success" in building up a R10-million business in just five years, Mr Khan claimed.

"I would never object to other companies' permits because it should be a free market. I believe we should live and let live. Competition is healthy."

He slated the permit system for which "a proven demand" was the only criterion, and said: "The industry is not regulated by service and safety. Sixty percent of the legal taxis on the road are not roadworthy or insured."

Unicab spent R60 000 a month for passenger liability insurance, its cars were fewer than three years old and the drivers trained and uniformed. The fleet would soon be fitted with a satellite tracking system at a cost of R800 000, said Mr Khan.

He believed permits should be issued by each local authority with a levy, which could be ploughed back into the development of the industry.

"And I am more than willing to pay."

He scoffed at the 3:1 ratio of taxis to taxi parking bays that had been applied by the authorities to limit permit holders to about 200 in the central city.

"How can we cater for Cape Town's population of 2,5 million people, plus the influx of tourists, with 200 taxis? If there is no demand, how come my business is thriving?" asked Mr Khan, who believes there is enough business for about 2 000 sedan taxis in the city.

Unicab had to pay about R10 000 in traffic fines each month for operating taxis illegally.

"We are being victimised and I will have to consider using unmarked vehicles now as a result of the constant harassment by the traffic department. This will affect the service we are delivering."

Taximen bury hatchet

By Themba Sepotokele

TWO feuding East Rand taxi associations yesterday signed a peace pact, bringing to an end a 10-month-old conflict which had claimed two lives.

At a ceremony held at the Nigel Civic Centre, the Reverend Jabulani Zitha blessed the signing of the peace agreement between the Brakpan Taxi Association and Nigel Taxi Association.

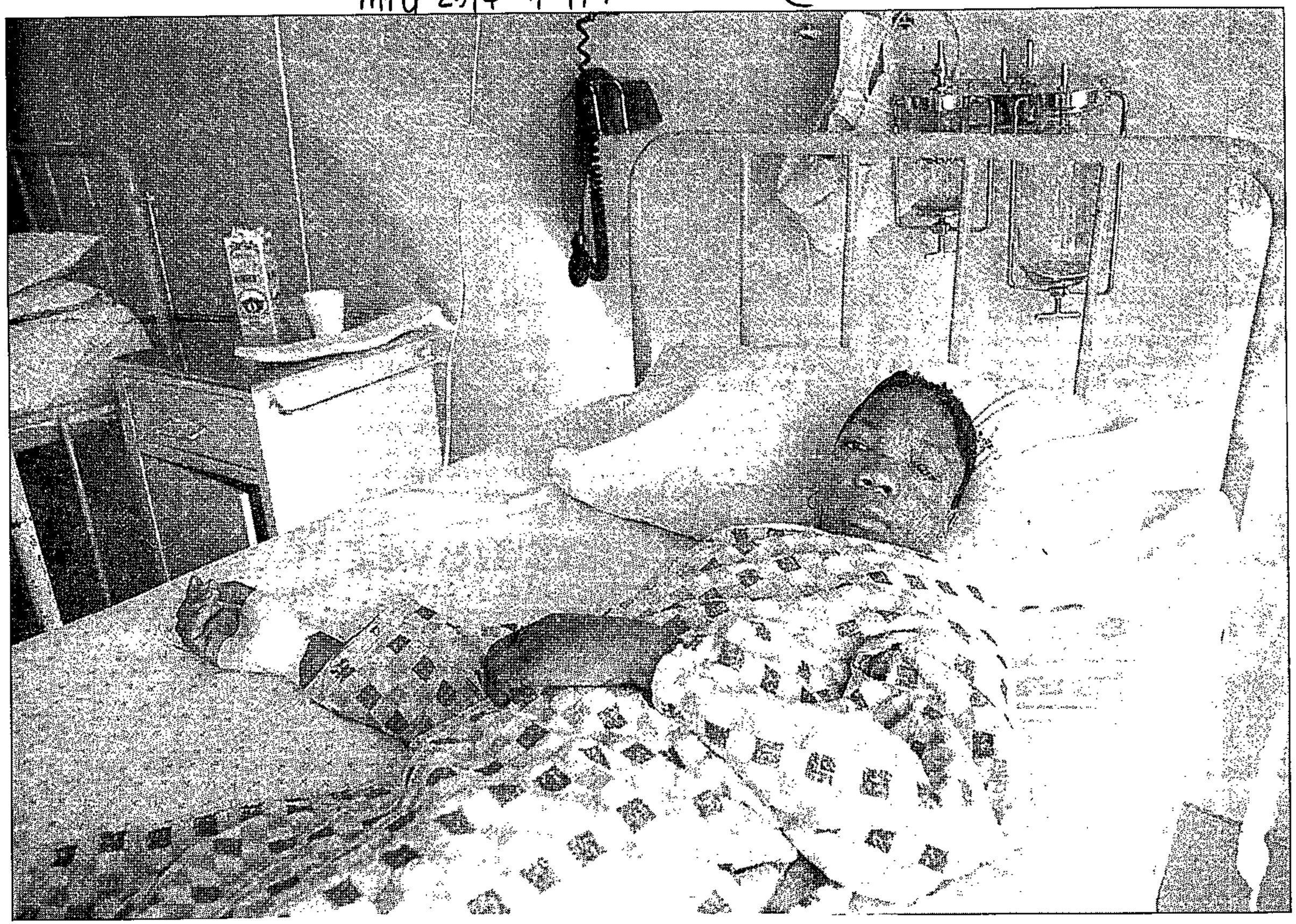
Zitha announced that members of the public would be invited to celebrate the peace reigning in the area on September 4.

Chairman of the BTA Mr B Simelane and his NTA counterpart Mr Phifo Mnisi pledged to work towards the attainment of peace in the trouble-torn industry.

South Africa's reckless death trip

M+G 25/4-1/5/97 (332)

A culture of reckless driving is creating havoc on the roads, but what is the government task team doing to put the taxi industry on the road to recovery? Dawn Blalock reports



MPHO MAKHAYA, one month shy of her 17th birthday, is recovering in Loratong Hospital from neck and leg injuries she sustained when the minibus she was taking to school rammed into a passenger car and then overturned on a corner.

Makhaya's mother says she's lucky. Her child is still alive. She says another family lost a daughter — their second child to die in a minibus accident.

There are an estimated 150 000 minibus taxis on the roads in South Africa today. They make up 2% to 3% of all vehicles, but are involved in 17% of all collisions, according to the Automobile Association (AA).

South Africa kills about 10 000 people on its roads each year, possibly the most road deaths in the industrialised world.

The government is working on bringing the taxi industry under control, but questions remain as to when a regulated taxi business will translate into fewer fatalities on the roads.

The roots of the problem are financial. Profit margins are slim so taxi drivers overload minibuses for addi-

tional fares, race in and out of town to pack in that extra trip, cannot afford to take a day off for minibus repairs or driver training, and rely on money-saving shortcuts such as re-grooved tyres — bald tyres with the tread cut into them.

"They're practically driving on the canvas!" says Moira Winslow, a member of the Gauteng Taxi Initiative's road safety committee.

On a typical day, a minibus carries 15 passengers into central Johannesburg. Those 15 passengers are chiefly breadwinners for their families. If that taxi driver crashes, "it could influence 100 people or more in terms of people who have to be fed on their salaries", says Björn van Oordt of the AA. Road accidents "are killing people and killing breadwinners and it's costing the country R10-billion a year".

'I can unapologetically say the process to resolve the taxi problem is not going to be a two-week process, or even a six-month process'

The culture of reckless driving "rubs off" on all drivers and creates a culture of lawlessness on the roads. "Everybody's always knocking the taxi industry," says Van Oordt, "but I've seen motor vehicle drivers doing the same types of things."

The industry has hit its low point, acknowledges Dipak Patel, chair of a government-appointed taxi task team. It is suffering from two decades of neglect, piecemeal legislation built on the back of the metered taxi industry and a business environment riddled with mafia-style violence. And the fatalities pile up.

The taxi industry is on the road to recovery, but it will not happen overnight, says Patel.

"I can unapologetically say the process to resolve the taxi problem is not going to be a two-week process, or even a six-month process," he says. "It will take two to three years to resolve the issue in a sustainable way."

The task team's aim is to break what has become a vicious circle: taxi drivers flaunt the laws; punishment is meted out in the form of a fine; the fines are ignored and begin to overburden the system; a bureaucratic logjam is created.

Add to this an over-saturated market, where too many drivers who compete for too few customers attempt to redistribute the supply and demand with their own form of violent capitalism.

The solution has to be a creative one, says Patel, with legislation specific to an industry that has long filled a vacuum in public service while being ignored by the government (except for when the powers-that-be were actively trying to stamp out the industry).

Also on the agenda is economic assistance to ease the financial margins in an industry that has long been, and was at one time, one of the few avenues for black entrepreneurship.

Patel has just emerged from two days of intense meetings in Kimberley concerning a taxi constitution. It includes provisions for labour practices, roadworthiness and a code of conduct.

But critics say the government is treating the taxi industry with kid gloves because it doesn't want to antagonise the loyalties of a valuable African National Council voting block.

"The Department of Transport is not going to threaten the taxi owners because we've got an election coming up and they are worried about disaffecting the entire industry," says Winslow, who is also the head of Drive Alive, a road-safety advocacy group she founded after her family was killed in a road crash.

Courting the industry may backfire on the government politically, Winslow warns. "They are doing a disservice to their voters. I think the voters appreciate strong-armed tactics to prevent road crashes."

Patel scoffs at any implication that the government is dragging its feet in its attempt to reign in the taxis.

"I did not spend the last two years of my life locked in very detailed negotiations with the leaders of the taxi industry because I wanted to buy their votes," says Patel, who is also a member of the Department of Transport.

What's needed, says Patel, is a total mindset change to a culture of road safety which actually obeys speed limits and doesn't pass over blind crests. "It's not just the taxi industry's problem, it's the country's problem."

Scarred: Portia Nkoane is fortunate to have survived a taxi accident that killed two of her schoolmates

PHOTOGRAPH: RUTH MOTAU

M+G
25/4 – 1/5/97
(332)

Taxi groups agree on registration

(332)

Bonile Ngqiyaza

BD 2/5/97

A PROCESS requiring taxi associations to apply for registration and comply with a standard constitution, a code of conduct and a grievance and disciplinary procedure was agreed to by taxi industry players at a meeting in Kimberley last week.

National taxi task team chairman Dipak Patel said yesterday the recommendations still had to be discussed by the nine provincial MECs and the transport ministry, and would be ratified in a few weeks.

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj would then request each MEC to publish the text of the ratified recommendations in the government gazette of each of SA's nine provinces, he said.

"What we are seeing now are the first steps of proper formalisation and regulation in the taxi industry."

Patel also disclosed that Safety and Security Minister Sidney Mufamadi was to have been asked, in a meeting scheduled for yesterday, to consider changing the name of the national taxi task team appointed to look into taxi-related crime, which was announced last month.

He said this would prevent the task team being confused with taxi industry bodies.

At the announcement of the 13-member SA police investigative team headed by top detective Dir Neville Thomas early last month, it was explained that the team's primary task would be to use intelligence from different sources to bring perpetrators to book.

Patel also disclosed that the deadline for taxi associations to register was in June this year, and for individual operators it was in October.

He said about 90% of the taxi industry had applied to register by the February 28 deadline.

Lured to meeting – then shot

By ANDILE NOGANTA

THE TAXI boss killed in a hail of bullets in Sandton, Johannesburg this week, was allegedly lured to a hastily arranged meeting – and his death.

Dickson Mampane, president of SALLDTA, the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association, was gunned down after leaving a local hotel after the meeting with rival bosses on Thursday.

Police said a BMW pulled up in front of Mampane's own BMW when he stopped at a traffic light not far from the hotel, and a man jumped out and opened fire with an AK-47 assault rifle.

Mampane died at the scene while Simon Sinhle, the National Chairman of SALLDTA who was with him, was badly wounded and is fighting for his life in hospital.

SALLDTA spokesperson Wesley Mpawu said Mampane got an urgent call from a rival taxi association, asking him to attend a meeting.

"After that meeting all hell broke loose," said an angry Mpawu.

A SALLDTA source said the two factions had met on Wednesday.

City Press understands that many of Mampane's confidantes were not aware there would be another meeting on the day of the attack.

Mampane was a big mover in the taxi industry in Gauteng and his murder is likely to break the uneasy peace between rival associations.

Taxi violence flares up again in Kutlwanong

CP 4/5/97 (332)

By DAN DHLAMINI

THE PREVIOUSLY calm Free State Kutlwanong township near Odendaalsrus this week relived sad memories of the 1990 taxi violence – as clashes by rival drivers over routes and the reduction of fares brought the booming taxi business to a halt as brothers slugged it out, injuring one another and damaging vehicles.

Although 19 cases have so far been registered by Odendaalsrus' police, Superintendent Erwin Schlechter said only three people have been arrested.

Schlechter said police are expecting to make more arrests tomorrow and people will be charged with malicious damage to property, robbery and assault.

The chairman of the Mohahlaula Taxi Association (MOTA), Sello Setabela told City Press that seven of their cars had been damaged, one right at the gate of the local police station.

"What is surprising is that the suspects were arrested, released on bail and they continued breaking our taxis again.

"Schlechter seemed not to care, and we then requested that he recuse himself from the investigation. Captain Frost did a sterling job," said Setabela.

Setabela said the people responsible for the trouble in the Odendaalsrus taxi industry were outsiders from Qwa-Qwa, Botshabelo, Thaba'Nchu and the former Ciskei and Transkei who had been fired from the Mohahlaula Taxi Association (MOTA).

Former Kutlwanong Taxi Forum member Sergeant Tawana Mohapi said the only way to bring about peace was by working together to bring about a properly constituted taxi association.

But Setabela said Mohapi was trying to insinuate that Mota wasn't a legitimate organisation.

He accused Mohapi of being a "security risk" who could not be objective when dealing with matters relating to the problems within the taxi industry in Kutlwanong.

"The current misunderstanding in the taxi business is of a very serious nature. It is a very sensitive matter of life and death.

"You cannot entrust a policeman with a dubious background, a previous conviction and a criminal case pending against him, to solve matters relating to taxi violence," said Setabela.

Attempts to contact the chairman of the Odendaalsrus Taxi Workers Association, Lucas Geqeshe, and others involved in the taxi fracas drew a blank as they were said to be busy transporting passengers.

Meanwhile more than 4 000 pupils converged at the local stadium where Crimestop was launched.

Schlechter said he wished people in the taxi industry would bury their differences and make peace.

Special unit fails to halt taxi wars

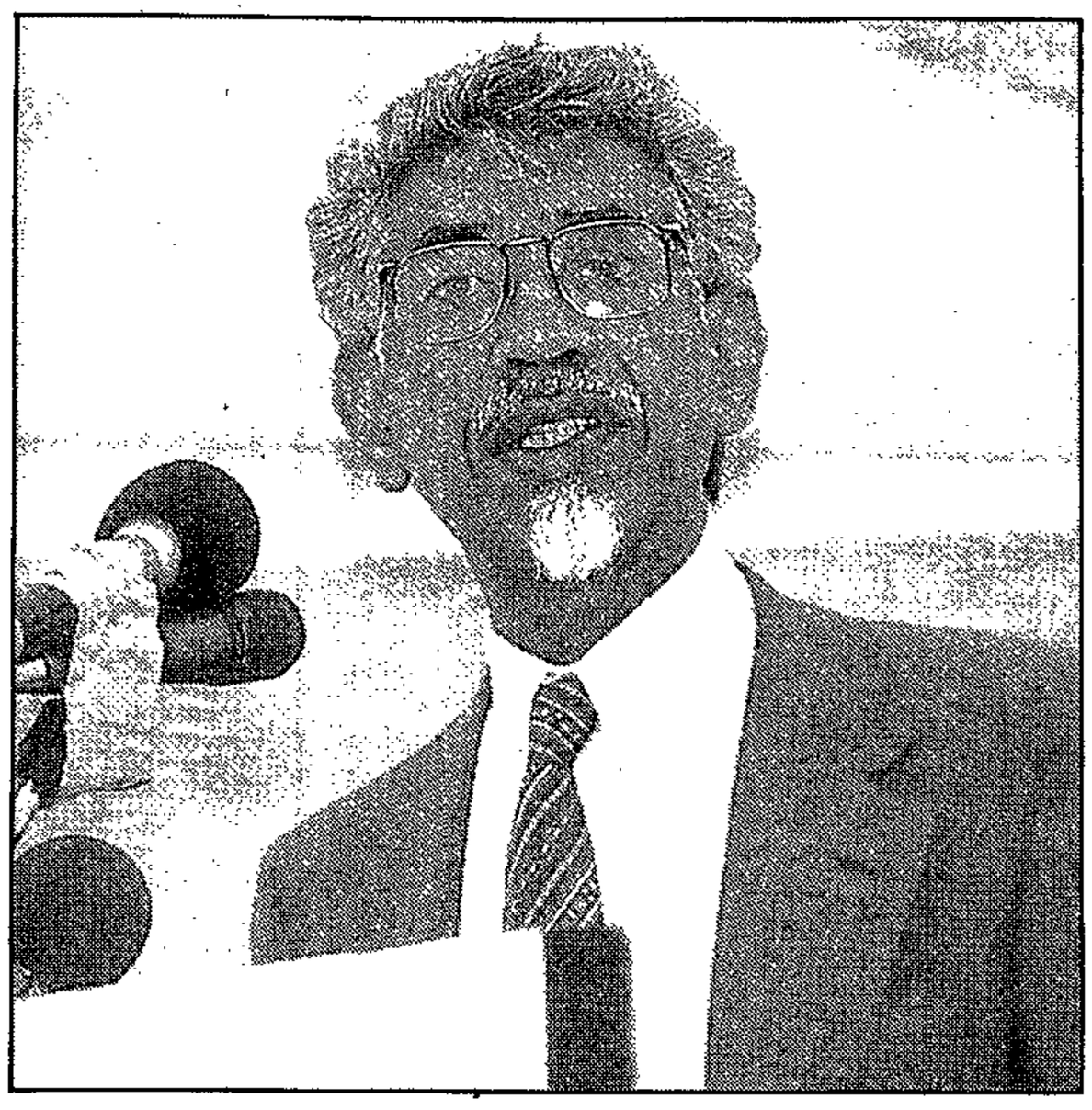
CP 4/5/97

(332)

'Team still hasn't made any arrests'

By PHALANE MOTALE

TWO MONTHS ago the government announced the establishment of a special task team which had reportedly "identified several individuals and groups" involved in the ongoing taxi violence.



WE'LL GET THEM . . . In March Transport Minister Mac Maharaj promised hired killers in the taxi industry would be hunted down – but the killings continue.

But according to information gained from police sources, up to date "no significant progress or arrests" have been made, despite the high profile composition of the task team.

A report about the unit's progress will only be made public – at the earliest – within the next two months.

A source within the police told City Press that the announcement of the task team "had been a political ploy" to bring credibility to a police force under fire from other political parties which had complained that the government "was not doing enough" to combat the ongoing taxi violence.

The source said the task team plan was announced "even before the necessary infrastructure was put in place". He said the task team had not done any serious investigations since they were still "setting the team into motion".

"The police do have the names of the people allegedly involved in the ongoing taxi violence but it was impossible to make any arrests at the time of the task team announcement before they simply lacked the mechanisms to act.

"The other problem with the special unit is that it has lost touch with the ordinary members, who are expected to do all the spade work before an investigation.

☐ Spokesman for the special task team Director Elf Huggett has confirmed that the report from the unit will only be made public by Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi "at least within the two months".

Huggett denied that the task team hadn't had "any successes" since its inception. He said investigations were under way and have reached "a very sensitive stage".

"We expect Minister Mufamadi to make a statement maybe within the next two months," Huggett said.

☐ In a joint statement released in Pretoria on March 6, Mufamadi and Transport Minister Mac Maharaj announced that "hired killers in the taxi industry were to be hunted down by a special team of handpicked detectives" under the leadership of Director Neville Thoms.

At the time Thoms revealed that "some of the perpetrators of taxi violence" had already been identified.

"We are going to be extend all available manpower to bring them to book . . . we are going to be ruthless," he said.

☐ While the incidence of most serious crimes had declined last year, taxi-related crimes continued to escalate.

The number of resulting deaths over the same period increased from 273 to 339.

Sowetan 8/5/97

Four die as taxi (332) war flares

By McKeed Kotlolo

TAXI violence has erupted again in Soshanguve and GaRankuwa in Pretoria, claiming four lives and leaving at least five others wounded during running battles yesterday.

The situation was extremely tense in Soshanguve after the shootings, which resulted in taxis not operating, but moving in groups through the main taxi and bus routes of the township.

At least five taxis were set alight.

Police said it all started at the old taxi rank next to GaRankuwa Hospital, at about 6.45am, when taxi driver Mr Patrick Moela of Zone 5 Extension, GaRankuwa was shot dead by unknown gunmen.

Rietgat police station commissioner Senior Superintendent Jerry Malesela described the Soshanguve shootings, in which three operators were killed between Mabopane Station and the clinic in Block BB at about 8.30am, as apparent revenge attacks.

The two dead operators in the first incident were identified as Mr Bongani Zweni (no age and address given) and a Mr Dlamini of Block AA. Mr Lazarus Benza of 209 Block X, Soshanguve, was rushed to hospital in a serious condition.

Malesela said another attack occurred at the Mabopane taxi rank when occupants of a blue bakkie opened fire with AK-47s.

Mr Amos Sello Marumo of 2305 Zone 2, GaRankuwa, was killed and a pedestrian, Mrs Christina Mokwele of 1527 Block P Soshanguve, was wounded in the left thigh.

The bakkie was later found abandoned at the Nafcoc shopping complex.

At about 11.30am occupants of the same Ford Laser bakkie allegedly opened fire at the GaRankuwa taxi rank at the main entrance of GaRankuwa Hospital. Three passengers were wounded.

Malesela said police reinforcements from various units managed to bring the situation in Soshanguve under control and were likely to be joined by the army.

Killing sparked taxi violence

CT 13/5/97 (332)

OWN CORRESPONDENT

PRETORIA: Taxi-related violence again flared up in Soshanguve yesterday adding two names to the growing list of people killed there recently.

The situation remains tense with few taxis operating, leaving hundreds of commuters stranded and unable to get to work.

Police and army members are patrolling the area but are battling to control the situation, which they believe has been fuelled by the killing of South African Long Distance Taxi Association boss Mr Dickson Mampane in Sandton earlier this month.

A number of cars were damaged in the violence and three minibus taxis belonging to the Federated Long Distance Taxi Association (Feldta) were set alight at Central City near Mabopane station shortly before midday.

One man died at the scene and another was taken to hospital with severe head injuries.

Police recovered 30 spent cartridges from the scene. A number of bricks and other objects were lying in the road alongside the damaged vehicles, which appeared to have been stoned.

"Tension in Soshanguve and Mabopane is high. We suspect it is the result of the killing of Dickson Mampane. It's since then that the trouble started," investigating officer Inspector Thinus Kruger said.

Police arrested a man at the scene, but are not sure if he is directly linked to yesterday's violence.

Legislation to change face of taxi industry approved

(332)
Wyndham Hartley
BD 15/6/97

CAPE TOWN — The cabinet has approved legislation which will change the face of the taxi industry by creating a code of conduct, a national register for taxis and mechanisms to punish associations which break the rules.

The cabinet yesterday approved the National Land Transport Bill which, said Transport Minister Mac Maharaj, would consolidate the nation's laws on land transport. This will include provision of passenger transport services and specific legislation to control the taxi industry for the first time.

Maharaj said after the cabinet meeting that "the minibus taxi industry is to be brought into the legislative framework for the first time. A national taxi register and a provincial taxi register will be established in terms of the bill."

He explained that a registrar would be appointed in each province and would be responsible for registration of minibus taxi associations and members. Until now registration of taxi associations had been voluntary in terms of transport department strategy.

"Adherence to a standard constitution and a code of conduct will be one of the preconditions for registration," Maharaj said, "thus promoting professional practices in the industry. Provision is also made for the deregistration of any associations which are in default." This bill would be the cornerstone of a new approach to passenger transport services and was the culmination of two years of intensive consultation. Part of this was demonstrated by the contracts signed with 31 bus companies in March which was a departure from subsidised bus transport and the start of a new contractual system "where transport is still subsidised but the awarding of the contracts is on a short-term, competitive and performance basis".

Robyn Chalmers reports transport department director-general Ketso Gordhan said yesterday the transport legislation approved by the cabinet was a major milestone for the transport sector and would contribute to transforming the department into a "completely different entity" by 1999.

The overall aim of the restructuring plan was to convert the transport department into a streamlined, efficient structure by commercialising a string of services. The plan would see the department's staff numbers reduced to 270 from 1 053 over a few years.

Apart from the road transport permit agency, three other agencies were planned with private-sector boards to deal with maritime safety, aviation safety and roads including toll roads.

Gordhan said the aviation and maritime safety agencies would be funded by charging a user levy for services performed while it was hoped that the cabinet would approve a dedicated fuel levy of 6c/l for the roads agency.

Cabinet approves new laws for taxis

(332)

By Jovial Rantao
Political Correspondent
Star 15/5/97

Cape Town – Legislation which will change the face of the taxi industry has been approved by the Cabinet.

The National Transport Bill and the Cross-Border Transport Bill are designed to increase the efficiency of the transport industry and bring the minibus industry into a legislative framework for the first time.

According to Transport Minister Mac Maharaj the National Transport Bill aims to consolidate the country's laws on land transport, including the provision of passenger transport services and specific legislation to control the taxi industry.

The bill will establish a national and provincial taxi register. It also hoped that a registrar responsible for the registration of minibus taxi associations and members would be appointed in each province.

The Cross-Border Transport Bill provides for the establishment of an independent road transport permit agency that would be responsible for the issuing of permits for the moving of goods and passengers across South Africa's borders.

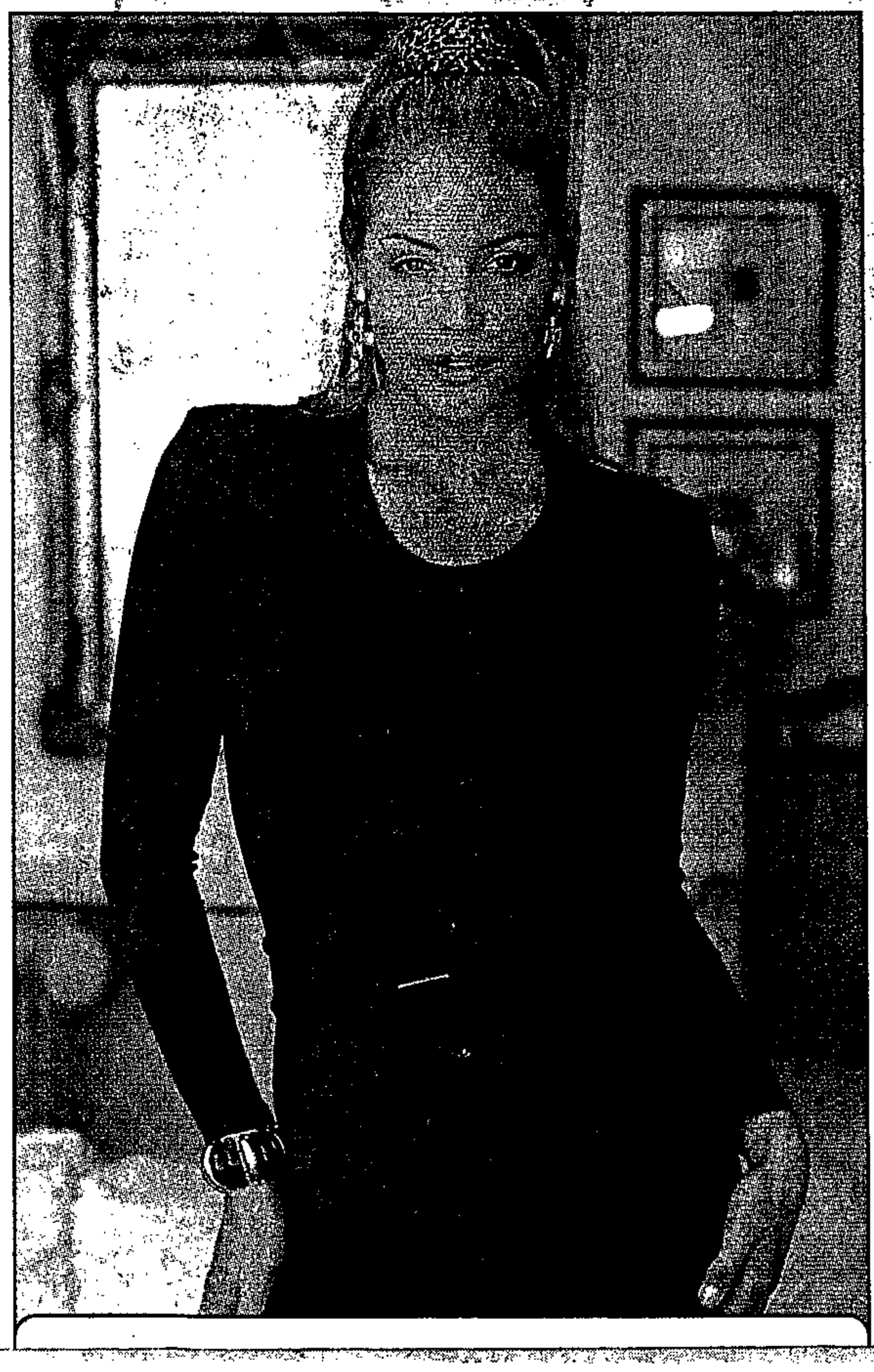
Ministry of Transport spokesman Didi Moyle said the bill was designed to improve the flow of traffic and to reduce the operational constraints on the cross-border transport industry.

The agency will undertake control and enforcement.

The National Land Transport Bill would consolidate all laws on land transport, excluding roads and traffic safety.

"The bill is the cornerstone of the department's new approach to the provision of passenger transport in this country and is the result of two years of intensive consultation with the provinces, local government and stakeholders in the industry," Moyle said.

"The broad objectives of the bill are to create the appropriate institutional management structures and ensure appropriate funding procedures."



C

Bill to protect children a first

Farouk Chothia
BD 16/5/97

MARITZBURG — African Christian Democratic Party member Jo-Ann Downs yesterday became the first KwaZulu-Natal legislature MP to introduce a private members' bill, proposing the creation of an office of the commissioner of children in the province.

The bill was expected to win the backing of all parties as they had previously indicated support for the idea.

Downs said the office would effectively operate as a ministry of children with the aim of protecting the interests of children under 18.

She said a similar bill was to be introduced in the National Assembly and the Gauteng legislature.

The bill required "predatory sex offenders" to "register" with the office, which would then publicise their names.

The office could inform community leaders, school principals and local police of the offenders in their neighbourhood.

Downs said that out of every 500 cases of child abuse reported, only 38 were investigated, resulting in one conviction.

The bill, if passed, will also give the office investigating powers, like search and summons of suspected sex offenders.

The suspect would be compelled to answer all questions.

Downs said the office would require a "modest" budget.

Timber growers object to new water policy

Robyn Chalmers
BD 16/5/97

THE Forest Industries Association's objection to the recently released national water policy hinges on allegations of a lack of consultation and insufficient analysis of the policy's effect on the forest industry.

The association, representing the majority of commercial timber growers, said yesterday it could have far-reaching implications for the industry.

Water and Forestry Affairs Minister Kader Asmal this week launched the paper which, he said, would ensure equity in water allocation and sustainable water use with a greater emphasis on water conservation and water demand management.

The association said that contrary to an undertaking given by Asmal, no consultation took place between the time the cabinet adopted the principles and objectives of a new law and its acceptance last week of the paper.

The association said the water affairs and forestry department had invited comment and contributions before the completion of the national water bill by the beginning of July.

"The industry is seriously concerned that the time available is too short to make adequate comment, given the enormous impact the new legislation could have. The association has formally requested the minister to extend the consultation period by at least three months," it said.

Aspects of the water policy document which concerned association members included that users would be subject to water use licences. In the case of forestry, although water is not delivered, there would be a charge for water used which meant that permission would have to be obtained to use and pay for rainfall, it said.

The limited duration of water use licences was also of concern, particularly as there was no guarantee they would be renewed. The association said this was a critical element, bearing in mind the long-term nature of investment in forestry and timber processing.

It appeared there would be no compensation for the loss of existing water rights.

The association said in view of the forest industry's major contribution to economic development, particularly rural development, the effect of the new water policy could have serious implications for investment.

Forest industry exports totalled R4,6bn a year and the association said 95% of this was value-added products with little raw material exported.

Taxi bodies welcome 'overdue' bill

Bonile Ngqiyaza (332)
BD 16/5/97

TAXI industry players yesterday welcomed the approval by the cabinet on Wednesday of the National Land Transport Bill, with spokesmen for national taxi bodies saying the measure was "long overdue".

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj said on Wednesday the bill would consolidate the nation's laws on land transport, including the provision of passenger transport services and specify legislation to control the industry.

SA Taxi Drivers' Union general secretary Maurice Bokaba said that the legislation was a first step toward the normalisation of labour relations in the industry.

"A regulated industry will contribute towards the achievement of our aspirations adopted at our congress in April last year. An unregulated industry has been nothing but a hindrance to our aims."

He said the union was involved in brainstorming sessions with the National Taxi Task Team for the establishment of a labour forum which would work out relations between employers and employees.

SA Long Distance Taxi Association spokesman Bhotile Tswele said: "Everyone in the industry understands that this (legislation) is for the betterment of the industry, but government will have to publicise this more — particularly in the indigenous languages."

The Star ... Friday May 16

Taxi 'hit' mars peace initiative

(332)

By Mike Masipa
Crime Reporter

Star 16/5/97

Peace initiatives between two warring taxi organisations in Gauteng could be threatened because the SA Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) has claimed that the rival Lehlabile Taxi Organisation (LTO) orchestrated the killing of its leader, Dickson Mampane, two weeks ago.

Mampane, the Salldta national president, was killed in a drive-by shooting shortly after meeting LTO leaders at a Sandton hotel on May 1.

Salldta Gauteng regional president Wesley Mpawu told The Star this week that the LTO had apparently telephoned Mampane at short notice to arrange the meeting, and that other leaders of Salldta only got to know of the arrangement after its deputy chairman, Philip Nkadimeng, telephoned Mampane during the event.

Police said further arrests in connection with Mampane's murder "were imminent". He said Elijah Nkosi (31), believed to be a Zimbabwean, was released on R1 000 bail after he appeared in the Randburg Magistrate's Court on Monday.



ROY WIGLEY

New start: Codeta leaders, David Jizele and Reggie Malimba, with the organisation's new logo

Taxi bosses make peace vow

ASHLEY SMITH
STAFF REPORTER

(332)
ARG 16/5/97

Newly elected executives of Western Cape taxi rivals Codeta and Cata have vowed to end the taxi war.

Although many other peace initiatives have collapsed, both groups are optimistic after negotiations over the past few weeks.

Codeta general-secretary Reggie Malimba, speaking last night at the launch of the group's new executive and unveiling of its new logo, said the first goal was "not to stop the conflict, but to end it once and for all".

As a gesture of reconciliation, the executive of Cata – now led by Johnson Madinisi – also attended the function at the Cape Town Civic Centre.

"We have entered a new phase in the taxi industry," said Mr Malimba.

"We no longer want to run the industry as organisations, but as businesses."

With this in mind, it was vital that commuters and business people in South Africa viewed the taxi industry as safe and viable, he added. The new logo expressed Codeta's desire to move forward in peace.

He said that in the past there had not only been rivalry with Cata, but also within his organisation.

But the new executive, and especially president David Jizele, enjoyed overwhelming support.

Codeta's attorney Frans Coetzee said Shell South Africa would be sponsoring the organisation in the future. This was a significant step in big business identifying the potential of Codeta to create jobs.

"Codeta may well be the main conveyor of people when we have the 2004 Olympics in the Mother City, so let's put our guns away and do this the right way," he said.

Authorities battle to stem flow of illegals who flock to SA for better

Star 20/1/97 (236)

By Angus Shaw
Komatipoort

Moses Mutembo took what should have been a grim ride with a smile and a joke.

"See you next week," the 18-year-old told guards on a government train hauling him back to the border for deportation to Mozambique.

South Africa's immigration officials aren't laughing, and say it's difficult trying to halt the flow of illegals over the loose borders of South Africa.

Mutembo, who trained as a construction worker in South Africa, was one of hundreds put on a "repatriation train".

The 12-car special runs from the Dyambu holding centre near Johannesburg to Komatipoort, a border post with Mozambique, 460km to the east.

The trip is no fun. Wearing sneakers, denim and light cotton in the early summer heat and carrying belongings in small bundles, the deportees are guarded closely by armed police on the overnight journey.

At each station, they must bow their heads below window level. That prevents them from figuring out where they are or how to escape, says Frans le Grange, a repatriation official.

Some do jump out when guards fall asleep. Others are back in South Africa within days, or even hours.

Colonel Daan Lotter, commander of the army's border patrol near Komatipoort, says his soldiers arrested one man seven times trying to get into South Africa.

"The names change. One day it's James, the next it's Francisco. But the fingerprints are the same," says Michael Nkosi, Komatipoort's senior immigration officer, as he stamps hundreds of deportation warrants.

Lotter's men patrol a 70km stretch of border that runs through hills and sugar plantations. Towering coils of electrified razor wire mark the frontier, and computers pinpoint breaks or short circuits.

When the monitors signal a break, Lotter's motorcycle unit scrambles to catch the illegals.

His men also look out from hilltop observation posts, watching Mozambicans disappearing into the sugar cane to wait for passing taxi vans or prearranged transport.

Using forked sticks to lift the electrified wire, and often helped by guides charging a lucrative fee, illegals can get through the fence in about two or three minutes, Lotter says.

"We don't have long to get to them," he sighs.

While pleased with his capture rate – probably 90 % of those spotted – Lotter knows countless more slip into South Africa after trekking from as far away as Mali and Nigeria in West Africa.

Officials compare the repatriation programme to baling out a leaking boat with a teacup. The Government estimates more than 4 million illegal immigrants live in South Africa.

"There's really no way of knowing, when you think of the risks people will take to get in and stay in," says Le Grange, who works at the Dyambu holding centre.

He says illegals swim crocodile-infested rivers and cross minefields left over from years of regional wars.

They also trudge through nature reserves, sometimes falling prey to wild animals. A Mozambican mother and child were killed by lions while trying to sneak through Kruger National Park on December 30.

On the train back to Mozambique, Pedro Simango (27), describes how he crossed illegally into South Africa in 1989 and found work as a labourer in a bottling plant. He was caught in a random police check.

"I came for a better life," says Simango, who earned R920 a month in South Africa, nearly four times the average annual income in Mozambique.

He is clear about his future. "I won't get work in Maputo," Simango says. "I'll come back. I have no alternative, but I'll try and get some papers."

South Africa has agreed to let illegal immigrants from the other 11 member states of the Southern African Development Community apply for permanent residence if they have lived in the country at least five years, have full-time work or have children born in the country.

That will not help everyone.

Jackson Mafwa
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"We're under
Grange says. "It's a
to plug all the holes

Computers aren't the only things that need upgradi

VISUAL C++

Diploma Course

This intensive course provides programmers with a solid grounding in the Visual C ++ language. Students learn how to write useful and marketable Visual C++ programmes for PCs and are given practical problem solving techniques to solve everyday programming problems.

Who should attend

Experienced programmers who wish to make full use of the Visual C++ interactive development environment and who do not have time to work through manuals and aquire good programming techniques in Visual C++ on their own.

Course outline

Visual C++ environment. Loops. Decisions. Functions. Arrays and Strings. Pointers. Programming Windows. Graphics. Object-Oriented Programming. Application Wizards. Class Wizards. OLE 2.0.

Starting date and duration

EVENINGS: 10 weeks. Two evenings a week.

Venue	Evenings	Saturdays	Full time
Braamfontein	-	-	-
Rosebank	20 Jan	-	-

PERSONAL COMPUTING for Windows

Microsoft Office

This diploma course gives students the PC qualification and skills that are essential for success in the business world. On completion of the course, successful students will be awarded the Damelin Diploma in Personal Computing for Windows (Microsoft Office).

Who should attend

Anyone interested in acquiring further skills on Microsoft Office software to succeed in business.

Course outline

Advanced MS-Windows. Microsoft Office: MS-Excel, MS-Word, MS-Powerpoint, MS-Access.Practical business applications include business graphics, creating business presentations, designing and printing memos and letters, using a spreadsheet to manage data and perform calculations and creating a database.

Starting dates and duration

EVENINGS: 10 weeks. Two evenings a week.
SATURDAYS: 15 weeks. Saturday mornings.
FULL TIME: 2 weeks.

Venue	Evenings	Saturdays	Full time
Braamfontein	14 April	-	-
Rosebank	18 Feb	25 Jan	10 Feb

UPGRADING & REPAIRING PCs

Certificate Course

This practical hands-on course teaches you how to identify different types of hardware, determine and correct faults, change installations, upgrade PCs and set up PCs. Students will gain practical skills to enable them to change standard hardware units and repair PCs with confidence.

Who should attend

Those who want to learn how to upgrade and repair PCs and gain technical knowledge of PC architecture. Those interested in a career in Hardware Support will also benefit from this course.

Course outline

The motherboard and the central processing unit (CPU). Memory architecture and caching. Video and monitor standards. Floppy and hard disk drives and controllers. Installation, fault diagnosis and support. Configuring a PC. A good user knowledge of DOS is essential.

Starting dates and duration

EVENINGS: 4 weeks. Two evenings a week.
SATURDAYS: 6 weeks. Saturday mornings.
FULL TIME: 4 days.

Venue	Evenings	Saturdays	Full time
Braamfontein	27 Jan	8 Apr	-
Rosebank	17 Mar	25 Jan	20 Jan

PC HARDWARE SUPPORT

Diploma Course

An advanced level of technical knowledge of PC architecture is required to keep up with the dynamic hardware industry. This intensive course covers PC units and components in unprecedented depth.

Who should attend

Technicians, programmers, and hardware and software support personnel who require advanced knowledge.

Course outline

PC units and components. Compatibility, maintenance and upgrade/repair considerations. The CPU-8088 to 80486DX2, Cyrix, 486 DLC and Pentium architecture and parts. Memory map of the PC. Video standards. Motherboards. EISA/LOCAL BUS. Memory architecture and caching. Drive controllers. CD-ROM. Peripherals. Tape streamers. Networks. Interrupts and DMA controllers. Fault diagnosis and support.

Starting date and duration

EVENINGS: 10 weeks. Two evenings a week.
FULL TIME: 5 days.

Venue	Evenings	Saturdays	Full time
Braamfontein	27 Jan	-	-
Rosebank	-	-	27 Jan

INTRODUCTION TO NETWORKING

Certificate Course

The Damelin Computer School course in Networking Support concentrates mainly on the theory aspect of Networking. It will allow the user to gain a good basic knowledge of all the concepts of Networking.

Who should attend

This comprehensive course is intended for users who want to pursue a career in Networking Support.

Course outline

Network orientation. Planning a LAN. The concept of Networking. Printers/peripherals. Network design/layout. Standard topologies. Bus/Star/Ring. Selecting a topology. Peer to Peer Networks. Peer to Peer operating systems.

Starting date and duration

EVENINGS: 4 weeks. Two evenings a week.

Venue	Evenings	Saturdays	Full time
Braamfontein	28 Jan	-	-
Rosebank	17 Feb	-	-

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Dame
COMPUTER SCH
"If you want to be a step

The Star ... Monday May 19 1997

Taxi peace accord brings joy to owners

(332)

Voices raised in jubilant song as rivals in conflict that has cost scores of lives bury the hatchet

Star 19/5/97

By Fikile-Ntsikelelo Moya
City Desk

A boisterous crowd of taxi owners burst into joyous song as the first tentative steps towards a peaceful resolution of the Soweto taxi conflict were taken at the weekend.

Two of the largest associations operating in the area, the Soweto Taxi Association (STA) and the Soweto Taxi Services (STS), met at the Johannesburg Civic Centre to unveil a new emblem that will unify the organisations.

The groups, which have been the main protagonists in the taxi war that has claimed many lives in the past five years, agreed that the unified structure should use the name STS and maintain the STA emblem.

Greater Johannesburg mayor Isaac Mogase, who distributed the new stickers to taxi owners and drivers, praised the commitment of the associations and of local and provincial governments in trying to bring peace to the violence-ridden industry.

Gauteng Transport Department official Sibusiso Buthelezi said the weekend agreement was a result of tough negotiations and lobbying among the taxi organisations in the area over the past four to six weeks.

Single body to be in place within three months

He warned, however, that the peace process was not complete because the new STS operated only in the southern and western parts of Soweto.

Other associations still at loggerheads over routes, such as the Dobsonville-Bara and Meadowlands-Bara, were still to meet sometime this week to discuss peace.

The latest peace initiative started after six taxi formations in Soweto formed a "Top Six" structure that was tasked with finding lasting solutions to the industry's problems.

Buthelezi said Top Six would be enlarged to include all taxi formations in the area, thus enhancing peace prospects.

He added that a task team had been formed to ensure there was a single taxi body within three months.

Notably absent at the meeting was the Witwatersrand African Taxi Association, which has in the past been accused of bully-boy tactics by taking over other associations' routes.

A cautious Buthelezi said talks had been held with Wata, but he would rather not make premature or hasty announcements about these because the idea was to find a lasting peace in the industry.

Pretoria taxi feud claims two more lives

(332) Sowetan 19/5/97

By Josias Charle

THE escalating and deadly war between two rival taxi organisations in Pretoria flared up again yesterday, claiming two lives including that of a policeman who was also a taxi owner.

Pretoria police spokesman Captain Morné van Wyk identified the policeman as Sergeant LE Ngobeni. The other operator was Mr Alpheus Rakgantsho. Both were members of the South African Long Distance Taxi Association which is embroiled in a feud with its rival, Federated Long Distance Taxi Association.

Violence broke out at about 9am, soon after the joint funeral service of Mr Alpheus Malefo (42) and Mr Solomon Dlamini (54) in Soshanguve yesterday. Both men were killed last week.

In less than two weeks about 10 people have been killed, scores of others injured and damage running into many thousands of rands caused when cars were set alight as the taxi war erupted anew in the Soshanguve area.

Three men two from Feldta and one from Saldta have been arrested in connection with some of the incidents.

Yesterday more than 10 000 mourners watched in shock as several shots were fired outside the Rietgat Cemetery. Three men with guns were seen running away from the crowd.

One car was torched outside the cemetery and there were failed attempts to burn three other vehicles.

Illegal firearms

After the joint funeral police officers tried to set up a roadblock outside the cemetery in search of illegal firearms but their attempt failed as most of the vehicles took alternative routes through the neighbouring informal settlement.

Mabopane Station, normally a hive of activity, was virtually empty as the majority of minibus taxis were at the funeral.

Local taxi operators were due to hold urgent talks late yesterday amid fears that further disruptions could be realised in the transport system, affecting thousands of commuters this week.

Deadly taxi war could spread

Star 20/5/97 (332)

By Derek Rodney
Crime Reporter

It is feared the taxi war raging north of Pretoria, which has claimed the lives of at least seven people in the past two weeks, may spill over into the Pretoria township of Mamelodi if last-ditch peace talks between rival taxi associations fail.

Leaders of the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta) and the Federated Long Distance Taxi Association (Feldta) will meet today to discuss the ongoing violence which has ravaged the sprawling northern Gauteng area, but a solution to the latest round of attacks appears far from attainable.

Despite a major breakthrough in the investigation yesterday, efforts by police to control the volatile situation in the area have been hampered by people's fear of identifying the perpetrators.

A major cause for this fear is that many police from the former Bophuthatswana and South African Police have shares in the taxi industry.

Violence flared this month when Mabopane Winterveld Taxi Association officials approached Feldta members to resist a push for control of Soshanguve taxi routes by Saldta members.

Yesterday police seized four suspected stolen vehicles, including three minibuses, on the premises of a Saldta executive member in Block DD, Soshanguve.

Two illegal immigrants from Mozambique and Malawi, believed to be "trigger men" for taxi hits squads, were also detained and could face deportation.

Unit commander Captain Mercia Fryer said yesterday the latest raid had confirmed police suspicions that senior executive members of taxi associations were involved in the ongoing violence.

Weekend violence in Soshanguve claimed the lives of two people, including a Rietgat police sergeant and taxi owner.

According to investigators, many policemen are making money from the taxi industry and use their influence to protect their own interests.

Metered taxis appeal to minister for regulation

BD 21/5/97 (332)

Bonile Ngqiyaza

A DOCUMENT focusing on the fragmented and deteriorating metered taxi industry, and aimed at raising the profile of the industry with government and users, was handed to Transport Minister Mac Maharaj yesterday.

The document, which carries specific proposals relating to the regulation and registration of the metered taxi industry, is meant to supplement last year's national taxi task team's final recommendations to the minister.

The document proposes setting up a national metered taxi working group and "effective" government-industry forums which would include other major players such as the Airports Company, Portnet and Satour.

It recommends the inclusion of metered taxis within the ambit of provincial taxi offices and further proposes more prominent and standardised physical identification and municipal numbering to help raise its profile and improve its quality of service.

It recommends the industry strive towards one national association, with official recognition and support.

On labour relations, it suggests the terms of reference by the interdepartmental working group set up by the labour and transport departments to deal with the issue in the minibus taxi industry, be extended to metered taxis.

The document recommends government economic assistance to metered taxis on the grounds that it plays a "highly visible" role in the tourism sector and complements the public transport system. It also expresses the view that the majority of businesses should qualify for assistance targeted at small medium and microenterprises.

On insurance, it proposes that foreign tourists be required to acquire personal accident cover to top up potential claims against the Road Accident Fund, formerly the Multilateral Motor Vehicle Fund, as such claims were likely to be capped in future.

Discreet meetings over disputed island

BD 21/5/97 (332)

Michael Hartnack

HARARE — The mysterious appearance of armed men on an island claimed by Zimbabwe, upstream from Victoria Falls, led to discreet meetings between Zimbabwe's Central Intelligence Organisation agents and their Zambian counterparts in the Zambian border town of Livingstone yesterday.

Zimbabwean tour operators in Victoria Falls believed the armed men, who appeared at the weekend on disputed Tongavesi Island, were from the Zambian security forces. However, a Zimbabwean national parks department official said: "In Zambia there are armed people who are not necessarily the authorities."

He drew attention to the prevalence of poachers in Zambia, and the employment by many tourist operators of their own security guards.

A Zimbabwe boat cruise manager said: "We are not really concerned about the ownership of the island, which attracts a lot of tourists, but we are worried about the presence of armed people which can easily intimidate customers."

Tourist industry sources say the problem stems from frequent changes of course by the deep channel in the 2km wide Zambezi above Victoria Falls. The channel, which differs from season to season, is supposed to constitute the international boundary.

Zimbabwean maps show Tongavesi in its territory, while the latest Zambian maps claim it for President Frederick Chiluba. With its riverine vegetation heavily frequented by elephant, buffalo, and other game, the island could be an ideal site for a hotel.

A conference in Livingstone last year on the ecological problems caused by pressure of tourist numbers at Victoria Falls reported that Zimbabwean boats had been shot at by resentful competitors on the northern bank.

No progress has been made yet on a recommendation by the conference for the establishment of an international authority to administer the area, which has been declared a world heritage site by the United Nations.

Bushbuckridge to remain in Northern Province

BD 21/5/97 (2bbA)

THE African National Congress (ANC) has decided that Bushbuckridge should remain part of Northern Province, a decision likely to raise the ire of residents demonstrating for the area's transfer to Mpumalanga.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the ANC's national working committee in Johannesburg on Monday which was attended by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki among others.

Referring to the recent violent demonstrations by Bushbuckridge residents, the ANC said that nobody had the right to resort to force and violence to achieve the resolution of problems.

The ANC said the new constitution had finalised the issue of boundaries, and on that basis the status quo had to be maintained. — Sapa.

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Potch taxis lead the way towards peace

CP 25/6/97 (332)

By DAN DHLAMINI

POTCHEFSTROOM taxi operators were this week commended for having maintained peace at all costs while their counterparts slaughtered one other in the North West Province.

Speaking during the official opening of the town's new R1,6-million taxi terminus, sponsored by Sasol and the Southern District Council, Potchefstroom mayor Dundee Ntsoelengoe said although local taxi operators had their differences there had never been bloodshed.

Ntsoelengoe congratulated them for resolving their differences through peace talks.

He said unlike neighbouring towns where taxi operators had been involved in conflicts which claimed lives, Potchefstroom had not as yet experienced a situation where people were seriously injured as a result of taxi warfare.

North West MEC for Transport Frank Vilakazi was supposed to have opened the terminus but had to attend to the trouble-torn Eastern Region – Ga-Rankuwa, Mabopane, Brits and others.

Last week he issued cheques of R450 000 to each of the North West regions to upgrade the taxi industry.

The chairman of the Southern District Council, Dan Dikoko also commended the various Potchefstroom taxi associations for the way they ran their affairs.

Dikoko said the teamwork between the public, the private sector and the taxi operators was instrumental to the smooth running of the town's taxi business.

"Commercial farmers"/ "emerging farmers"

165. Mr L J SWANEPOEL asked the Minister for Agriculture and Land Affairs:†

(1) What is the meaning of the concepts, as mentioned in his Department's annual report for 1995-96, (a) "commercial farmers" (p 33), (b) "emerging farmers" (p 27), (c) "previously disadvantaged farmers" (p 27), (d) "small scale farmers" (p 33), (e) "beginner and small farmers (p 36) and (f) "subsistence farmers" (p 32);

(2) whether he or his Department gives any measure of support to any of these categories of farmers; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what support in respect of each specified category;

(3) whether he or his Department has ascertained to what extent each of the specified categories of farmers contribute towards (a) security of food supply in the Republic and (b) increased food earnings for the Republic; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details in each case? C178E

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND LAND AFFAIRS:

(1) The White Paper on Agriculture (1995) defines a farmer as a land user (irrespective of his/her race, gender or scale of production) who engages productively in agriculture, either on a full-time or on a part-time basis and regardless of whether agriculture forms the principal source of income. We thus have a broad spectrum of farmers in terms of farm size, land tenure systems and the extent to which they are market orientated. No generally accepted terminology exists to describe different categories of farmers and it is therefore obvious that people may attach different concepts to the terminology being used.

(a) The concepts of commercial farmers as referred to on page 33 of the 1995/96 Annual Report of the National Department of Agriculture relates to white commercial farmers that qualified for drought assistance according to the regulations of the Water Quota Subsidy Scheme.

(b) Emerging farmers are farmers who have commercial objectives and farm small or large enterprises. They lack access to support services and resources to expand their farming operation. They normally have access to land by renting it, although farmers who have bought land recently, can be included. Most financial institutions are not prepared to provide finance to this group mainly due to lack of collateral and high risk.

(c) Previously disadvantaged farmers consist of the rural poor farmers on marginal land, the landless and unemployed rural poor. They have a low asset base that could not be converted into an income generating unit. This category includes therefore all the farmers that did not have effective access to the agricultural support measures that were available to white farmers in the previous dispensation.

(d) These farmers include the majority of emerging farmers as well as commercial farmers with small farming operations. It may also include subsistence and sub-subsistence farmers as intended on page 33 of the report. Small scale farmers can be part-time or full-time farmers that partly or totally depend on agriculture for their household income.

(e) The concept of beginner farmers is more or less equal to the term emerging farmers already described while small farmers refer to small scale farmers.

(f) Subsistence and sub-subsistence farmers are characterised as farmers with extremely limited resources. Production is mainly for household consumption.

(2) The majority of the rural poor in South Africa are involved in subsistence agriculture. Agricultural activities account on average for roughly one-sixth of their total household income. A minority of these households produce a surplus or even take part in the marketing of agricultural products.

In terms of food production South Africa thus relies mainly on the commercial farming sector to produce adequate supplies. The policy of food self-sufficiency has, however, been replaced by a policy of food security which emphasizes the availability and accessibility of food for all South Africans.

At this stage the necessary reliable database does not exist to exactly determine to what extent each category of farmers contributes towards food security and increased food earnings.

Gifts given in official capacity: Minister/Deputy

172. Mr W F MNISI asked the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology:

Whether (a) he and/or (b) his Deputy Minister gave gifts to any persons in their official capacity in 1996; if so, in each case, (a) to whom was the gift given, (b) what gift was given, (c) what was the value of the gift and (d) on what occasion was the gift given? C185E

The MINISTER OF ARTS, CULTURE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY:

(a) Minister's official visit to Germany: 8 - 15 June 1996

- (a) Mr W Rothkegel, Berlin (b) Bead-covered stick (c) R50,00 (d) Host in Berlin.
- (a) Mrs Rothkegel, Berlin (b) Bead necklace (c) R25,00 (d) Wife of Mr Rothkegel, the host in Berlin.
- (a) Ms L Mabuza, South African Ambassador, Bonn (b) Beaded wall hanging (c) R185,00 (d) Arranged the programme in Germany and for hospitality.
- (a) Dr J. Rüttgers, German Minister of Science (b) Framed beadwork of small South African and German flags (c) R260,00 (d) On the occasion of signing the Science and Technology agreement with South Africa.
- (a) Ms C Yzer, German Parliamentary State Secretary (b) Book *This is South Africa* (c) R110,00 (d) Accompanied the Minister on various visits in Bonn, and for hospitality.
- (a) Prof Pöppel of Research Centre Jülich (b) Book *This is South Africa.* (c) R110,00 (d) Courtesy visit.

Minister's official visit to India: 1 - 9 December 1996

- (a) Director-General of the Indian Culture Department fda (b) CD of Hugh Masekela (c) R94,95 (d) Courtesy visit.
- (a) Minister of Culture (b) Book *Journey through South Africa* (c) R120,95 (d) Courtesy visit.
- (a) Minister of Textiles (b) Book *South African Landmarks and Popular Places* (c) R99,95 (d) Courtesy visit.
- (a) Head of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in India (b) Book *This is South Africa* (c) R110,00 (d) Courtesy visit.
- (a) Minister of Human Resource Development (b) Book *This is South Africa* (c) R110,00 (d) Courtesy visit.
- (a) Director of the Central Cottage Industry (b) Book *This is South Africa* (c) R110,00 (d) Courtesy visit.
- (a) Minister of Science and Technology (b) Book *Africa, a natural history* (c) R130,00 (d) Courtesy visit.
- (a) South African High Commissioner, New Delhi (b) CD of the Soweto String Quartet (c) R88,90 (d) For arrangements made for visit and for hospitality.

(b) Deputy Minister

None

Minibus taxis: statistics 332

174. Mr J SELFE asked the Minister of Transport:

(1) Whether his Department has gathered any statistics on the number of minibus taxis that are registered to operate; if not, why not; if so, how many such taxis are registered;

(2) whether his Department has estimates on how many unregistered minibus taxis are currently operating; if so, how many such taxis are estimated to be unregistered;

(3) whether the proposals of the National Taxi Task Team have been implemented; if not, why not; if so,

(4) whether any action has been taken in this regard; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what action;

(5) whether he will make a statement on the matter? C187E

The MINISTER OF TRANSPORT:

(1) Yes. The total number of legal minibus taxis in the Republic is 76 323. This figure, however, excludes the number of legal minibus taxis of the former TBVC countries and self-governing territories. A legal minibus taxi in this case is defined as a minibus taxi with an operating permit and a valid certificate of fitness.

(2) Yes. The total number of illegal minibus taxis is estimated to be approximately 70 000 for the Republic. This figure includes the minibus taxis of the former TBVC countries and self-governing territories.

(3) Yes. All members previously conducting illegal operations who now comply with the criteria set by the National Taxi Task Team, will have the opportunity to legalise their operations in terms of the special legalisation procedure. If applications for legalisation do not comply with the criteria, members have to apply to their Local Road Transportation Board in terms of the normal application procedure as described in the Act.

(4) Yes.

The actions taken have been to:

1. establish a Taxi Registrars Office in each of the 9 provinces;
2. set up and communicate to all taxi associations and their members the administrative process with which they must comply in order to qualify for conditional registration, and ensure that they are fully aware of the cut-off point of 30 June 1997. (At present, the provinces report an average compliance rate of 90%);
3. set up and communicate to illegal operators the special legalisation process with which they must comply - with a clearly understood cut-off point of 31 Oct 1997;
4. launch intensified law enforcement exercises in all 9 provinces to reinforce drivers' and operators' awareness of the legalisation process and to emphasise both the cut-off date and the strict measures which will be applied to all those without the required permits after 31 October;
5. open a Taxi Office in each Province as an organisational centre and meeting point for industry members;
6. provide training and assistance in the establishment of taxi co-operatives and taxi fuel installations; and
7. provide assistance with the establishment of financial and insurance guarantee schemes.

(5) All the major issues relating to the proposals of the NTTT and the mechanisms for their implementation were discussed during a press conference held on 6 August 1996. Further communication initiatives to be taken are as follows:

- Following on a regular meeting of MINCOM in Pretoria on 10 June 1997 – at which the Closing Report of the NTTT will be tabled - a joint press conference, hosted by myself and the Provincial MECs for Transport, will be held in Cape Town on 11 June 1997, to update the public on progress being made with registration, legalisation, training and economic assistance in each of the provinces;
- I shall be addressing the National Council of Provinces on the full range of issues involved in the taxi restructuring process on 12 June 1997; once again, all the provincial MECs for Transport will be present and will participate in the debate. The media will be invited to attend, and there will be a brief social event after the debate to give journalists further access to the key role players.

Minister/Deputy:

177. Mr E K MOORCROFT asked the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism:

Whether (a) he and/or (b) his Deputy Minister gave gifts to any persons in their official capacity in 1996; if so, in each case, (a) to whom was the gift given, (b) what gift was given, (c) what was the value of the gift and (d) on what occasion was the gift given? C190E

The MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM:

(a) Minister: Yes.

(i)(a) The Namibian Minister of Environmental Affairs; Mr Pohama.

(b) A Tiger-eye letter opener.

(c) R150,00.

(d) On an official visit to Namibia.

(ii)(a) The leader of the Danish delegation visiting South Africa; Mr P Arnold.

(b) A book on South Africa.

(c) R151.00.

(d) On an official visit to South Africa.

(b) Deputy Minister: No.

(a) to (d) Fall away.

Trips abroad: cost/purpose/destination/duration

188. Mr W F MNISI asked the Minister of Sport and Recreation:

(1) (a) How many times (i) in 1996 and (ii) during the period 1 January 1997 up to the latest specified date for which information is available, did (aa) he and/or (bb) staff members of his Ministry go on trips outside the borders of the Republic funded entirely or partially by the State and (b) what was the (i) purpose, (ii) cost to the State, (iii) destination and (iv) duration of each such trip;

(2) whether any (a) family members and/or (b) other persons not employed by the State went on any of these trips; if so, in each such case, (i) who and (ii) at what cost to the State? C201E

The MINISTER OF SPORT AND RECREATION:

(1) (a) (i) (aa) 1996: 2 times

(bb) 1996: 1 time

(ii) (aa) 1997: 2 times
(bb) 1997: No one

1996:

(b) (i) Attended the Olympic Games.
Attended meetings of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa Zone 6.

1997:
Attended a meeting of the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa Zone 6.
Attended meetings of the Olympic Bid Committee.

(ii) 1996: R13 640,00
R22 393,00

1997:
Cost absorbed by the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa Zone 6.
Cost absorbed by Olympic Bid Committee.

(iii) 1996: Atlanta
Algeria

1997: Botswana
Switzerland

(iv) 1996: Atlanta, 10 days
Algeria, 4 days

1997: Botswana, 1 day
Switzerland, 4 days

(2) (a) (i) 1996: Mrs Tshwete accompanied the Minister to Atlanta.

1997: None

(a) (ii) 1996: R13 640,00

1997: N/A

(b) (i) 1996: None

1997: None

(b) (ii) 1996: N/A

1997: N/A

MEC on the edge in bid to end taxi war

CP 1/6/97 (332)

By MAPULA SIBANDA and ANDILE NOGANTA

FRANS VILAKAZI, the North West MEC for transport, is facing the battle of his political life to get the two players in the Pretoria taxi war around the negotiating table.

Ironically, his background as a taxi operator counts against him, with both sides suspecting him of having a vested interest in the matter.

As frantic efforts continue behind the scenes to try to end the stalemate, a lot is hinging on Vilakazi's personality.

The South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (SALLDTA) has already declared that it will not negotiate at a meeting chaired by the MEC.

"On our side we are not prepared to meet Vilakazi. He cannot get us together because we have no confidence in him," said Wesley Mpawu, a SALLDTA spokesperson.

The other party in the dispute is the Federation of Long Distance Taxi Associations (FELDTA).

The organisations say they want Premier Popo Molefe to personally intervene in the violence.

☐ This week, the conflict in Mabopane, Soshanguve and Ga-Rankuwa, north of Pretoria, claimed two more lives – bringing the death toll to nine.

So far nineteen people have been injured.

The war has also left more than 70 000 commuters stranded.

☐ When City Press went on a walkabout in the townships two weeks ago, the air was thick with tension, with one party suspecting the other of trying to outmanoeuvre them.

☐ Vilakazi's taxi background makes him a good candidate to bring about a lasting solution to the problem.

Vilakazi says his family opted out of the industry in 1987 when his fledgling political career presented a conflict of interests.

But his past seems to be eroding his credibility as a mediator.

Taxi owners at a rank at Mabopane station described Vilakazi as a "mere taxi driver".

☐ The carnage in the area does not spring from a conflict over routes.

It apparently started when SALLDTA and FELDTA both tried to get the more than 1 000 members of the disbanded Ga-Rankuwa United Taxi Association to join their groups.

Vilakazi believes that only a crackdown on those responsible for the feud will bring stability to the industry.

However, taxi bosses are also suspicious of the police. They say some policemen cannot be trusted because they own taxis.

It has always been suspected that a third force is involved in the conflict – and Vilakazi sees this as a fact.

"Quite clearly there is a hit squad operating in the area. It has come out in the past that there has been a third force stirring up violence in the taxi industry," he said.

Man shot as drivers battle over taxi rank

ARG 4/6/97

STAFF REPORTERS

(332)

Tense talks were under way today between rival taxi associations after a shootout in Main Road, Mowbray yesterday over control of a taxi rank in front of Mowbray police station.

The talks, held at the police priority crimes unit offices in Parow, were being facilitated by senior superintendent Simon Mpembe and superintendent Mark Splinters of the Western Cape taxi task team.

This follows a four-hour clash between members of the Peninsula Taxi Association and Main Road Taxi Association during which 25-year-old Khayelitsha taxi conductor Nyanga Gcwabe of the Peninsula association was shot in the buttocks and another driver stabbed in the head.

Mr Gcwabe was shot when his vehicle was attacked by gunmen opposite President Mandela's Groote Schuur estate.

The stand-off spilled over to the station deck taxi rank in the city centre where rival drivers also confronted each other.

Other sporadic incidents of intimidation and violence followed, leaving hundreds of Wynberg-bound commuters without transport for several hours.

Public order police, traffic officials and the army were called in to restore order. Taxi drivers from both associations blocked the road at various stages.

During an adjournment in today's negotiations, it emerged that the Main Road Taxi Association and Green Cabs, a third taxi group, had merged and did not want to allow Peninsula to use the temporary rank for Wynberg.

Yesterday's violence comes barely 12 days after the two associations decided they would both use the temporary rank.

Taxi rank no-go area after clashes

(332)

STAFF REPORTER

Two rival taxi associations battling for control of a temporary rank at Mowbray have agreed to avoid the rank until it is converted to a permanent facility.

This follows urgent talks yesterday between members of the Peninsula Taxi Association and the Main Road Taxi Association, facilitated by the police Western Cape Taxi Task Team.

The talks were held after a tense four-hour confrontation on Tuesday between the rival associations. A conductor was shot and wounded, a driver stabbed, and Main Road Mowbray blockaded.

The talks ended with agreement that no taxi would pick up or off-load passengers in Main Road between Victoria Road and the storefront of a fried chicken fast-food outlet. It was agreed the temporary rank would be a no-go area for taxis until the Cape Town municipality's city planning department had approved a permanent facility there.

Taxi representatives agreed with police facilitators to identify "unruly elements" responsible for Tuesday's violent clashes.



DOUG PITHEY

Tough talks: police and taxi operators meet to discuss the Mowbray violence

ARG 5/6/97

Going price for killing of taximen as little as R300

(332)

At least 17 have been gunned down in three townships in the Pretoria area in the past month

Star 5/6/97

By Mike Masipa
Crime Reporter

Hit squads active in the taxi war ravaging townships north of Pretoria now charge as little as R300 a hit, fuelling fears of more violence in the taxi industry, police said yesterday.

Gauteng police revealed in November that hitmen hired by competing taxi associations were paid between R3 000 and R100 000 to take out members of rival organisations.

Inspector Tinus Kruger of the Pretoria Taxi Violence Unit investigating the ongoing killings in Soshanguve, Mabopane and Ga-Rankuwa, all north of Pretoria, said yesterday that local taxi drivers who were regarded as less important could be killed for a mere R300.

Some of the killers even got paid if passengers were injured or killed in the crossfire because their deaths discouraged other commuters from using the taxi, and this resulted in the rival organisation making less money.

The three townships and their surroundings have witnessed the killing of at least 17 people over the past month, with most of the murders taking place in Soshanguve.

A further 43 people were injured in attacks that included the use of drive-by shootings and hits on prominent taxi bosses.

Police investigations revealed that the life of a fairly high-ranking local official could be worth about R3 000, a third of what their counterparts elsewhere in the province were "worth".

The highest price in the area is about R50 000 for "big shots" such as the chairman of a federation's regional committee.

Kruger said the Winterveld informal settlement near Soshanguve was a hideout for most of the hitmen because it was a haven for illegal immigrants who could be paid very little to carry out a job, and were also hard to track down.

"Most of these people are unemployed and highly trained in the use of firearms. Many of them are easy to come by," he said.

Drivers claim they are victimised by their bosses

By Patrick Phosa

Johannesburg minibus taxi drivers claim that their attempts to form a viable national body to represent their interests are being thwarted by taxi owners who intimidate and abuse them.

They claim the owners fear that once drivers are organised, they will not be easily manipulated and could start demanding rights such as basic employment benefits.

These were the sentiments expressed in Johannesburg yesterday at a meeting of taxi drivers from various taxi associations. The meeting was convened by the National Taxi Drivers' Organisation (Natdo).

Natdo was created in 1995 to deal with warrants of arrest and summonses issued against taxi drivers who had accumulated fines for traffic offences.

The organisation plans to demand employment contracts for drivers so that they can have fixed salaries and know what is expected of them by their bosses.

Natdo deputy chairman Godfrey Mohlala said taxi drivers were not provided with contract agreements, and could be fired by their bosses at any time.

"We are just given a taxi to drive before we are even told how much we will earn," he said.

Mohlala said drivers worked up to 15 hours a day without any overtime pay, and they were even worse off than domestic workers, whose rights were embodied in the new Labour Relations Act.

Natdo chairman Themba Mogabi said he had been thrown out of a taxi association he belonged to because he was vocal about taxi drivers' rights.

"Our taxi associations do not want to see us getting organised and they just dismiss us as if we are nothing. Many drivers may have wanted to attend this meeting, but they were not able to because they feared intimidation from their bosses," he said.

Natdo secretary-general Ace Nhlapo said taxi drivers should be registered with the Department of Transport so that the Government could know where to put resources for training. He said training should include customer care, first aid and patience on the road.

The Star ... Monday June 9 1997

Pretoria taxi gunmen target law enforcers

(332)

Arrest of high-ranking officer is imminent, which could fuel the widely held belief Star 9/6/97 that police have interests in the industry

By Mike Masipa
Crime Reporter

Gunmen in the taxi killings currently gripping townships north of Pretoria are growing bolder by the day, carrying out attacks on law enforcers and attacking rivals despite around-the-clock joint army and police patrols.

Area police spokesman Captain Morné van Wyk said yesterday the hit squads – said to be carrying out murders for as little as R300 per hit – were increasingly attacking police on patrols.

Numerous policemen have been injured in the violence that has left at least 17 people dead and 45 others injured in Soshanguve, Mabopane and GaRankuwa since early last month.

The area has over the past decade been ridden with senseless taxi violence that was at times sparked off by absurd and sometimes childish excuses.

The latest round of fighting between the SA Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association is widely believed to have been sparked by one organisation forcibly placing their emblems on minibuses belonging to the other.

Sparked off by absurd, childish excuses

Van Wyk said the overstretched law enforcers were finding it difficult to bring the situation under control and that the picture would remain the same unless "the taxi organisations start showing some seriousness in ending the fight".

Rumours abound that there was police complicity in the violence since some police officers have interests in the industry.

Captain Mercia Fryer of the Pretoria taxi violence unit said the arrest of a high-ranking local police officer was imminent. This would lend much credence to a widely held belief that police had interests in the taxi industry, and that hence there had not been any breakthrough in investigations into the violence.

Fryer said another police officer was shot and seriously wounded yesterday in an incident believed to be linked to the strife.

Hours earlier, a Salldta member was shot and two vehicles were set alight at Soshanguve's Rietgat taxi rank, a few metres from a local police station.

Boost for Cape taxi industry

STAFF REPORTER

(332)
ARG 10/6/97

The taxi industry in the Oostenberg municipality is set for a major boost as associations from 10 areas launch a liaison committee in Kuils River today.

In a bid to improve the industry's public image, taxi associations from areas such as Kraaifontein, Mfuleni, Eerste River and Blue Downs have banded together to form a committee which will liaise with traffic officials, commuters and the transport ministry to iron out problems, said Oostenberg taxi representative Aubrey van Niekerk.

The initiative is set to revolutionise the industry in the Oostenberg municipal area by creating a platform for addressing grievances.

"We are also hoping to improve the image of the industry to such an extent that the business sector will invest in taxi associations in our area," he said.

Taxi violence hits Pretoria ranks

sowetan 12/6/97

(332)

Recent killings make mockery of peace pact

By Josias Charle

SPORADIC TAXI VIOLENCE flared up again in Soshanguve, Pretoria yesterday with gunfire being exchanged between the police and taxi operators.

Police spokesman Captain Morne van Wyk said the shooting took place at the Rietgat police station around 9.30am.

"Bystanders started shooting at the police station and police returned fire. Nobody was wounded during that shooting," Van Wyk said.

He said in a separate incident earlier in the day, a taxi operator was wounded in the arm when shots were fired at his minibus at a transfer rank in Soshanguve. His vehicle was set alight.

At Rietgat taxi rank, a woman passenger was wounded in an attack on another minibus that was also set alight.

The Mabopane Station taxi rank, which has been the focus of repeated attacks on taxis and their owners, is situated about 500m from the police station.

Train services to Mabopane came to a standstill at 9.45am because of the violence but resumed about 20 minutes later, Metrorail said in Pretoria.

Since the beginning of last month, 19 people have been killed and scores injured in the ongoing struggle between the Federated Long Distance Taxi Association (FLDTASA) and the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (SALDTA).

Eight people have been arrested so far.

A peace pact was signed last week between the two organisations but by yesterday it looked like both parties had reneged on the agreement.

The two organisations have been embroiled in a war over the use of the lucrative Mabopane Station taxi rank. The rank is a link between central Pretoria, the townships and villages north of the city. Thousands of people use the route daily.

A spokesman for the special taxi investigating unit Inspector Trevor Masser yesterday said he was unable to provide any information on the unit's successes since it was formed in February.

Masser said figures were usually forwarded to Minister of Safety and Security Mr Sydney Mufamadi.

Mufamadi is expected to release crime figures in Cape Town tomorrow.

ost taxis register to beat deadline

Sowetan 12/6/97

S to regulate South
haotic minibus taxi
e on track with 90 per-
country's associations
or registration before
30 deadline, Transport
Mr Mac Maharaj said

taxi operators –
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as they conform to the
eria, Maharaj said at a press briefing in Cape Town.

The registration process has placed authorities in a better law enforcement position with some provinces already cracking down on offenders.

Although there is a grace period for contravention, law enforcement will be intensified once the registration process is complete, Maharaj warned.

The October 31 deadline will see the majority of taxi operators in one regulatory fold for the first time, National Taxi Task Team chairman Mr Dipak Patel said.

The Land Passenger Transport Bill will probably be enacted by then and the entire process of re-regulating the industry under the new law can begin.

Although registration is voluntary, it is a pre-requisite for any form of assistance, Maharaj said.

Applications are conditional on the associations conforming to a standard constitution as prescribed by the new Bill.

The NTTT has recommended that taxi operators should form cooperatives and in this way receive the necessary economic assistance, he said.

On taxi violence, Maharaj said a special police investigative team was appointed three months ago and some progress has already been made.

Safety and Security Minister Mr Sydney Mufamadi will give a progress report tomorrow. – *Sapa*.



Most taxis register to beat deadline

(332) Sowetan 12/6/97

ATTEMPTS to regulate South Africa's chaotic minibus taxi industry are on track with 90 percent of the country's associations applying for registration before the June 30 deadline, Transport Minister Mr Mac Maharaj said yesterday.

Illegal taxi operators – believed to comprise half of the industry – have up to October 31 to apply to operate within the law as long as they conform to the legal criteria, Maharaj said at a press briefing in Cape Town.

The registration process has placed authorities in a better law enforcement position with some provinces already cracking down on offenders.

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Safety and Security Minister Mr Sydney Mufamadi will give a progress report tomorrow. – *Sapa.*



NEWS

Time running out for illegal taxis

ARG 12/6/97 (332)

CLIVE SAWYER
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Minibus taxis operating illegally – believed to be half of those on South Africa's roads – have until October 31 to apply for registration, says Transport Minister Mac Maharaj.

While the drive to bring illegal taxis into the fold has leant towards voluntary compliance, there is an intensifying campaign of law enforcement.

Steps are also to be taken to encourage the use of larger 20- to 25-seater vehicles – "midi-buses" – and the Government is investigating whether the bus taxi industry should go over wholly to the use of diesel fuel.

Mr Maharaj told a media briefing in Cape Town yesterday that the National Taxi Task Team, appointed three years ago, had handed in a final report. The department of transport was shifting to a greater emphasis on being a regulator and policy formulator while powers were being devolved to the lowest-level authority.

Plans for bus services were that their interim contracts would expire after three years, followed by a shift to a fully-competitive tendering system.

Among buses, competition would then be for routes rather than on routes.

Turning to rail transport, Mr Maharaj said the Government had negotiated with Transnet and Spoornet that Metrorail would become a "self-standing" business unit.

Regarding minibuses, he said that from the 1998/99 financial year funding for regulation of the industry would be under the control of provinces.

Maharaj warns taxi operators

CT 12/6/97

POLITICAL STAFF

(332)

ILLEGAL taxi operators have four months to apply to operate within the law, national Transport Minister Mr Mac Maharaj warned yesterday.

He also announced that only registered taxi associations would receive financial assistance from the government.

The government hopes that by March next year all taxi operators will unite and form one taxi co-operative in each of the nine provinces, a move that should reduce tensions and help wipe out taxi violence.

These co-operatives would also be able to tap into training facilities being set up by provincial taxi offices.

Maharaj yesterday said the government was eager to hand over transport powers to provincial and local government, which would carry out the regulation and policing of the transport networks.

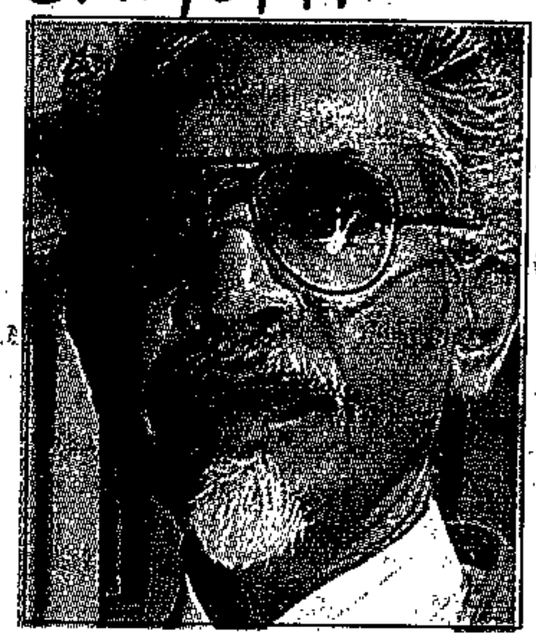
The government hoped to complete this restructuring within three years.

He said he had no intention of dictating to the transport industry "from my office in Pretoria".

While the national transport ministry would act as a facilitator, policy formulator and a "strategic planning" instrument, the regulation of the industry and enforcement of the law would be carried out by the nine provincial governments.

Economic assistance to the taxi industry would be channelled through the provincial transport ministries.

Referring to the setting up of taxi associations, he said a Land Transport Bill had been accepted by cabinet and was expected to be passed by Parliament later this year.



WON'T DICTATE: Mac Maharaj

He said this would ensure taxi associations were democratic and financially accountable, and that taxi operators were guided by a code of conduct. It would also set up the terms of dispute resolution mechanisms.

Maharaj estimated that 90% of the taxi industry would have registered before the June 30 deadline.

The national ministry will provide R39,6 billion for the first two years and funding will then become a provincial matter.

"Registration will be voluntary, but it will be a prerequisite of economic assistance," said Maharaj.

Illegal taxi operators must register by October 31, but taxi associations must register before the end of the month.

The government was encouraging taxi operators to move away from minibus taxis to larger 20-to-25 seater buses. This would also require a conversion to diesel.

Turning to the bus service, he said provinces would implement a plan to move away from the ticket-based subsidy system to one which required proof of kilometres travelled in order to receive a government payout.

Girl killed in taxi rank shooting

(332)

OWN CORRESPONDENT

ET 12/6/97

PRETORIA: A young girl was fatally shot, two people were seriously injured and two taxis torched in taxi violence that turned part of Soshanguve into something resembling a war zone.

Hundreds of commuters were left stranded again as virtually no taxis moved in the area yesterday, and Metro Rail temporarily suspended its service to Mabopane because of the shooting at the nearby Rietgat taxi rank.

The train service was suspended from 9am for an hour because of the shooting, and ticket offices closed. There was a strong police and Metrorail Protection Services presence when the service resumed an hour later.

Yesterday's violence in Soshanguve broke out when unknown people opened fire on the Rietgat taxi rank, said Captain Mogotsi Monaledi of Rietgat police.

There was a long-standing feud, police said, between the South African Long Distance Taxi Association and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association members.

Monaledi said that during the shooting a bullet went through the reception area of the police station, which is near the Rietgat taxi rank, close to the busy Mabopane station, narrowly missing people in the room.

"After that we heard shots being fired, and people started stampeded towards the police station. We rushed to the scene."

Police said that among the wounded was a young girl, who later died of her injuries at Ga-Rankuwa Hospital.

She could not be named until her parents, who lived in Rustenburg, had been informed.

Taxi 'permits racket' angers city undertakers

ARLT 13/6/97 (332)

NORMAN JOSEPH
STAFF REPORTER

Peninsula taxi operators are allegedly extorting vast sums of money in "permit fees" from undertakers for allowing them to transport mourners and corpses out of Cape Town.

Provincial Transport Minister Leonard Ramatlakane has issued a stern warning to members of the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) and the Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta) to stop their "senseless action".

Undertakers affiliated to the Western Cape Black Funeral Undertakers' Association claimed this week that Cata and Codeta drivers intimidated, threatened and demanded fees of between R100 and R800 before allowing them to leave Cape Town.

The undertakers, who asked not to be named as "we may become targets", said their business was being affected in areas such as Khayelitsha and Guguletu.

The only time they felt safe was once they were away from Cape Town, they said.

An undertaker told the Cape Argus that some taxi operators had reduced the fee to R100, but this depended on the number of mourners in an undertaker's vehicle.

Mr Ramatlakane said it had been brought to his attention recently that taxi operators affiliated to the taxi associations were charging undertakers "permit fees" at taxi ranks to allow them to pick up mourners and transport them to the Eastern Cape.

He condemned the alleged intimidation, saying anyone charging undertakers was infringing their rights and the rights of the mourners.

"Please do not export the conflict to other areas," Mr Ramatlakane appealed to taxi operators.

Undertakers said that most Khayelitsha, Guguletu, Langa and Nyanga residents were from the Eastern Cape or still had close family links with the region.

When a family member died, the corpse and mourners were taken to the Eastern Cape for the funeral.

Codeta spokesman David Jezile said they had met the undertakers recently, "but they never came back to us".

He had heard details of their allegations for the first time when approached by Mr Ramatlakane this week.

Cata spokesman James Mkunyana denied any knowledge of the allegations.

CAPE TIMES
FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 199★

COLOURED DRIVERS FORM OWN GROUP

New turn in taxi row raises race clash fears

CT 13/6/97 (332)

POLICE in the Peninsula were working yesterday to prevent a new taxi flare-up from "spilling over from a taxi story to a racial problem", reports **ROGER FRIEDMAN.**

THE Western Cape was last night on the brink of a new kind of taxi war which threatens to be fought on racial lines. Commuters started bearing the brunt yesterday, and police are not looking forward to the weekend.

Twelve fed-up taxi associations from predominantly coloured areas united last week under the banner of the new Reformed United Taxi Alliance (Ruta), which had its first brush with the predominantly black Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) at the Bellville rank yesterday.

Yesterday police were working to prevent "it spilling over from a taxi story to a racial problem", as the head of the Taxi Unit, Superintendent Yasser Splinters, put it.

Ruta's interim chairperson, Mr Aubrey van Niekerk, who is the chairman of the Kraaifontein Taxi Association, told the Cape Times the new organisation was formed to protect taxi routes and curb Cata expansionism.

Taxi associations which have apparently joined Ruta include those from Elsie's River, Uitsig, Kuils River and Bellville South, and it appears there are particular tensions on the Delft, Belhar and Kraaifontein routes. And, of course, at the Bellville station hub.

Since last week, Ruta vans have operated alongside Cata's at the Bellville rank, but the uneasy neighbourliness boiled over during the morning rush-hour yesterday when Ruta supporters stopped Cata taxis and forced their passengers out. Ruta then moved from the rank to an adjoining parking area, on the far side of where the Congress of Democratic Taxi Associations (Codeta), Cata's old rival, has ranks.

To complicate the issue, it appears that people connected to both Cata and Ruta have been courting members of Core, the organisation of gangsters and former gangsters formed last year apparently to promote peace and development. Several prominent members of Core own taxis that operate in areas controlled by both Cata and Ruta.

Members of the Delft Taxi Association, which has an operational agreement with Cata and Codeta, said yesterday Core had undertaken not to involve itself in the politics of the industry.

And to add a final complication, Codeta, which agreed to a truce with Cata a few weeks ago, held discussions with Ruta yesterday at the offices of the police taxi unit. The meeting — and a follow-up meeting scheduled for Tuesday — is bound to disturb Cata.

Police and soldiers maintained a constant vigil at the parking-lot Ruta rank in Bellville yesterday, where many taxis were parked idly and groups of drivers huddled in heated conversation. Some speakers urged members not to engage in violence, others said violence was already inevitable.

A Mr Williams spoke out for non-violence: "Please, we still have a long programme to follow. You know that Codeta members have sometimes been forced by Cata to leave their homes. That is Cata's story, they come for you in the night."

Another speaker warned: "If Cata comes in the night we will deal with them in the day. If one person falls it will be shoot-shoot-shoot here in the Cape."

Elsewhere, another huddle was discussing overnight security



EVICTED: A commuter who hopped into a private car "taxi" yesterday in preference to taking her chances in a conventional taxi is hauled from the vehicle by supporters of a new player in the taxi mix, the Reformed United Taxi Alliance (Ruta). ***PICTURE: BENNY GOOL***

arrangements, with the suggestion that drivers should spend the night in groups so as not to be caught alone in case of a Cata attack.

Late in the afternoon information that Cata drivers had threatened Ruta drivers on the Kraaifontein route infuriated Ruta members in Bellville.

The new rank in the parking-lot and the police and army presence evidently confused would-be passengers, some of whom were lured into private cars by opportunistic drivers hoping to make a quick buck. Ruta supporters blocked the road to prevent these cars from leaving, and manhandled their passengers out. One such incident led to an angry confrontation between Ruta members and the police, which almost became violent. Police and military reinforcements were immediately brought into the area.

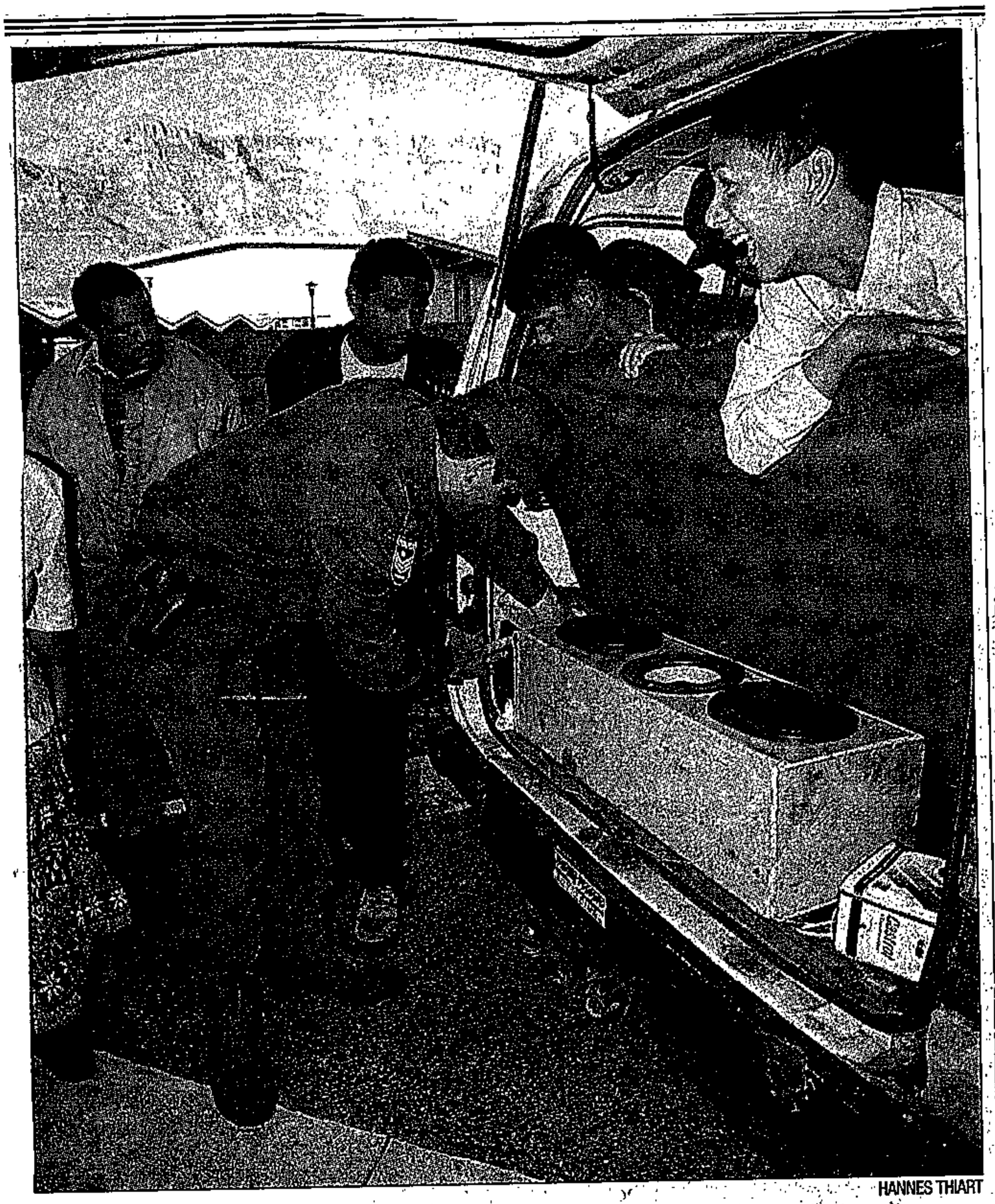
Ruta leader Van Niekerk accused Cata of trying to drive a wedge between coloured and black people by insisting on being allowed to ferry black passengers regardless of the route. "We have blacks aligned to our association, so they are actually turning it into a racial thing," he said.

Official comment from Cata was unobtainable yesterday; a few Cata drivers said the organisation was non-racial.

Superintendent Splinters said: "The government must speed up the legalisation process for taxis. We need legislation to impound vehicles which are not operating on the routes they should be. And traffic police need to be empowered to operate across municipal boundaries."

● See Page 5

CT 13/6/97 (332)



HANNES THIART

Raid: police search a minibus taxi at a road block on the Cape Town Station Deck taxi rank

Police, army, join forces in bid to avert re-kindling taxi clashes

ARG 14/6/97 (332)

JOHAN SCHRONEN
CRIME CORRESPONDENT

Police, the army and traffic officers have joined forces in a bid to clampdown on an imminent rekindling of the Pensinsula's taxi war.

Law enforcement officers searched for weapons and set up road blocks at taxi ranks and on commuter routes while police and defence force helicopters hovered above.

A police spokesman said the operation was an attempt to bring order to this highly competitive industry which has been marred by violent clashes and the killing of innocent passengers.

Police also checked for drugs, stolen property, wanted persons and unroadworthy vehicles. The spokesman said although no significant confiscations or arrests were made, the police presence did help to curb crime within the taxi fraternity and was in keeping with the police's "proactive" approach to crime.

Roadworthy taxi scam: a licence to kill

(332)

Star 14/6/97

By JACQUI REEVES

Thousands of taxi drivers are operating in the Greater Johannesburg area with false roadworthy certificates – playing a lethal game of roulette with their passengers', and other road users' lives.

A *Saturday Star* investigation has revealed that false "certificates of fitness" have been passing through the system at the metropolitan licensing department in Loveday Street in excess of 100 a week.

The newspaper has in its possession examples of the falsified documentation, which include certificates of fitness, applications for registration and licensing of vehicles, and fake clearance certificates.

The certificates of fitness – a prerequisite for all minibus owners – are being falsified largely for taxi owners desperate to stay on the road with as few maintenance costs as possible.

In addition to the huge number of unroadworthy taxis on Johannesburg's roads, a separate set of false documentation is being issued, aiding another of Gauteng's growing "industries" – car hijacking and theft.

False registration documents, complete with motor vehicle clearance certificates are available from dealers using falsified stamps from the Johannesburg vehicle theft unit. "Legal" cash receipts, printed on multi-coloured paper are also available.

Having stolen or hijacked a vehicle, criminals need only approach the fraudsters for the documentation, which passes through the system past the untrained eyes of local cashiers.

Gerrie Gerneke, the acting head for TMC licensing, said the problem had only recently been identified in the department by senior supervisors.

"Only the very experienced staff were able to pick up the subtle differences in the false documents. When they realised the problem, they brought it to my attention," Gerneke said.

The false documents can only be recognised by the poor quality and colouring of the paper, slight inaccuracies in the duplicate stamps used to represent private testing companies, and missing information.

Training courses have been set up by the senior staffers to educate junior cashiers, both internally and provincially, on the nuances of false documents, but Gerneke remains concerned.

"The big departments like Johannesburg are starting to crack down on the problem, but the smaller departments remain a problem – the criminals are simply going to go there if we don't act soon," he said.

Despite many meetings with the SAPS, limited resources have made the permanent posting of officers at the licensing department impossible, leaving the door open for criminals.

Gerneke is considering making a formal request to the "peace officers" in the traffic department to help the licensing staff curb the problem.

"If the criminals can't register the vehicles, then hijacking and theft become more difficult for them. But nothing is going to happen until we show these people that we are serious about fighting this problem and arrest anyone found with the false documents – even if they are just runners," he said.

Since the problem was recognised by licensing officials, cashiers and supervisors have identified an average of 40 false registration documents each week, out of the about 10 000 that are processed over the same period.

"What is worrying is that in the past, more than 100 taxis have been certified fit for the road every week, without ever having done any real tests," Gerneke said.

Private testing stations, which operate legally and with the consent of the licensing authorities, are bearing the brunt of the fraudsters' actions.

"They are stealing our business and dragging our names through the mud with their fake stamps," said Dana Bench, owner of a private test centre.

Although most of the fraudsters have attempted to duplicate the stamps of the private operators, some small differences exist.

Incorrect spelling and placing of addresses and telephone numbers on the stamps are some of the telltale signs.

All aboard for the trip to tap

Transport Minister MAC MAHARAJ says minibus taxis are blazing a new trail

to tap

dapper commuting

MORE than half of South Africa's five million commuter passengers are transported every day by minibus taxi without costing the taxpayer a cent.

The industry has grown into a business that's worth R8-billion and has assets that would cost R15-million to replace at today's prices, despite no financial assistance from the public sector.

As such, it represents the best entrepreneurial spirit of this country operating in perhaps the most adverse working conditions.

But more important, the minibus taxi industry is integral to putting in place an efficient and effective public passenger transport system.

That's why my department, along with other role players in the industry, embarked on a detailed consultative process in the National Taxi Task Team to put the taxi industry on a firmly regulated financial footing where it belongs — in the mainstream of economic life in this country.

The process was long and often difficult as more than half of the taxi industry has, through force of circumstance and lack of opportunity, been working outside of the system.

Coming on board was a double-edged sword for taxi operators.

The plus was the stability of working in a regulated environment with economic assistance, but with it is the responsibility of being part of a system of controls and regulations.

More than 90 percent of the 1 200 taxi associations nationwide have decided to go this route and applied for conditional registration before the deadline at the end of this month. This represents more than 70 000 people operating 130 000 taxis.

The registration of associations, the start of formalising the industry, is part of a three-phase strategy that was adopted out of the recommendations of the task team and has the full support of all nine provinces which are charged with its implementation and enforcement.

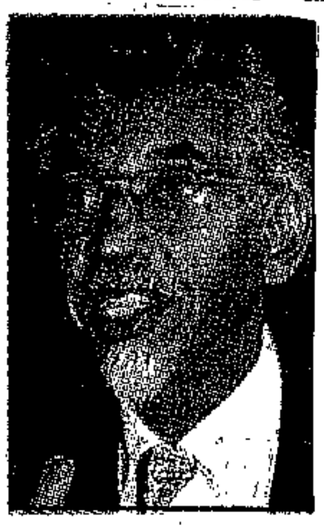
In terms of the regulations, all nine MECs of transport have established taxi offices in their provinces and have employed registrars with the assistance of national government.

The registration data from the provinces will be fed into a national register of taxis as well as into the National Traffic Information System, which is a nationwide database of all road users.

The link with this system will allow police in any part of the country to cross reference and verify the registration of any vehicle as well as the legal status of the driver and the vehicle.

The process of formalisation will be complete when all associations adopt a standard constitution and code of conduct as well as a grievance and disciplinary procedure.

Failure to comply could result in deregistration of an association, and therefore the onus is on the associations to keep their houses in order.



Once the members of hit squads are behind bars the process of normalising the minibus taxi industry will gain increased momentum

This will also ensure they remain democratic and accountable within a self-regulatory framework.

And it will bring the users of taxis and the people who work in the industry into a new system which will have both organisational structure and a regulatory framework of control.

The second phase of the strategy is the legalisation of illegal operators. After October, any operator found without a valid permit will face the full force of the law.

The last part of the strategy is economic assistance through the formation of co-operatives designed to sustain profitability. This will transform the industry into managed businesses that can participate fully in a new public transport system.

The benefits will not be just for the minibus industry but for the economy as well, as frustrated entrepreneurs will finally get the chance to develop and even diversify into other modes within the transport sector.

Although March next year is the target date by which each province must have at least one co-operative functioning, Kwazulu Natal and the Eastern Cape are already leading the way.

A problem that does remain for the industry is its almost endemic history of violence. In the past, members jockeyed for power and routes without any recourse to a legal system of regulation or control.

But if the task team process has taught us anything, it is that the violent element in the industry is a minority.

On one level there has been violence symptomatic of the neglect and the lack of enforcement of a regulatory framework in the industry. This will largely be eradicated over the next few years as the new process gathers momentum and is enforced on the ground.

The second type of violence comes from professional criminals who see the industry as a lucrative market in which to ply their vicious trade.

A special presidential investigation unit was established three months ago under the minister of safety and security to root out this criminal element which uses hit squads to enforce its will.

Linked to this is the full co-operation of the minister of justice to ensure that these people do not get bail and that through effective prosecution they will feel the full force of the law. Already progress is being reported on both fronts.

Once the members of these hit squads are behind bars the process of normalising the minibus taxi industry will gain increased momentum.

Our policy secures the regulatory foundation for the minibus taxi industry's long-term future as a recognised member of the formal transport sector as well as an integral part of public passenger transport in the Land Transport Bill, which was approved by the cabinet last month.

We are working for an efficient and effective transport system, within available resources, that is driven by customer needs and demands.

The policy is based on three pillars: planning; regulation and law enforcement; and the role of government in the process as a planner and a regulator, but not a provider.

While we have worked with the taxi industry over the past two years, the Department of Transport has also been negotiating with bus companies and commuter rail services to reorganise their operations within a three- to four-year time frame.

We believe that these three elements — bus, rail and taxi — harnessed together will provide South Africa with its first intermodal public transport system. And by the year 2000 we will be living up to the name of our strategic plan, Moving South Africa.

Taxi drivers resolve to stay out of the violence

(332)

BY FIKILE-NTSIKELELO MOVA AND SAPA

Star 16/6/97

The South African Taxi Drivers Union (Satdu) has resolved to distance its members from taxi violence because the fighting is among owners and not drivers, Satdu general-secretary Maurice Bokaba said yesterday.

The union has called on its members to park their taxis in safe places and to avoid the violence because they could be victims or mistaken for perpetrators. The resolution comes in the wake of at least five taxi-related attacks at the weekend.

The taxi drivers union, which has been involved with the National Taxi Task Team, decided at its national consultative conference held at a Johannesburg hotel at the weekend, to co-operate with similar structures at local and provincial government levels to combat taxi violence.

The conference, attended by 55 delegates from nine regions, also resolved to support the Labour Department's ministerial committee which is setting up a national wage board for the industry and to support the Transport Department's convention of a labour relations forum.

Bokaba said it was hoped that the forum, consisting of taxi owners and drivers, would culminate in the formation of a bargaining council.

Committee to help taxi industry

Sowetan 16/6/97 (332)

By Themba Sepotokele

THE South African Taxi Drivers' Union yesterday hailed the proposal by the Department of Labour to establish a ministerial committee to tackle labour-related issues in the taxi industry.

Speaking to the media in Johannesburg after the end of a three day consultative forum, Satdu secretary-general Mr Stanley Bokaba said the Labour Department has shown commitment in transforming the taxi industry.

He said the committee will look at issues such as basic conditions of employment, working hours, training, the establishment of the National Taxi Labour Relations Forum (NTLRF), welfare and other benefits for drivers.

"The Labour Department has shown commitment by investing in the taxi industry. The department has also called for the establishment of the National Taxi Labour Relations Forum to address the relationship between taxi owners and drivers.

"There is indeed progress made since our national conference last year. It is expected that the ministerial committee will start functioning by August.

"This kind of commitment will bring taxi violence to an end," he said.

SA nurses back in world fold

Sowetan 16/6/97

By Charity Bhengu (332)

SOUTH African nurses are once more in the fold of international nursing after years of isolation due to apartheid.

The new Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (Denosa) will be represented at the 21st congress of the International Council of Nurses which got under way in Vancouver, Canada, yesterday.

Denosa was admitted to the Commonwealth Nurses Federation at the same time.

A South African delegation of six nurses led by the newly appointed president of Denosa, Professor Philda Nzimande, a vice-dean at the University of Zululand, left the country last week to attend the congress.

The South African Nursing Association was expelled from the ICN and the CNF during the apartheid era.

Soshanguve residents plan 10-week boycott in bid to end taxi violence

Star 19/6/97

332

Exasperated Soshanguve residents caught in ongoing violence between rival taxi groups are planning a 10-week taxi boycott in a bid to end strife in the area, community leaders said in Pretoria yesterday.

Soshanguve community police forum chairman Dan Mahlangu said four committees were set up on Tuesday to put the plan into action.

At least 22 people were killed and 34 wounded in taxi violence in Soshanguve in the past month.

The latest incident was yesterday, when a taxi operator and one of his passengers were wounded in a drive-by shooting.

"We have had enough," Mahlangu said. "We cannot afford to lose one more life in this violence."

He said one of the committees was to have met Gauteng Transport MEC Paul Mashatile last night to ask him to obtain an interdict to close down all taxi ranks in Soshanguve for 10 weeks. Safety and Security MEC Jessie Duarte was also expected to attend.

The second committee would engage in talks with the authorities on the possible deployment of soldiers and extra police in the area.

> **Peace agreements broken the next day**

Mahlangu said the third committee would approach the Pretoria metropolitan council to help arrange extra buses for commuters. Police would be asked to protect these buses from attacks by taxi groups.

The last committee is organising a mass rally for Sunday to get public support for the boycott.

Mahlangu added it was clear that peace agreements between the rival taxi groups had had no effect.

"There have been several such agreements, only to be broken the next day."

Police community relations division spokesman Captain Johan Volschenk agreed it was vital for the community to act. "If they decide on a boycott, we will support them."

Volschenk said police on Friday embarked on a special drive to curtail taxi hit-squads and to seize illegal weapons.

"But there are limits to what the police can do. We need the community to take a stand against the ongoing violence," he said. – Sapa.

ROAD TRANSPORT (332)

Taxi laws FM 20/6/97

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj's attempts to regulate the fractious minibus taxi industry have moved into high gear with Cabinet's approval of two key Bills.

The Cross-Border Transport Bill and the National Land Transport Bill aim to increase efficiency of the transport industry and curb taxi violence.

The first Bill introduces a national and provincial register to keep count of taxi operators and organisations and disqualify defaulters. It establishes an agency to issue permits for the transportation of goods and passengers across the country's borders.

The second Bill consolidates all laws on land transport. **Justice Malala**

Pharmacists 'living on the edge' over imminent changes

Star 19/6/97

BY PRISCILLA SINGH
Health Reporter

Pharmacists are stressed out over the uncertainty of new dispensing regulations, a survey conducted by Roche Consumer Health has revealed.

Berocca Stress Barometer's high-stress findings showed only 18,4% of dispensing pharmacists had stress levels in the 30 to 40 category, which indicated they were coping with the repeated postponements and lack of clarity on new dispensing fees.

One pharmacist said the stress levels were an indication of the state of flux that the industry was in and that pharmacists were worried and confused about the variety of pricing structures proposed by the various controlling bodies and associations.

A professional fee is to be introduced for pharmacists once the controversial Medicines and Related Substances Control Bill is passed.

The bill was expected to be approved by Cabinet yesterday.

Other factors which contributed to the high-

Staff are feeling vulnerable

stress levels among pharmacists was the fact that medical aids were at odds about the dispensing tariffs.

Survey co-ordinator Gill Polglase said: "The environment for the dispensing pharmacist is now changing drastically and until all the kinks are ironed out, the stress levels will run high."

A startling finding by the stress barometer showed that 26% of pharmacists had very low stress levels, between and 20, and was a possible indication that their circumstances had finally got the better of them.

Polglase said this category was generally very laid back, distracted and lacked motivation.

At least 38,47% had scores higher than 40 and some 19% had a stress level over 50.

The pharmacists in general said that the future was very uncertain in their environment.

They said pharmacies would have to streamline their operations to make ends meet.

This would possibly lead to retrenchments and staff at smaller pharmacies, which felt the most threatened by the imminent changes, according to the survey.

Gauteng police shut taxi ranks to quell violence

(332)

ARG 21/6/97

Pretoria – All taxi ranks in Soshanguve, north of here, have been closed in a move to force an end to fighting.

Police spokesman John Mabasa said the Rietgat taxi rank had been sealed off with razor wire, while taxis would not be allowed to enter the ranks at the Mashmaide and Transfer filling stations.

Captain Mabasa said there was a large police and defence force presence in the township to deal with any violence arising from the closures.

Alternative transport was being provided for commuters, he said.

Gauteng safety and security MEC Jesse Duarte earlier announced the move after a meeting between Soshanguve community representatives, members of the Gauteng safety and security and transport committees, the Akasia city council and the Pretoria Metropolitan Council.

"The taxi ranks in Soshanguve will be closed temporarily until final agreement has been reached between all taxi associations," she said.

The meeting had decided that the taxi industry would be regulated by new provincial legislation.

A number of taxi drivers on Wednesday called on the police to close the Rietgat taxi rank.

At least 22 people have been killed and more than 34 have been wounded in a series of recent taxi attacks in Soshanguve. – Sapa

Code obliges public servants to expose corruption

BD 18/6/97

David Greybe

CAPE TOWN — Public servants will be obliged to expose corrupt colleagues in terms of the country's first code of conduct for public servants, unveiled yesterday.

Speaking at the launch in Parliament, Public Service Minister Zola Skweyiya said public servants should be encouraged to become "whistle-blowers".

The African National Congress (ANC) had come to power in 1994 on a "clean government ticket" and, however difficult, "we need to act on that", he said.

While the code's primary purpose was a positive one — to promote exemplary conduct among the 1,2-million public servants — Skweyiya said a critical reason for its introduction was the "ever looming spectre of corruption and fraud in the service".

However, research had shown that corruption could be efficiently combated by means of regulations, legislation, codes of conduct and professionalism among officials. "We believe the code of conduct should go a long way in providing the right climate for an ethical culture to thrive, and promoting a professional ethos among public servants at all levels," Skweyiya said.

While the public service commission had developed the code, heads of department were reponsible for its implementation.

Government would not tolerate breaches of the code, Skweyiya said. Heads of departments had to ensure such breaches were "properly dealt with" in terms of the Public Service Act.

The code, promulgated by President Nelson Mandela last week, covers five areas:

- The professional nature of a public servant's relationship with the legislature and executive, stressing loyalty and accountability;
- Relationships with the public, stressing impartiality, fairness and respect in the delivery of services;
- The obligations of individual employees in their work relationship with one another, emphasising co-operation, effectiveness and integrity;
- Values associated with the performance of duties, aimed at instilling ideals of honesty, efficiency, accountability, transparency, and to fight corruption, fraud, nepotism and conflict of interest among public servants; and
- The principles and values related to personal conduct and private interests, in order to instil responsible behaviour and integrity, as well as provide guidelines to counteract bribery.

The code states, for instance: "An employee shall report to the appropriate authorities fraud, corruption, nepotism, maladministration and any other act which constitutes an offence, or which is prejudicial to the public interest."

In compiling the code, a comparative study was undertaken of codes in t Philippines, Singapore, Australia, Cana the US and Uganda.

Skweyiya said the code would need to updated as issues became critical under t public service transformation process.

Public service commission chairm Stan Sangweni said the commission wou begin a six-month programme next mon to popularise the code at national a provincial levels.

Next year the commission would work a rotational basis of inspections of depa ments and reports to Parliament, under tensive new policing powers envisaged the commission in draft legislation bef Parliament.

Soshanguve taxi service closed until war is over

(332)

All taxi ranks in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, have been closed until warring taxi associations cease hostilities.

Gauteng Safety and Security MEC Jessie Duarte announced the closure of the Soshanguve taxi ranks yesterday after a meeting attended by Soshanguve community representatives, members of the Gauteng safety and security and transport executive committees, the Akasia city council and the Pretoria Metropolitan Council.

Duarte said the Soshanguve community's resolution to make use of alternative means of transport until the taxi violence had ceased had been acknowledged.

"The taxi ranks in Soshanguve will be closed temporarily until final agreement has been reached between all taxi associations," she said.

The meeting decided that the taxi industry would be regulated by means of new provincial legislation.

The police, with the assistance of the defence force's Group 15, would control the situation until peace had returned to the area. – Sapa

Star 21/6/97



LEON MULLER

We've had enough: taxi demonstrators hold a placard outside the Western Cape government offices

Angry taximen wield placards in protest against 'pirates'

(332)

ARG 23/6/97

SHARKEY ISAACS
TRANSPORT REPORTER

Angry operators from 13 taxi organisations protested outside the Western Cape provincial headquarters in Wale Street today against drivers who violate the agreement on routes.

Placard-waving operators from the recently established Reformed United Taxi Alliance handed a memorandum to David Frost, a representative of provincial Transport Minister Leonard Ramatlakane.

The alliance is the umbrella organisation representing taxi associations driving various routes in Delft, Elsies River, Belhar, Uitsig, Bellville, Kuils River, Kraaifontein, Mitchell's Plain, Silversands, Ravensmead and Norwood.

The memo complained that the taxi industry had not met to address its problems since February.

It also stressed that alliance members were unhappy about pirate taxi drivers, mainly from the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata), infiltrating and overtrading routes allocated to other operators.

The taxi memo also called for stricter law enforcement at taxi ranks; impounding of vehicles operating and overtrading on allocated routes; the arrest of offenders when charges are brought against them; and the establishment of one association to operate and control taxi routes.

Star 23/6/97

Protesters call for boycott of taxis

(332)

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Soshanguve residents have called for a boycott of taxis along with the full-time deployment of the army in the area, despite the closure of taxi ranks at the weekend.

While there were no reports of taxi-related violence in the township after the closure of the three main taxi ranks, more than 1 000 residents gathered at Soshanguve stadium yesterday to protest against the taxi violence that has ravaged the area in the past two months.

"Taxi owners have violated agreements with each other and the community – the industry is out of control," said Dan Mahlangu of the area's community policing forum.

"We are highly affected by the violence, it is destabilising every project we try to build but there are many people who benefit from the violence."

Transport MEC seeks to stop Pretoria taxi violence

(332)

By Patrick Phosa

Star 26/6/97

Gauteng Public Transport MEC Paul Mashatile's office is considering amending the Road Transportation Act in a bid to stop the taxi violence ravaging townships outside Pretoria.

Mashatile's personal assistant Sibusiso Buthelezi said yesterday that public works and transport MECs could impound the taxis of operators involved in violence.

This follows the apparent failure of a joint venture by the army, safety and security officials and the transport authorities to stop the carnage.

A member of the Southern African Long Distance Taxi Association was shot dead in Mabopane outside Pretoria yesterday. Another three people were killed in shootings in Winterveld near Mabopane.

The latest spate of violence has brought to more than 25 the number killed following the seemingly uncontrollable violence which has ravaged the townships for more than a month.

Anyone with information should contact the nearest police station or phone Crime Stop on 0800-11-12-13.

Putco claims union is blocking tender system

BD 26/6/97 (333)

Lucia Mutikani

BUS operator Putco yesterday accused labour of trying to block the implementation of the new tender system in the transport industry because of fears of massive job losses. The tendering system is being introduced as part of the new transport policy.

Financial director Vic Coetzee, whose company has been experiencing operational problems, said the Transport and Allied Workers' Union (Tawu) was the "biggest stumbling block" in the system's introduction.

Putco's attributable earnings slumped 24% to R3,6m in the six months to December and the company was pinning its hopes on the new transport policy to improve profit margins. "The union fears job losses if contracts move from one company to another," he said.

Coetzee also accused Tawu of frustrating his company's efforts to empower small entrepreneurs in the public transport sector. "We are definitely looking into the issue of black empowerment. We have subcontracted to small black businesses and this programme has been in place for the past two-and-a-half years," he said.

"However, the biggest problem is how to convince them (union) to buy into the situation of empowering small entrepreneurs."

Tawu assistant secretary general Harold Harvey said the union had "serious" problems with the tender system as it did not make provision for job security. "The union's position and that of Cosatu is that public transport should be provided by a publicly owned enterprise and not a private enterprise. Our view is that the tender system introduces into the public transport system a disruptive element. We are of the view that the profit motive introduced by this system is inappropriate, taking into account SA's level of development. People cannot afford transport in SA."

Tawu would block subcontracting if it was a way of privatising jobs. "Putco must not talk of black empowerment when it is trying to use black business people to exploit black labour. They must open up ownership to workers by giving them shares in the company."

Labour, government and bus operators were locked in negotiations on how to deal with the question of job security when the new transport policy was fully implemented.

Seven killed in taxi violence

BD 26/6/97 (332)

SEVEN people were killed yesterday in separate incidents related to disputes between rival taxi organisations.

A man was fatally wounded when shots were fired during a blockade by about 50 taxis in Katlehong on the East Rand, police spokesman Insp Michelle Erasmus said.

Four people were killed in taxi-related shootings in the Mabopane area near Pretoria.

Capt Warren Alberts said two taxi drivers and a commuter were shot dead in Winterveldt near Mabopane.

A member of the SA Long Distance Taxi Association was later shot dead in a car near a taxi rank in Mabopane.

In Bushbuckridge in the Northern Province, a taxi owner was shot dead and a taxi driver wounded in violence involving rival taxi associations.

Abaniel Mokoena, 50, was shot twice through the head, Capt Thomas Ramatseba said.

Taxi driver John Brown Hlatshwayo, 37, was shot through the hand at the Bushbuckridge taxi rank after Mokoena's murder. Three taxi drivers were arrested in connection with the wounding of Hlatshwayo.

Meanwhile, the Gauteng legislature is to hold an urgent special sitting tomorrow to consider the Gauteng Road Transportation Amendment Bill, aimed at curbing taxi violence.

Speaker Trevor Fowler said the sitting had been requested by Gauteng premier Tokyo Sexwale. — Sapa.

BULLETIN BOARD

New measures will bring an end to taxi violence – Tokyo

(332)

Star 28/6/97

The reign of taxi warlords who killed innocent people in crossfire as they sought to feed their greed was a thing of the past, Gauteng Premier Tokyo Sexwale said yesterday.

"The days of lawlessness are over," he told MPLs after they unanimously passed urgent amendments to the Road Transportation Act of 1977. The amendment bill was rushed into law on the day the legislature went into recess, in an effort to prevent further killings by taxi operators.

It gives Transport MEC Paul Mashatile the power to impound illegal taxis, impose heavy fees for impounding, and close down problem ranks and routes. When routes or ranks are closed to associations because of violence, the act now provides for emergency permits to be issued to other operators so that commuters are not unduly inconvenienced.

The act makes registration of associations and operators compulsory.

Mashatile told legislators that 20 people had been killed in two weeks in Gauteng by lawless taxi operators who believed they could act with impunity. This was "completely unacceptable" and the government would not turn a blind eye.

"We must condemn it, followed by strong action," he said. "We must intervene decisively to save lives."

Mashatile was applauded when he said: "In terms of the powers vested in me by the constitution and this legislation, I am going to act."

Warlords

Mashatile said he and Safety and Security MEC Jessie Duarte would leave no stone unturned in their campaign against the "warlords".

Duarte said 170 people had been murdered in taxi violence countrywide since late 1995. She said the people most responsible were the taxi associations, including the SA Long Distance Taxi Association, the Federation of Long Distance Taxi Associations and the Letlhabile Taxi Organisation, as well as other smaller associations.

Duarte said she planned to take action against certain associations the moment the bill was signed by the premier.

Transport standing committee chairman Elias Mosunkutu (ANC) said taxi violence was harming the economy and the social fabric of the country. The act provided a legal framework for dealing with the violence.

He said moves in the industry to undermine the registration process would be "stopped in their tracks".

Olaus van Zyl (NP) said 30% of commuter trips in Gauteng were by minibus taxi. More than 40% of the country's minibuses were registered in Gauteng. The NP supported the bill but was concerned about potential misuse of its emergency provisions.

Daniel Bisschoff (Freedom Front) said his party had serious misgivings about these measures, but supported the bill.

Jack Bloom (Democratic Party) asked why police had not managed to arrest the killers in the taxi industry. – Sapa

SATURDAY JUNE 28/29 1997

Gauteng crackdown on taxi industry

'Draconian' laws rushed through to halt lawlessness

ARG 28/6/97 (332)

Johannesburg – The reign of taxi warlords who kill innocent people is over.

This was the view of Gauteng premier Tokyo Sexwale, who told MPLs yesterday after they unanimously passed urgent amendments to the Road Transportation Act of 1977: "The days of lawlessness are over."

In a bid to prevent further killings, the amendment Bill was rushed into law on the day the legislature went into recess.

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Mr Mashatile told MPLs that 20 people had been killed by lawless taxi operators, who believed they could act with impunity, in two weeks in Gauteng.

This was "completely unacceptable" and the government would not turn a blind eye.

"We must condemn it, followed by strong action," he said. "We must intervene decisively to save lives."

Mr Mashatile was applauded when he said: "In terms of the powers vested in me by the constitution and this legislation, I am going to act."

He said he and safety and security MEC Jessie Duarte would leave no stone unturned in their campaign against the warlords.

Ms Duarte told MPLs that 170 people had been murdered in taxi violence countrywide since late 1995. She said the people most responsible were the taxi associations, including the SA Long Distance Taxi Association, the Federation of Long Distance Taxi Associations and the Letlhabile Taxi Organisation. She named other relatively minor associations.

Ms Duarte said she planned to take action against certain associations the moment the Bill was signed.

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Daniel Bischoff (FF) said his party had serious misgivings about these measures, but supported the Bill.

Jack Bloom (DP) asked why police had not managed to arrest the killers in the industry. "Why is there such pathetic progress in this serious matter which vitally affects the daily lives of many people?

"We should not fool ourselves that the special emergency measures in this Bill are anything other than draconian and an infringement of normal civil liberties."

Mr Bloom lamented the lack of "a sunset clause" for the emergency measures, and he said the measures should be reviewed every three months.

Taxi war takes a racial turn

(332)

ST (CM) 29/6/97

Coloured owners unite to fight black outfit

KEN VERNON

COLOURED taxi owners in Cape Town have formed a united front to fight a black-run taxi organisation trying to "muscle in" on their territory.

More than 100 people have died in Cape taxi violence since 1989, but until now the violence has largely been between rival black-run organisations.

Earlier this month 12 organisations in the city's northern suburbs — areas traditionally controlled by coloured taxi owners — united to form the Reformed United Taxi Association (Ruta).

Sources close to the industry say Ruta's main purpose is to present a united front to combat strong-arm tactics by Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata), a black-run organisation trying to take over the lucrative Bellville - Kraaifontein routes as well as other routes in the northern areas.

Last week Ruta drivers were forced to leave the Bellville rank because of threats by Cata gunmen.

Ruta members have laid charges of assault and intimidation in connection with the incident. But, faced with a lack of police action, the organisation is known to have contracted the Sexy Boys gang to hit back at Cata gunmen if violence breaks out.

"We have been forced to draw a line," said Ruta spokesman Koert Meyer. "Enough is enough".

This week the Integrated Planning Group (IPG) of the Department of Safety and Security held an urgent top-level meeting to discuss the threat of violence breaking out between the rival groups — a development that would have major political repercussions.

Steff Nel, of the Unrest Monitoring Awareness Centre (Umac), that is helping mediate the dispute, said the authorities were treating the threat with the utmost concern.

"This could lead to another taxi war, but this time it would be along racial lines and would be on a greater scale than anything seen in Cape Town before," he said.

Cata is known to control more than 3 500 taxis in the Western Cape, and reputedly resorts to the use of gunmen to sort out its troubles, but Ruta would control more than three times that number of vehicles — with far more financial muscle to carry on a war.

A senior Ruta member, who did not want to be named, warned: "We do not want a war or violence, but we will defend ourselves. The problem is that the taxi industry is overtraded and so when Cata try to jump in on our routes it is our very livelihood at stake."

He said the contest for supremacy on Western Cape routes extended as far afield as Oudtshoorn, and Ruta was being flooded with membership applications.

A Ruta letter addressed to the provincial Minister of Police this week said it planned "to protect taxi operators against the domination of Cata".

"Their members force their way onto taxi ranks (and) by doing so they are provoking our members and drivers — this is a recipe for disaster."

The letter added that "the racist method Cata is employing could lead to a black and coloured taxi war", and ends with a plea for strict implementation of taxi laws.

Police director and IPG member Fanie Bouwer, admitted that the potential for race violence in the Cata/Ruta dispute was "very worrying".

"Cata has been very arrogant, expanding into routes traditionally run by coloured owners and I am just about fed up with them," said Bouwer, adding that the police would be out in force to avert any violence.

"The Taxi Task Team under the direction of Minister Gerald Morkel is being very active and I am optimistic we will keep the lid on the situation."

New legislation 'waste of time', say taximen

Star 30/6/97 (332)

Amendment to Road Traffic Act and closing down of ranks not the solution to curbing violence, operators claim

PRETORIA CORRESPONDENT

Taxi operators in the violence-stricken townships north-west of Pretoria have dismissed the new legislative measures to curb the taxi war as "a waste of time".

Last week the Gauteng legislature rushed through an urgent amendment to the Road Transportation Act of 1977, giving Transport MEC Paul Mashatile powers to impound illegal taxis, to impose heavy fees for impounded vehicles and to close down problem ranks.

The amendment also forces Gauteng taxi operators to display stickers on their vehicles indicating which routes their organisations are allocated.

Mashatile said the stickers regulation would be ready for enforcement within a fortnight.

North West MEC for Transport Frans Vilakazi said the North West legislature would sit on Thursday to pass an identical amendment there.

Both Vilakazi and Mashatile maintained they were confident that the moves would succeed in curbing the violence.

The MECs said the priority was to enforce peace among the taxi organisations north of Pretoria, and that their governments were still pursuing negotiations between the warring taxi bodies.

A total of 31 people have died in taxi violence in Soshanguve, GaRankuwa and Mabopane in the past six weeks.

Gauteng Safety and Security MEC Jessie Duarte told members of the Gauteng legislative assembly that the people most responsible for the violence were the taxi organisations. These include the SA Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta), the Federation of Local and Long Distance Taxi Associations (Felldta) and the Leng and Lethlabile Taxi Organisation (LTA).

Ten days ago several ranks were closed off with razor wire in the Soshanguve area, but the taxi operators said the problem were routes, not ranks.

'Fighting is planned in offices by officials'

Other causes of the fighting were power-plays by officials of rival associations and money that operators paid to their associations.

They said, while the ranks were the battlefields, violence was planned in offices by officials who gave orders. Many said the Government should deal with the officials and not the ranks.

A senior police officer dealing with the taxi violence said closing ranks was not a solution as fighting would then be taken to the streets where drive-by shootings could also become a problem.

Spokesman for LTA Peter Thiba said his organisation did not support the closing of ranks as it was an inconvenience to commuters and a frustration to those organisations not involved in the violence.

Thiba said the Government should get involved in serious negotiations with all stakeholders to find a lasting solution to the problems.

He said all taxi organisations should be allowed to make an input.

Thiba said taxi organisations never asked commuters what they wanted. It was time that commuters had a say in how they wanted to be transported.

A Felldta member from Soshanguve, who did not want to be identified, said he was still angry over the closure of ranks in Soshanguve as the move gave Saldta an upper hand.

He claimed that Saldta operated freely at Mabopane station while Felldta was not allowed to.

Officials of both Saldta and Felldta were not available for comment, but drivers from these associations said they had no problems with one another.

They said that the problem was with the officials who wanted everybody to be affiliated to their associations because they made a lot of money out of this.

Drivers were exchanging passengers peacefully at Wonderboom station without checking their different stickers.



PELICAN BANK: Over 400 pelicans have taken advantage of lower, cleaner water in Zeekoevlei, which before the cleanup earlier this year was highly polluted. *PICTURE: THEO STOCK*

Flamingos return to Zeekoevlei after clean-up

CT 27/6/97

ELISSA GOOTMAN

BIRDS are flocking back to Zeekoevlei after a massive clean-up by residents and the city council.

The clean-up was launched in March, when a dam wall across the vlei was opened, allowing polluted water to be flushed out and enabling residents to clean the newly exposed areas.

"We haven't seen flamingos here since 1982, and this year we have around 280 right off the shore," said Mr Theo Stock of the "It's really nice to see them again. For a long time we weren't able to get any wading birds, because the weeds were too tall."

Stock said the flamingos were joined by more than 400 pelicans and large groups of avocets, African spoonbill, gulls and cormorants.

Mr Roger Godwin, also of the forum, said the lower, cleaner water enabled pelicans to fish more successfully.

"I don't know how nature gets the word out. They (the pelicans) must have made a couple of cell- to come in for supper," he joked.

Godwin said that since 1972 residents had been fighting to lower the water level of the vlei so that the accumulation of weeds (mainly water hyacinth) and garbage could be cleared away.

Earlier this year, stop-logs (boards) were installed in the dam wall. They can be removed periodically to lower the water level by about one metre at a time. The first removal took place in late May, to approving cheers by residents, councillors and e[illegible]

The parks and forests branch of the Cape Town municipality staged the subsequent clean-up, consulting the local community to identify areas to be given priority. Funding came from this branch and from the Cape Metropolitan Council RDP fund, which contributed R309 000.

Much of the work was done by residents — a precondition for receiving RDP funding. Fifteen workers from the local Phumlani squatter camp were employed to [illegible]

The Zeekoevlei Civic Association organised several "environmental days", on which children from three local schools collected rubbish. Many residents voluntarily cleared the areas in front of their homes.

Godwin said the stop-logs would be re-installed on July 4 and removed again next March.

"We would like to get the vlei down for a few months each year," he said, adding that the forum hoped to extend the project into

End of road for 'emergency taxis'

BD 2/7/97 (332)

Michael Hartnack

HARARE — Zimbabwe's notorious "emergency taxis" known as "ETs", must come off the road by December 31 to cut down the road carnage, Zimbabwe's Transport Minister Simon Moyo has announced.

"The days of carrying passengers in boots of emergency taxi cabs like firewood or bags of charcoal must, in line with the dignity of our nation, come to an end," Moyo said.

He warned the estimated 20 000 drivers to "start making alternative plans", so that they did not join Zimbabwe's 2-million unemployed.

What were once known as "pirate taxis" were tolerated by Bishop Abel Muzorewa's Zimbabwe-Rhodesian government in 1979-80 as thousands of rural people flooded into cities, desperate for a livelihood in a sanctions-hit economy.

Shortly after independence in 1980, Robert Mugabe's incoming government invoked the emergency powers to permit the taxis to operate, despite their having no commercial insurance cover.

"ETs" were supposed in law to be owner-driven, but the authorities were unable to prevent the emergence of fleets covertly owned by prominent businessmen. The state of the vehicles and the conditions offered passengers horrified leaders of the SA Black Taxi Association when they visited Zimbabwe in 1990, and have not improved.

Since the government relaxed foreign exchange and vehicle import controls three years ago, and deregulated urban bus routes, hundreds of commuter minibuses have been imported by wealthier operators. They have now joined the ETs in furious competition for passengers. A standard 10km rush-hour fare from central Harare is 80c.

Moyo urged drivers of vehicles that could still pass roadworthiness tests to equip them with meters, but he said most could not obtain fitness certificates.

"Reckless conduct of ET drivers has contributed to many accidents and violence that has compromised the safety of passengers," said Moyo. Two weeks ago an Australian schoolgirl, Arianne Hafyn, was killed in a crash involving an ET.

Moyo confirmed lack of insurance, and emergence of illegal ET fleet owners, posed problems.

Moyo's move against the informal transport industry coincides with a test of nerves between Zimbabwe's city councils and vendors and hawkers on their streets. Harare city council last week deferred, yet again, a deadline for them to move to designated areas.

Any clampdown on vendors or taxi drivers could provoke an explosion of violence, as was demonstrated in 1995 when a vendor and a passerby were accidentally shot dead by a policeman trying to arrest suspected robbers.

Army could be called in to help stop escalating taxi war

By Tefo Mothibeli

Gauteng police and provincial authorities were scheduled later today to announce tough new measures to clamp down on escalating taxi violence.

The measures, which follow an upsurge in violence in Pretoria and the Reef, will include joint army and police patrols at taxi ranks.

Yesterday eight taxi commuters were injured when a handgrenade was lobbed into the bustling Faraday taxi rank in central Johannesburg and a taxi owner was shot dead at a taxi rank in Benoni.

Police spokesman Captain Johan du Toit said three men hurled the grenade into the rank about 6pm. The men were spotted by commuters who gave chase, but failed to catch them.

The attack comes after a shooting in which a taxi-owner was killed and three passengers injured at a Benoni rank shooting yesterday.

On Monday, a taxi boss was murdered in Katlehong on the East Rand and a driver was shot in the head in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, on Tuesday.

A taxi driver, whose vehicle's window was shattered by yesterday's grenade blast, said the attackers fled in a white Kadett after being chased by commuters and taxi drivers.

At the time of the blast, hundreds of people were waiting in queues for taxis, he added.

"I only survived because I was standing outside my taxi. The people who were injured had just come on board," he said.

(332) Star 3/7/97

Law gets tough on taxi wars

Star 9/7/97 (332)

By Mike Masipa
Crime Reporter

Security forces are closely monitoring taxi ranks and routes in Gauteng following the upsurge in taxi-related violence this week.

SAPS taxi violence unit spokesman Captain Pierre Serfontein said today that although there were no incidents overnight, the East Rand and Pretoria were still tense.

The Gauteng and North West governments yesterday passed tough legislation in a bid to end the two-month-long "war" gripping the regions.

Amendments to their respective road transportation acts give authorities more powers to deal with the violence.

Gauteng safety and security MEC Jessie Duarte said Premier Tokyo Sexwale had signed an amendment to the Road Transportation Act, giving herself, transport MEC Paul Mashatile and security forces extensive powers to deal with the scourge.

At least 35 people were killed and scores injured in attacks and counterattacks by rival taxi organisations in major centres in Gauteng and the North West in recent months.

Most of the attacks occurred in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, and spilt over into neighbouring Mabopane, Winterveldt and GaRankuwa.

Minibus taxis must now display stickers indicating which routes they are using.

Second Soweto taxi peace pact signed

(532 SRDN 8/7/97

BY FIKILE-NTSIKELELO MOYA
City Desk

Soweto taxi passengers could find some respite after the Gauteng Transport Department brokered a peace deal to end a six month stand-off between two rival taxi associations fighting to control the Bara-Dobsonville route.

The deal, brokered by the provincial government and the "Top Six" – an association created by six independent Soweto taxi bodies to resolve problems between rival associations – will see the Witwatersrand African Taxi Owners Association and a Dobsonville association jointly operating the route from tomorrow.

The latest agreement is the second involving the provincial government and the "Top Six". In May the Soweto Taxi Association and Soweto Taxi Services agreed to end hostilities and the agreement is still holding.

Transport department official Sibusiso Buthelezi said that in terms of the latest agreement, the associations would each have 50 minibuses which would be monitored by a task team made up of members of the two organisations.

Efforts to prop up failing Soweto taxi peace initiative

(332)

BY FIKILE-NTSIKELELO MOYA
City Desk

Star 11/7/97

A Soweto taxi peace initiative that would have seen two rival associations share one route is on the verge of falling apart.

The two bodies accused each other of launching attacks and assaulting drivers on the route.

The Witwatersrand African Taxi Owners Association (Wata) and the Dobsonville association were supposed to share the Baragwanath-Dobsonville route from Wednesday, in terms of a recent agreement.

But the deal turned sour after Wata accused the Dobsonville association of assaulting their taxi drivers as they entered Dobsonville.

Wata spokesman Muzi Tshabalala said the association was unsure why Wata minibuses were attacked.

In turn, Dobsonville association chairman Malakiah Mabada said they had not been notified where to park and accused the task team – of which he is a member – of not doing its job properly.

"We don't know which part of the Bara rank to use, nobody has communicated the fares and we don't want the (Wata affiliated) Federation of Local and Long Distance Taxi Association in Dobsonville," he said.

The peace initiative was the second brokered by the Gauteng transport department and Top Six – an initiative by six independent taxi formations operating in Soweto – to resolve all industry-related problems.

There were "problems with drivers being assaulted" said transport department spokesman Sibusiso Buthelezi yesterday, adding that the allegations had been referred to the police.

The peace brokers were expected to meet with the associations to resuscitate the deal.

Said Buthelezi: "We have instructed the associations to restart operations while we hold talks."

Soweto police nab 1 500 in 6 months

Soweto police have arrested more than 1 500 suspects and recovered more than 2 500 stolen vehicles in the past six months, says area media liaison officer Superintendent Govindsamy Mariemuthoo.

Mariemuthoo said crime-prevention meetings, attended by Soweto police officers, were being held every Thursday. Crime-combating strategies were then planned by the area head of crime prevention and the area commissioner.

"Although the rate of reported crimes is sometimes high, we enjoy a high success rate," said Mariemuthoo. – Staff Reporter.

lympic bid

its affects on children.

Earlier yesterday she was accompanied by the president when she was presented with an honorary degree at the University of Essex in Colchester, north of London.

Mandela is due to travel to Oxford in central England today to receive the freedom of [illegible] an ancient honour

Funds scam hits reeling Unizul

OWN CORRESPONDENT

Empangeni – Hard on the heels of the "degrees for sale" scandal, the University of Zululand has uncovered another scam on campus involving more than R600 000, and five officials have been suspended pending the outcome of an independent au-

The Star ... Friday July 11 1997

Efforts to prop up failing Soweto taxi peace initiative

(332)

By Fikile-Ntsikelelo Moya
City Desk
Star 11/7/97

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Taxi bosses are probed

CP 13/7/97 (332)

By PHALANE MOTALE

TAXI BOSSES who are possibly involved in sponsoring the ongoing violence in the industry, have come under the spotlight – and could soon land behind bars.

In a bid to end the ongoing taxi violence in Gauteng, the provincial safety and security department is implementing new drastic measures – including the infiltration and the monitoring of bank accounts of taxi bosses.

The police urgently need to break the grip of prominent individuals who are directly involved in the conflict between the taxi associations by means of Mafia-type strategies and activities.

According to a source within MEC Jessie Duarte's office, it is clear that more needs to be done to achieve short and longer term solutions to the problem.

"This will require strategic infiltration, surveillance, electronic interceptions and monitoring of bank accounts, to help compile detailed profiles of persons who are reasonably suspected to be engineering or perpetrating taxi violence," the source said.

He said since the recruitment drives of the Lehlabile Taxi Organisation (LTO), the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (SALDTA) and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (FELLDTA) contributed to the continuation of conflict and violence in the taxi industry, a restriction on recruiting new affiliates and prohibiting long distance taxi associations from operating on local routes remained a challenge.

City Press has been told that the South African Inland Revenue Services department is scrutinising the banking accounts of LTO president Isaac Seriti, with the aim of determining if his organisation is involved in the sponsoring of taxi violence.

This comes a week after the LTO had demanded an apology from Duarte, accusing her of "attacking the organisation's president on a television programme without facts."

The organisation said Duarte's alleged remarks suggested that it was involved in the ongoing violence in the Pretoria areas of Mabopane and Soshanguve.

Taxi driver killed shortly after peace bid launched

(332) Star 14/7/97

CRIME REPORTER
AND OWN CORRESPONDENT

A taxi driver was murdered at the Mashamaite taxi rank in Mabopane yesterday afternoon, about two hours after a sticker campaign to crack down on taxi wars was announced.

Police spokesman Captain Morne van Wyk said Solomon Balavuane of the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta) died when gunmen in a white Jetta opened fire on Balavuane's taxi with AK-47s.

"There were 23 spent shells found at the scene," Van Wyk said this morning.

The murder happened shortly after Gauteng and North West transport MECs asked thousands of commuters to exercise patience and tolerance regarding transport problems while the two provincial governments implement the Road Transportation Amendment Act, which becomes effective today.

The Mashamaite taxi rank was one of many closed down earlier this year because of taxi violence which has claimed the lives of more than 30 people in recent months.

Paul Mashatile and Frans Vilakazi, Gauteng and North West transport MECs, launched Operation Thiba, a project aimed at halting the outbreaks of taxi-related violence in Soshanguve, Winterveldt, Mabopane and Ga-Rankuwa.

They said the operation would curb the violence.

Vilakazi said a series of roadblocks, involving the South African National Defence Force, the police and the public order policing unit would be operated over 24-hour periods for the next three months.

Mashatile said high-tech stickers, which unscrupulous operators would not be able to forge, will be provided free of charge to all registered taxi owners who complied with the Government's earlier request to register before February 1997.

Mashatile added that stickers would play a major role in identifying taxis which were not registered and those who had defied the call to do so.

Those without stickers and route specifications will be impounded and owners will be heavily fined, he said.

Taxi industry steers into retailing

(332) CT(BR) 14/7/97

FRANÇOISE BOTHA

Johannesburg — The South African Black Taxi Association (Sabta) plans to establish a nationwide chain of co-operatives as part of a commercialisation drive, Joe Boweni, the executive president of the North West Taxi Association (Nowta), said at the weekend.

Boweni said taxi industry representatives agreed to follow Nowta's lead and form nine provincial co-operatives. These will become shareholders in a national company to be formed within six months. He said the nationwide chain could have a yearly turnover of R15 billion.

The co-operatives, which will operate as subsidiaries of the holding company, plan to establish spares retail outlets and move into property development, tourism and education.

"As part of the diversification process, we should also be providing transport in the tourism market ... and have indicated our intention to buy shares in Metro Rail, government-subsidised bus services and trucking businesses. We are going to take over some of these markets," he said.

The plans were supported by warring provincial taxi associations, which agreed to work together on the plan, and provincial transport departments.



GOING TO TOWN *Joe Boweni, left, the executive president on the North West Taxi Association, and Joe Mabaso, the president of the South African Black Taxi Association, are the driving force behind a national co-operative scheme*

PHOTO: JOHN WOODROOF

North West, which has already established a co-operative active in the spares market with a monthly turnover of R2,8 million, has been used as a model for the other co-operatives.

Because North West is the leader in this field, it will own 76 percent of the holding company. Co-operatives in the other provinces will share the remaining 24 percent. Nowta was also considering issuing a 10 percent stake to Nissan and Toyota, the car makers, he said.

The first provinces to establish co-operatives will be Mpumalanga, KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng and the Eastern Cape.

Boweni said Sabta had received confirmation from the government that expertise would be made available to the company, and legislation would be passed allowing for the self-regulation of the taxi industry.

"We are also calling for a truth and reconciliation commission for the industry to address the problem of taxi violence, much of which has been politically motivated, and to allow for amnesty," he said.

Taxi consultants want business to participate

(332)

Bonile Ngqiyaza BD 14/7/97

A CONSORTIUM of government-appointed consultants tasked with establishing guidelines for the creation of co-operatives in the taxi industry, has invited private sector companies who could offer assistance, services and products to the industry to participate.

The consortium's project manager Henry Kleinsmith said at the weekend the meetings would all take place today. "We have three teams of different people who will be seeing people from different companies every half-hour."

Kleinsmith said the co-operatives had to identify a site where business activities — the running of petrol stations initially — would be located. "The next step for them would be to tender for fuel installations."

Industry sources said at the weekend the initiative was government's "carrot approach" which supplemented its hard stance.

Kleinsmith said at the weekend the aim of the co-operatives and the partnerships was to reduce the operational costs of taxis, improve the economic viability of the industry and allow for diversification into other areas of business.

He said two co-operatives, in the Eastern Cape province and Mpumalanga, had been registered. These were expected to enter into contracts with private players soon.

"We are starting to make progress in Gauteng which is the more important province — and we expect the Northern Province to follow suit," he said.

Asked about time frames regarding the private sector initiatives, Kleinsmith said: "It is difficult to talk about time frames because we cannot force anything from outside the industry. Everything has to emanate from within the taxi industry itself."

'We are forced to pay for taxi hitmen'

(330) Sowetan 16/7/97

By McKeed Kotlolo

A GROUP of taxi operators in Mabopane, Garankuwa and Soshanguve, near Pretoria, have told *Sowetan* that taxi owners were each made to pay R100 a month while each taxi pays R50 every Friday to hitmen and pirate squad members.

They said the ongoing taxi violence, which has already claimed more than 30 lives and left about double the number maimed in the Soshanguve-Mabopane area, was not likely to end soon.

This is because taxi bosses from one long distance taxi association, which claims the largest membership in the country, allegedly made more money during the violence than through their normal operations, they alleged.

Pretoria police spokesperson Captain Morne van Wyk said they were investigating some of the allegations and appealed to those making the claims to come forward and assist the police by submitting affidavits.

He also said such witnesses could be placed under the witness protection programme "only if they are prepared to testify in court".

The startling allegations were made by members of one of the feuding taxi organisations in the area.

"The bloodshed will continue with innocent people, including some of our own members, being killed by the same hitmen hired to eliminate opponents and to ensure that we the members continue to contribute cash to keep the hitmen in the job.

"After the hitmen have been paid, some bosses pocket part of the remaining contributions. A fortnight ago, a local leader had about R130 000 in cash remaining after the payment of the hitmen," one of the taxi operators told *Sowetan*.

The angry operators also criticised the police who they said made arrests but failed to make proper follow-ups.

One of the operators said each member was compelled to sign a register at the Mabopane taxi rank every morning between 4am and 6am to be able to operate.

"Those who miss the 6am deadline are waylaid by members of the pirate squad and their minibuses are impounded if found operating," he said.

Star 16/7/97

7 held after 'plot to attack taxi body'

(332)

By Mike Masipa and Tefo Mothibeli

Police have arrested seven men who the Lehlabile Taxi Organisation (LTO) has alleged were linked to a rival taxi organisation's plot to attack them after a meeting in Sasolburg, Free State, at the weekend.

The LTO yesterday alleged that the men were linked to its rival, the SA Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta). Police would only confirm that the suspects were being investigated in connection with possessing illegal firearms and a stolen vehicle.

The LTO alleged that the gang was accompanied by a Salldta national executive member, Wesley Mpawu, who requested the meeting between the two rivals.

"These suspects are connected to the assassinations of both Watson Moloisane and Jacob Ledwaba (both former executive members of the LTO) and the recent spate of attacks in Mabopane, Soshanguve and GaRankuwa," LTO spokesman Peter Thiba said.

Ledwaba and Moloisane were killed earlier this year.

Nafto resolves to unite region's taxi industry

Bonile Ngqiyaza

BD 18/7/97 (332)

THE National African Federated Transport Organisation (Nafto) resolved yesterday to assist government to unite the taxi industry.

In an interview yesterday, Nafto general secretary Jacob Baleni said the organisation had felt it was important not to work towards the improvement of SA alone, but to reach out to the whole southern African region.

Baleni was speaking after the organisation's eighth annual meeting.

He said the meeting had agreed that Nafto and operators in general should take the initiative in working with government to bring lasting solutions and a culture of coexistence in the fractured industry if it was to remain viable.

It had also agreed to work actively towards partnerships between government, tertiary institutions involved in training, and players in the industry which would lead to the establishment of education and training programmes for operators.

Sapa reports that Nafto yesterday resolved to institute policy guidelines to formalise the taxi industry so that all stakeholders' welfare improved.

In another development police said yesterday that Diepnooit Taxi Organisation chairman James Kgape had been shot dead at point blank range outside his home near Pretoria on Wednesday.

Spokesman Capt Morne van Wyk said Kgape, 39, was sitting in his car outside his home in Diepsloot near Erasmia south-west of the city when he was approached by two unknown men. "They dragged him out of his car and into the road, where they shot him four times with a 9mm pistol."

Taxi violence: security beefed up

Star 22/7/97 (332)

By Mike Masipa
Crime Reporter

Security forces yesterday beefed up operations in Katlehong and Tokoza on the East Rand as fears of renewed violence between warring taxi factions grew.

Additional police and military personnel were sent in after yesterday's blockade by the Greater Alberton Taxi Association (Gata) of the main route to the Natalspruit taxi rank on the Tokoza/Katlehong boundary.

The area has, over the past month, been the scene of retaliatory attacks in which at least four people have been shot dead and more than 20 others have been injured.

Gata taxi drivers told The Star they had closed the route to protest against the actions of the rival Faraday Taxi Association (FTA) which had barred them from using a route both organisations shared.

A' Gata spokesman alleged two of their drivers were shot at while taking soccer followers to the FNB Stadium in Johannesburg over the weekend.

The attack was in apparent violation of an earlier agreement to share routes and ranks during major sporting events.

Yesterday's blockade lasted more than five hours as drivers awaited the outcome of a meeting between FTA and Gata leaders.

Police spokesman Superintendent Eugene Opperman said no incidents had been reported by late yesterday.

FTA spokesman Muzi Sibiya said the two organisations had agreed to meet again tomorrow to discuss differences.

Govt gets tough with companies

Sowetan 16/7/97

Employers told they will have to enforce new laws or risk prosecution

By Abdul Milazi

THE Government said yesterday it would take tough measures on employers who did not comply with the new labour legislation to ensure that previously excluded sectors benefited.

Department of Labour director-general M. Sipho Pityana said the new Labour Relations Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Bill were aimed at extending basic rights of sectors such as agriculture, domestic, part-time and public service workers previously excluded.

"To ensure that these pieces of legislation and all other laws that we pass are effective, we have to be proactive. We need to monitor and enforce them," said Pityana.

The Government's plans to get tough include criminally prosecuting and imposing heavy fines on employers not complying with legislation. [illegible] its job of inspectors [illegible] trade unions and non-governmental organisations working with farmworkers.

"Statistics from the Central Statistical Service (CSS) reveal that a significant number of workers are found in those types of employment which are newly regulated such as agriculture, public service, mining and domestic work," Pityana said.

He said regulated and unregulated labour markets accounted for more than 50 percent of the national workforce. The agricultural sector employed at least two million people, the private sector 1,9 million, mining and domestic each employ more than half a million people.

Apartheid exclusions

The informal sector accounted for more than a million people. "We are interested in the newly regulated sectors because under apartheid these sectors were for a very long time effectively excluded from major labour laws and initiatives.

"Compliance [illegible] to ensure that we bring [illegible] with it we will lose its effectiveness in terms of its objectives," Pityana said.

Mobile courts part of plan to curb taxi violence

By Mike Masipa
Crime Reporter

The Government has decided to introduce mobile and specialised courts to help speed up the legal process in dealing with the ever-increasing taxi violence, Transport Minister Mac Maharaj said yesterday.

Maharaj, along with the Gauteng MEC for transport Paul Mashatile and his North West counterpart Frans Vilakazi, was visiting Mabopane, north of Pretoria, where minibus taxi operators from both provinces were issued with identification stickers last week. The stickers specify the routes on which the taxis are allowed to operate.

The stickers are issued in accordance with the Road Transportation Amendment Act passed in both Gauteng and the North West three weeks ago in a bid to quell the endemic violence. Law enforcers would be enabled to distinguish permit-holding taxis and those in the process of getting one.

Stickers with the letter "A" indicate that the vehicle owner has a permit, while "B" is for operators whose vehicles were only registered with a taxi organisation and have applied for permits.

At least 32 people have been killed and scores of others injured in violence in northern Pretoria townships across Gauteng and North West since May. Five other people were killed in the violence elsewhere in Gauteng in the same period.

Maharaj said it was important that something be seen to be done about the taxi violence and its perpetrators, hence the need that prosecution of suspects be speeded up. He said the ministry had agreed with the Justice Department that magistrates in affected areas also speed up cases related to taxi disputes through special or after-hours hearings.

Mobile courts would be set up alongside police roadblocks to deal immediately with violations of the law. Maharaj said concrete evidence suggesting links between taxi hit squads and armed robberies has already emerged from current court cases and the momentum needed to be maintained.

Campaign to regulate taxi industry picks up speed

CT (BR) 23 NF 97 (332)

NCABA HLOPHE

Johannesburg — The national campaign to regulate the minibus taxi industry scored a telling victory yesterday when a pilot exercise resulted in more than 1 200 taxis out of a total of almost 3 000 in Soshanguve, Pretoria, volunteering to have their vehicles registered within five days, Mac Maharaj, the transport minister, said yesterday.

The registration had been taking place at an average of 300 taxis a day, and it was hoped that all would be registered by next week, Maharaj said.

He said Soshanguve had been chosen because it had been the latest flashpoint in the violent taxi wars that had claimed the lives of many commuters as taxi associations engaged in territorial battles.

The minister said the exercise had focused on encouraging taxi operators to put identification tags on their vehicles. This would form part of the proposed legislation, making such tags mandatory countrywide.

"There is Tag A and Tag B. The first one is for those vehicles which have a valid permit, and the second one is for those who would not have a permit, but had been operating for a long time.

"This exercise has come as a result of efforts by different players, including the police services and ministry of justice."

The police would then mount road blocks in the vicinity to monitor the taxis, and those which were not registered would be encouraged to do so, he said.

Resistance could "result in some people being out of the business", he said.

Maharaj was equally encouraged by the plans by the South African Black Taxi Association (Sabta) to establish a chain of co-operatives as shareholders in a holding company that could formed within six months.

"Within the next three years, we aim to stabilise the taxi industry to the point at which each province has its co-operative. We will also work on the bus service sector to ensure an effective national public passenger service," Maharaj said.

Taxi drivers' gangs protest ends in gunfire

A PROTEST by taxi drivers, intended to signal that they were "fed up" with being harassed by Mitchells Plain gangsters, ended in an exchange of fire and the wounding of two drivers yesterday.

Police later arrested seven men and seized four unlicensed firearms used in two attacks on protesters.

The injured men, members of the Mitchells Plain Taxi Forum — which includes taxi associations in the Wynberg / Mitchells Plain area — had been protesting as part of a convoy in Tafelsig and Eastridge.

The men said the taxi industry had been infiltrated by gangsters, who were harassing taxi operators.

Describing the incident, the men said shots were fired at them at about 2pm from the house of alleged gangsters in Sterling Street, Rocklands. One driver was wounded in the leg and the other in the cheek. They were taken to hospital.

Three men were arrested and two unlicensed firearms seized.

About 3pm, protesters on foot were shot at in nearby Sutherland Street by four men in a blue Toyota Corolla. The men were arrested and two more unlicensed firearms were confiscated.

Mr Ashraf Rossie, chairperson of the United Route Seven Taxi Association (URSTA), said the motorcade followed an incident last Friday in which a URSTA driver was stabbed in the head by gangsters.

The seven suspects are expected to appear in the Mitchells Plain magistrate's court today. — Staff Writer

(332) CT 23/7/97

Soweto taxi bodies in peace talks

(332)

The Gauteng government today intervened in the Soweto taxi conflict which has left thousands of taxi commuters stranded for the past two days.

Gauteng transport department official Sibusiso Buthelezi was locked in a meeting with leaders of the warring Witwatersrand Taxi Association (Wata) and the Nancefield Dube West Taxi Association (Nanduwa) after clashes between the organisations resumed at the weekend.

The clashes started after disputes over taxi routes. On Friday afternoon at Dube, a Wata taxi driver was allegedly assaulted on the Zola-Johannesburg route by an executive member of Nanduwa.

Anxious commuters now fear that the outbreak of clashes could develop into a full-scale taxi war, breaking the fragile peace in the area.

Commuters from Naledi, Zola, Emndeni, Moletsane, Rockville, Mofolo and other townships in Soweto expressed anxiety about the taxi war.

Wata taxi drivers, apparently seeking revenge, were seen yesterday searching for Nanduwa taxis. At about 10am two owners from Wata were assaulted near Club 707 shopping centre. – Staff Reporter.

Star 29/7/97

then chairperson of the OAU), Kenya and Zimbabwe, was mandated by the second regional summit on the conflict in eastern Zaire, which took place in Nairobi on 16 December 1996, to assist international efforts in bringing about a peaceful solution to the conflict.

South Africa facilitated talks involving a Zairean Government delegation and Mr Kabila (and his delegation), by providing a secure venue.

It will also be recalled that these meetings led to the face-to-face meeting of President Mobutu and Mr Kabila on board the SAS Outeniqua in the Congolese harbour of Pointe Noire on 4 May 1997, in presence of President Mandela. Mr Kabila handed President Mobutu a document containing proposals of the Alliance and agreed that President Mobutu would have a period of 8 to 10 days in which to study the proposals after which the second meeting would take place on board the SAS Outeniqua.

This second face-to-face meeting never took place and while Mr Kabila was still in Cape Town, consulting with President Mandela, President Mobutu on 16 May 1997 announced in Kinshasa that he was relinquishing power but not his position.

In view of the vacuum at the level of Head of State, created by the unforeseen flight of President Mobutu, and the gravity of the situation, Mr Kabila announced on 17 May 1997 that, he, the President of the ADFL, was assuming as of that day the functions of Head of State of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

(a) In view of the above, this question falls away.
(b) In view of the above, this question falls away.

Steps to address taxi violence (332)

*38. Mr J S A MAVUSO asked the Minister of Transport:

(1) Whether he or his Department has taken or intends taking any steps to address taxi violence in South Africa; if not, why not; if so, what steps;

(2) whether he will make a statement on the matter? N1602E

The MINISTER OF TRANSPORT:

(1) Yes. However, it is important first of all to situate the issue of violence within the framework of the wider problems we have had to address in the process of regulating and rebuilding this vital service industry.

As mentioned in my reply on 14 February 1997, the Government initiated the National Taxi Task Team process in order to exhaustively investigate all the problems which were at that time surfacing in the taxi industry. Our analysis showed that the problems fell into three main groups, namely regulation and control, formalisation and training, and economic assistance. Working groups were established under intergovernmental liaison structures to tackle the problems identified and to find appropriate and enforceable solutions.

At this stage it is still too early to make any easy claims of success, as the process is still unfolding. I can, however, point out some significant milestones in the implementation of various key measures recommended by the NTTT.

The process of conditional registration of taxi associations and their members, and the special legalisation procedure for illegal taxi operators, were simultaneously launched at the special meeting of MINCOM held on 5 and 6 August 1996.

Application forms for registration and legalisation, manuals explaining the procedures, as well as posters and leaflets promoting the processes were distributed to all Provinces, Town Clerks of local authorities, Local Road Transportation Boards (LRTBs) and provincial taxi offices, where these had been established. The documentation was available at all these centres by 12 August 1996.

In the interim:

- all Provinces appointed or designated their Registrars;
- taxi offices were established and staffed;
- computer software for the registration of taxi associations was installed at all Registrars' offices; and
- all Provinces began accepting applications for registration and legalisation.

Funding for these processes was provided by the National Department of Transport.

During January, February and March 1997, I held meetings with MECs, provincial officials and leaders in the taxi industry in most of the

Provinces to discuss the issues of registration and legalisation. In the great majority of instances, the reaction of the taxi industry was positive.

To date, 1255 taxi associations nationwide have applied for registration. This represents close to 100% of all existing taxi associations (though it must be noted that name changes etc. can make it difficult to be certain that our record of existing associations is 100% accurate).

The Provincial Registrars are currently engaged in the process of checking the details provided by these associations to verify their compliance with all the conditions laid down for registration, and to ensure that associations which have not yet provided all the information required, do so in the shortest possible space of time. In the meantime, the practical effects of registration are bearing fruit. As the Honourable Member will no doubt have been able to observe in the streets not far from this House, taxi route markers are now being used to regulate operations on all metropolitan routes; and this has already had a dramatic effect in eliminating the violence which previously arose from unregulated competition on over-traded routes.

Let me turn now, however, to the issue of violence in its remaining organised forms. On 24 December 1996 the President met with taxi representatives from the northern provinces and strongly urged them to make their contribution to a nonviolent climate within the industry by ensuring that all associations applied for registration by the end of February 1997.

Following this, on 6 March 1997 my colleague, the Minister of Safety and Security announced the establishment of an investigating team headed by Director Neville Thoms with a specific mandate to isolate and combat the remaining pockets of organised, systematic violence by criminal elements opposed in principle to the regulation of the industry.

This initiative has become an integral element of a broader co-operative effort by the Ministers of Safety and Security, Justice and myself to ensure that, in addition to the usual measures undertaken by the security and justice system, special efforts are made to eradicate violence in the taxi industry.

In the recent past the Provinces of Gauteng and the North West took specifically targeted actions to address violence in particular areas (Soshanguve and Mabopane north of Pretoria) by introducing special legislative measures. At this stage the violence in these areas has subsided and the taxi industry is co-operating with the introduction of special measures to identify operators who should and should not be operating from these areas.

(2) Not at present.

Registration of employers with Unemployment Insurance Fund (337)

*39. Mr A WATSON asked the Minister of Labour:

(1) Whether any progress has been made since 1994 with the registration of employers in the agricultural sector with the Unemployment Insurance Fund; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what progress had been made in this regard at the latest specified date for which information is available;

(2) whether he will make a statement on the matter? N1603E

The MINISTER OF LABOUR:

(1) The Unemployment Insurance Fund has made progress with regard to the registration of employers in the agricultural sector. In this regard the following information can be provided:

Number of registered employers in the agriculture sector

December 1994 – 40980

December 1995 – 44229

December 1996 – 47059

(2) A statement is not deemed necessary at this point in time.

Relevant authorities informed of notices of failed appeals

*40. Ms M SMUTS asked the Minister of Justice:

Whether any steps have been recommended or taken to (a) ensure that notices of failed

Rivalry feared in metered-taxi violence

(332)

Star 5/8/98

By Mike Masipa
Crime Reporter

Police are investigating the possibility that inter-factional violence might be at play as attacks on sedan-taxi drivers increase across Johannesburg.

SAPS spokesman Captain Andy Pieke said police had "noted with concern" that in half of the attacks reported since May, the assailants had not stolen their victims' cars.

"We are investigating every possibility," Pieke said.

Police last week warned metered-taxi drivers in the city to be on the alert following the recent spate of killings. Pieke issued a list of precautions to be taken by drivers.

He said five taxi drivers had been found dead in their vehicles in Johannesburg suburbs and townships in the past two months. The latest victims were found in Berea and Yeoville last week.

Five incidents of hijacking of taxi drivers were reported from May to mid-July, Pieke said.

The management of Johannesburg's two major metered-taxi operators, Maxi and Rose's, told The Star they did not know of any friction between operators in the city.

Karin Schoenfeldt of Maxi Taxi said she did not know of any cases of driver-on-driver rivalry between their operators and others.

However, there was a possibility that the violence in the industry could be stemming from pirate operators.

She said most of the taxis recovered after hijackings were found stripped of their radios and meters.



One of three taxis that were torched at Noordgesig, Soweto, yesterday. The recent flare up of hostilities between taxi operators has beleaguered township residents. PIC: MBUZENI ZULU

Commuters shot as taxi violence flares

(332) sowetan 6/8/97

By Saint Molakeng

THREE people were shot and wounded, minibus taxis torched and two drivers assaulted when taxi violence flared up again in Soweto yesterday.

Two passengers and a driver were shot by assailants who were travelling in a minibus taxi yesterday morning. They were waiting in the morning queue for taxis to Johannesburg outside the disused Uncle Tom's Hall in Orlando West.

Confirming the shooting, Orlando police station commander Senior Superintendent Fred Kekana said in the ensuing melee an eight-year-old schoolchild was knocked down by a car.

He said the victims were waiting for taxis run by the Witwatersrand Taxi Owners Association (Wata).

About three hours later, two drivers were assaulted and their taxi windows smashed in Phefeni and Orlando East. Three taxis were also burnt in Orlando East and Noordgesig.

Kekana said the victims in the later incidents belonged to the Nancefield Dube West Taxi Association (Nanduwe).

Thousands of commuters in about 10 Soweto townships had their transport disrupted yesterday.

Kekena said he had asked for 80 Johannesburg police and 200 soldiers to be deployed in Soweto.

Taxi drivers told to display stickers

(332)

Star 8/8/97

By Themba Sepotokele

The Gauteng department of transport issued a stern warning yesterday to minibus taxi operators who fail to display stickers specifying the routes on which their taxis are allowed to operate.

Kate Bapela, spokesman for Transport MEC Paul Mashatile, said that from Monday, police would set up roadblocks at various strategic points, especially around Pretoria, to impound taxis not displaying the "A" and "B" identification stickers.

This is part of "Operation Thiba", initiated by Mashatile and his North West counterpart Frans Vilakazi, to combat taxi violence.

The deadline for taxi operators to display stickers is today. The stickers are issued in accordance with the Road Transportation Amendment Act passed by the Gauteng and North West provinces.

The stickers are white with black writing on them. Stickers with a letter "A" indicate that the vehicle owner has a permit to operate in a declared area, while those with a "B" are issued to members of conditionally registered associations in a declared area, and signify conditional registration.

Bapela said more than 3 137 stickers had already been issued to taxi operators. The stickers have a validity period of two months and any person who contravenes the regulations will be fined a maximum of R1 500.

She said impounded vehicles would be kept off the road in the custody of the government for 14 days and the owner would be charged a R500 administration fee.



ON THE ROAD AGAIN: Matthew Maifo at the wheel of his combi before disaster struck PHOTOGRAPH: TJ LEMON

Taking you for a ride is the name of the game

Taxi driver Matthew Maifo has to go the extra mile if he wants to make a decent living

(332)
Star 9/8/97

Most of us love to hate minibus taxi drivers. We all have horror stories about their driving skills and aggression. The never-ending taxi violence that has taken so many innocent lives just serves to feed our prejudices.

A colleague who commutes to work by minibus taxi from Soweto told me that every day he says a silent prayer that he will get to work and back safely. "The fear of being at the mercy of these maniac drivers is indescribable," he said.

I, too, have had more than one fearful run-in with a few drivers who were undoubtedly a hazard to my health. So it was with much trepidation that I decided to spend Tuesday commuting in a minibus taxi.

I was to commute between Soweto and Johannesburg, but at the last minute the taxi negotiating task team dissuaded me from the Soweto routes because tensions between taxi associations were high. "Giving newspaper space to one association's driver could lead to his untimely death and yours," I was warned. So I spent Tuesday on the Atteridgeville-Pretoria route. Good thing too – three taxi drivers were seriously injured in a shootout in Soweto that day.

'There aren't enough bays, so what choices do we have but to stop in the road to load people?'

Knowing that things had been set up for me calmed my nerves slightly – but nothing went according to plan. I landed up stopping taxis and asking drivers if I could pay my way to spend a day with them.

I was turned down a few times until Matthew Maifo, in his metallic-blue 10-seater combi, told me to jump in.

I tried to explain my intentions over full-volume Radio Metro. Maifo just nodded gruffly, saying something in Sotho about me to the guy in the front passenger seat. Was it my imagination, or was there a vaguely hostile feeling emanating from the front seat?

The combi filled up, and I felt decidedly uneasy and noticed people staring at me. As the combi entered Atteridgeville, I tried hard to look confident and in control, squeezed between people at the back of the vehicle. I was scared and kept asking myself why I had got myself into this situation. The driver looked fierce and I felt decidedly white and threatened. But as soon as the ice melted between Maifo and me, I realised I was quite safe and that the seemingly gruff driver was a gentle person trying to make a living, against all odds.

I don't for one moment believe that Maifo (33) is typical of all taxi drivers. He happens to be a God-fearing sort although lately, it seems, his faith is being tested. He was recently released from jail on probation after spending eight months of a 15-month sentence for not paying R4 000 in traffic fines for driving an unroadworthy vehicle. "I gave the fines to my previous boss but he let them expire. Just after I started a new job, he told the police where I was," Maifo said.

Hailing from Pietersburg, Maifo began as a factory worker but was one of 300 workers arrested and fired after embarking on protest action in 1992. Unable to find work, he took his public driving permit and tried his luck as a taxi driver.

"You only make money in this business if you own the taxi," he said as he pulled up at a curb in Atteridgeville and jumped out to help a woman put her groceries in the combi's boot. "If your vehicle breaks down, you lose because there is no work, no pay."

In most cases, minibus drivers pay taxi owners around R300 a day, depending on their routes. In some cases, the driver earns only the takings over and above that sum, or he receives a salary and a nominal amount for the excess. In other cases, depending on the owners, drivers have to pay their contribution even if their vehicle has broken down. Maifo had bad luck with his first boss, who kept giving him a combi that was on the verge of disintegrating.

Maifo lives on his own in Atteridgeville's Jamesville squatter camp, where he is struggling to keep his home. A brutish man is claiming that the shack Maifo built is actually his.

But Maifo tries to remain positive and says that despite his "few problems", he has no worries because "God is watching over me".

At least six days a week, Maifo starts work at 4.45am and hardly stops until after 6pm. If business is good he will work until midnight. He stops only to wash his vehicle, go to the toilet or buy food.

On Tuesday, at his side he kept a bag full of muffins which he munched throughout the day so that he wouldn't have to stop. He is working as much as possible so that he can earn money to marry the mother of his three children, who live in Pietersburg.

Wearing a trendy navy-blue corduroy shirt, smart pinstriped pants, blue socks and slip-on leather shoes, he cut a dashing figure. I didn't notice at first, but his face is that of a young boy, not a rough, 33-year-old taxi driver.

When we chatted, he smiled a sweet, crooked smile that made him look more gentle. But, when trying to attract passengers, he snarled, furrowed his brow and put his index finger up.

When a group of teenage passengers asked him where I was from, he said "Atteridgeville". All this was going on in a language I was not familiar with, so I found out only later why these girls cackled with laughter every time I turned to face them.

THE PETA KROST INTERVIEW



Mindful of the bad reputation of these vehicles and their operators, I spent a day commuting in a minibus taxi. Seeing what a driver has to endure was a real eye-opener

Some passengers had long chats with Maifo. When this happened, everyone got involved. "Atteridgeville commuters are very friendly," he told me.

Because he has been doing this route on and off since 1992, many commuters know him. "Sometimes they will stop me in the street to say 'hey, you are a taxi driver'," he chuckled as we stopped off at an Atteridgeville filling station after at least six round trips. He rushed off and returned with a Coke for each of us. He checked under the bonnet, filled up with petrol and we were off again to load up for the trip back to town.

Because there is only one taxi association in Atteridgeville, taxi drivers there currently don't fear the sort of factional violence plaguing Soweto and many other areas. But they do face the constant risk of being hijacked and killed. "Recently a taxi driver was shot and thrown in the boot of his taxi – residents saw it happen and challenged the robbers and got the vehicle back," Maifo said. "Your life comes once – you can't just give it away for a car."

He would not discuss taxi drivers' reputation of being gun-wielding thugs. He merely agreed that some drivers are armed, but said he believes that owning a gun is asking for trouble. He took exception to their reputation of being dreadful drivers.

"The problem is that there are not enough loading bays, and where there are, private vehicles are always parked. So what choice do we have but to stop in the road to load people?" he asked. He agreed that some drivers do not use indicators when they intend to stop or change lanes. "We have to indicate because we do not want accidents, and if we do indicate, people don't come too close," he explained.

Just then, a taxi with its hazard lights on screeched across the road in front of Maifo's taxi, just missing it, leaving Maifo highly peeved. He just carried on and the passengers didn't seem to notice. I suppose it's a matter of what a person is used to!

As the morning wore on, business started slacking off. Maifo's frustration at trying so hard to get passengers was tangible. He went to the pension hall to try to pick up elderly people with their monthly payout. Only one old woman got on.

After searching for a while in the township, he transferred the *gogo* to another combi so that he could continue his hunt for customers. "There is no point driving to town with one passenger," he said. "Droppo (to town)?" he asked, his head out of the window.

'I must work hard. If I work just normal hours, the money won't be able to afford me'

After one more round trip, Maifo's worst fears came true. The combi broke down in the middle of town. I've never seen such frustration before.

I've also never seen such shocked looks as those of the onlookers witnessing this white woman pushing a minibus taxi with a black driver in the middle of Pretoria central. Get with the programme, guys, this is the new South Africa!

There was nothing Maifo could do to salvage his day. He called the owner to arrange a tow. Disheartened, he vowed that as soon as the combi was ready the following day, he would put in even more hours. "I do not want ever again to live the life of the unemployed. I must work hard so that I don't think of useless things. If I work just normal hours, the money won't be able to afford me."

Clampdown on illegal taxi operators begins

(338) Sowetan 11/8/97

By Mandla Mbatha

POLICE will from today set up roadblocks at various points in Gauteng and North West to impound taxis not displaying authorised identification stickers allowing them to operate in specified areas.

And the Gauteng transport ministry has warned commuters not to use taxis which do not display authorised stickers because those vehicles could be impounded.

"The impoundment of illegal and unmarked vehicles will commence in full swing from Monday," Gauteng MEC for transport Mr Paul Mashatile said at the weekend.

The stickers have been issued in accordance with a provincial regulation promulgated by the Gauteng and North West provinces. This is part of "Operation Thiba" which gives the transport MECs of the two provinces powers to suspend any taxi or even close taxi ranks.

Taxis may be impounded

The regulation includes the impounding of those taxis not displaying "A" and "B" stickers. The "A" type indicates that the vehicle's owner has a permit to operate in a declared area, and the "B" type is issued to members of conditionally registered associations. This sticker is valid for two months.

Mashatile said: "Any person who contravenes these regulations will be guilty of an offence and liable for conviction to a fine not exceeding R1 500."

Once a vehicle had been impounded it would be kept by the provincial government for up to14 days. The owner would be charged an administrative fee of R500, increasing to R1 000 if the vehicle was impounded for a second time.

"At this stage about 3 137 stickers have been issued. However, it is noted with regret that some associations and operators have deliberately disregarded this process and have intimidated those who cooperate with the government," said Mashatile.

THE TAXIS FR

ARG 14/8/97

Cops can't keep 'death tr

(332)

ANDREA WEISS AND ASHLEY SMITH
STAFF REPORTERS

Traffic police are powerless to stop "death trap" taxis using the city's roads daily.

Many minibus taxis are so dangerous even traffic officers are afraid to drive them – but the traffic department does not have the power to order them off the road permanently.

Taxis which appear to be unroadworthy are pulled off the road and their licences withdrawn if they fail a compulsory roadworthy test at the department's headquarters at Gallows Hill in Green Point. But officials are obliged to return vehicles to their owners to give them the chance to repair and re-register them.

Traffic officers say that they know many owners simply put them back on the road without attempting to fix the defects.

The traffic authorities plan to petition the national Department of Transport and the provincial Transport Minister, Leonard Ramatlakane, to give them the power to confiscate and destroy vehicles which are so far gone they can be described only as "death traps".

Many vehicles impounded by the department in a law-enforcement campaign in recent weeks had no brakes, lights or tyre treads.

Yesterday, the department released a taxi which, instead of a petrol tank, had a five-litre plastic jerrycan next to the driver's seat, with a pipe leading to the engine.

The front and rear windows were held together with rope, the passenger door could not be opened by anyone other than the driver and the taxi had to be hot-wired to get it started.

It was stopped in Nyanga, driven to Manenberg police station by senior traffic officer Wayne Rosslind and towed to Gallows Hill, because it was too dangerous to drive.

Owner Rupert Mdokwana said he had bought the vehicle from his uncle for R6 000 and was fixing it.

He said the people traffic police saw being unloaded were not passengers, but "friends" who were helping him test-drive it. He said he had hoped to use the vehicle to cart fruit and vegetables.

Traffic officers disputed this, saying there were seven people on board, including a two-year-old child.

The taxi had 22 defects and was unlicensed, but it was returned to Mr Mdokwana, who had it towed from Gallows Hill yesterday. Traffic officers predicted the vehicle would be back on the road today.

Western Cape Minister of Police Gerald Morkel said he agreed that traffic officials should be given powers to take blatantly unroadworthy taxis off the road "for good".

"It is very good that the traffic department identifies these vehicles and confiscates them, as we have to have discipline in the taxi industry," he said.



LEON MULLER

Licensed to kill: officer Wayne Rosslind with a plastic can used inside a crowded taxi as a petrol tank

P.T.O.



LEON MULLER

field is carried away



shot by his guards

'Death trap' taxis scare experienced traffic cops

(332)

ANDREA WEISS
City Editor

ARG 14/8/97

It takes skill and nerves of steel to drive some of the "death trap" taxis which have recently been pulled into the traffic department's headquarters in Green Point.

For a start, it is likely you won't have an ignition key and will have to hot-wire the taxi to get it going. Even with a key, you may have to reach into the engine compartment to pump the carburettor to get it started.

Most vehicles impounded for compulsory roadworthy tests were without a foot or handbrake, making it necessary to change gear to slow down. To stop you have to stall.

Among the vehicles being tested yesterday was a sedan taxi from Guguletu which totted up enough defects to earn a R780 fine. These included a petrol tank held up with wire, no footbrake or handbrake, no hooter, tyres with canvas showing and no indicators. The unregistered vehicle's bodywork had gaping holes. It had apparently been bought in March for R2 000.

A minibus taxi from Nyanga had a "petrol tank" in the form of a plastic jerry can next to the driver and its windscreens were tied on with rope. The passenger door could only be opened from outside, so in a fire, the passengers could not get out.

One packed taxi stopped in Nyanga had no brakes and no indicators. Senior traffic officer Wayne Rosslind, who drove it to Manenberg police station, said it was too dangerous to drive and called a breakdown truck to tow it to Green Point.

It was found to have 24 defects, and there were four warrants of arrest out for the driver.

All the vehicles had excessive play in the steering, making them difficult to control. Officer Rosslind believes there should be only one destination for these vehicles – the scrapyard.

"These vehicles don't belong on the road. They should be crushed, like they are in America."

Traffic chief Mark Sangster says his department wants to take the owners of the vehicles to court if they put them back on the road. The problem was that they were the property of the owners and could not simply be confiscated.

ARG 14/8/97 (332)

OM HELL

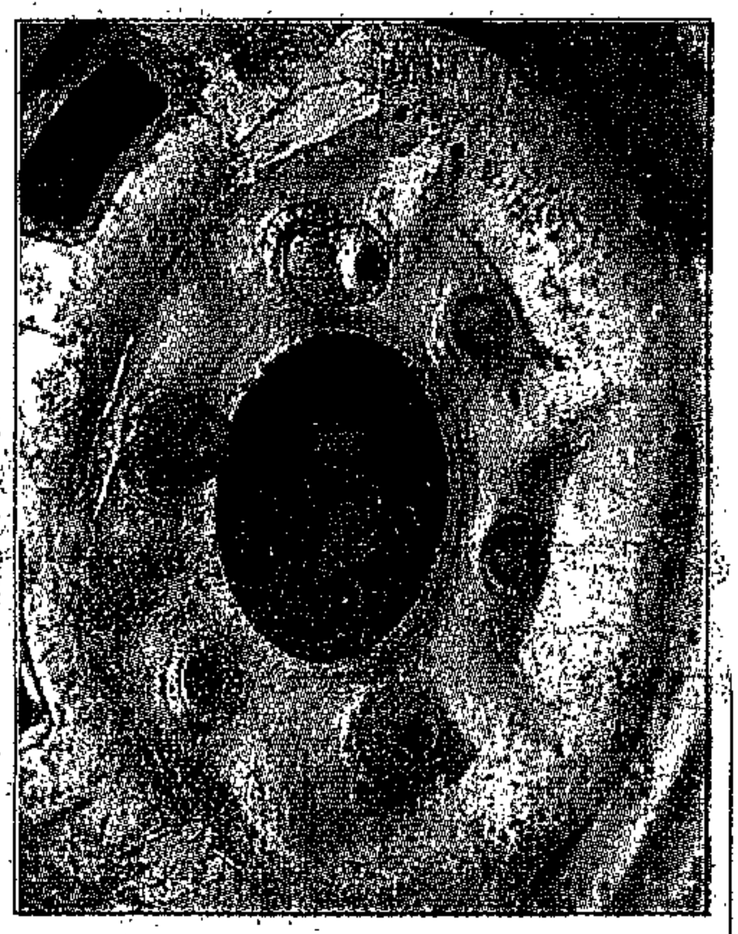
ips' off the road



Deadly package: this taxi is held together with rope. Traffic police are afraid to drive some vehicles



Rattletrap: minibus owner Rupert Mdokwana



Dodgy: a wheel with three of its six nuts missing

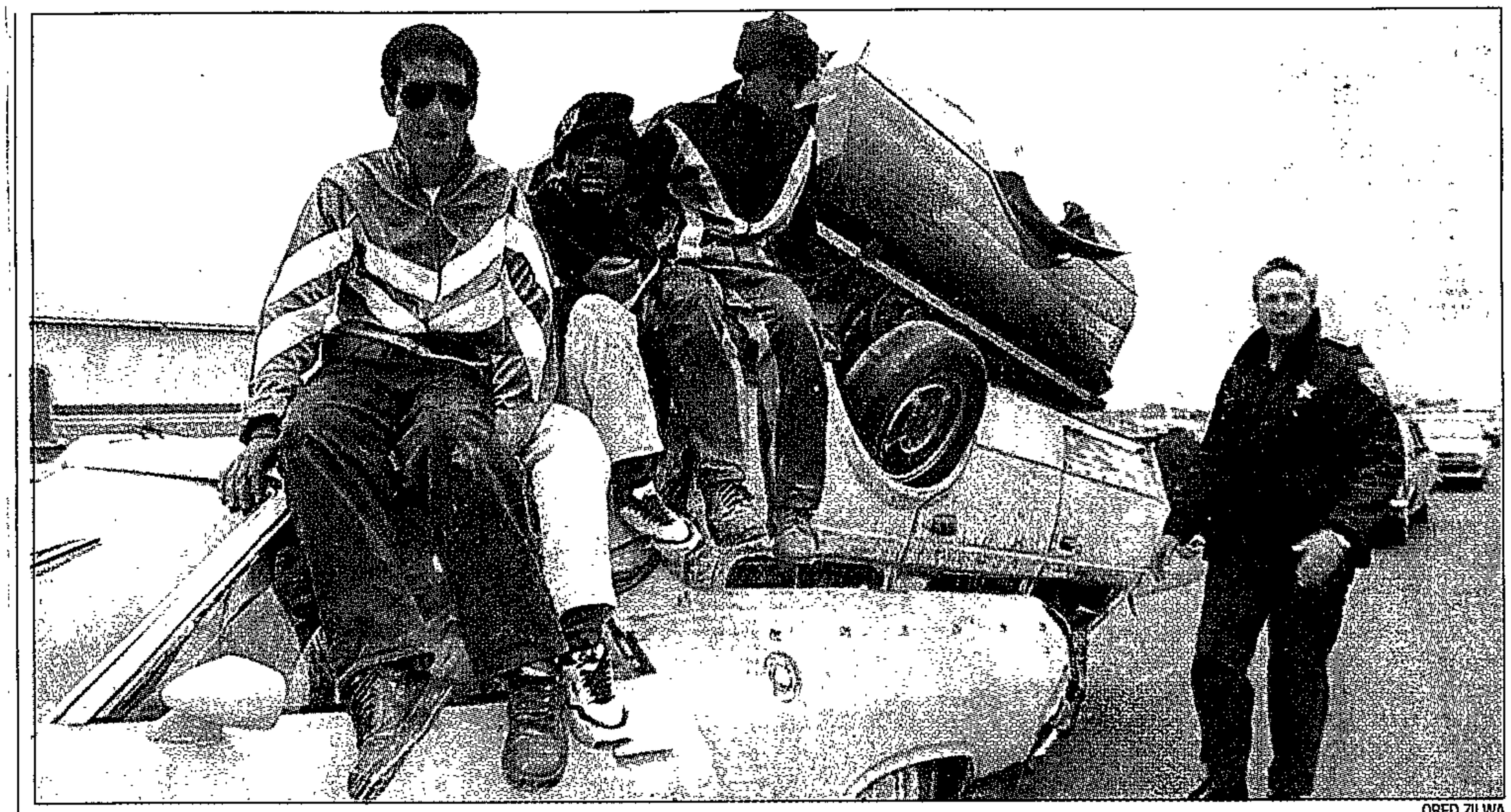
But many of these taxis were the livelihood of township families, he said.

Owners of unroadworthy taxis had to be given the chance to bring mechanics to police depots so the taxis could be repaired.

This should be done before drastic action was contemplated, Mr Morkel said.

"However, I do agree that taxis which are not roadworthy are lethal weapons on our roads."

See page 3



OBED ZILWA

Operation overload: a traffic officer stops an overloaded bakkie at a roadblock in Khayelitsha. The officer could barely fit his hand under the rear of the truck

Teens are taxi 'timebombs'

(332)

JOHAN SCHRONEN
CRIME CORRESPONDENT

ARG 20/8/97

Traffic police warn that a growing number of under-age drivers on township taxi routes, many driving unroadworthy vehicles, are "timebombs on wheels".

The warning comes after traffic police caught two youngsters driving minibus taxis in two days.

They fear these inexperienced drivers, many moonlighting for pocket money, could fuel the high accident death toll.

Traffic police yesterday caught a 17-year-old driving a badly-rusted, unregistered minibus with smooth tyres, no handbrake and no reverse near Khayelitsha.

On Monday, a 13-year-old boy driving a minibus taxi crashed into a car in a convoy escorting President Mandela.

Meanwhile, at least 80 drivers on the run for traffic offences have been arrested in a big clampdown on taxis.

ELING



Mr Samson Nelufule, of Dlamini, Soweto, is R200 richer after he was spotted by our team sporting a Sowetan bumper sticker on his taxi. He got his sticker from Toby's Ford in Diepkloof and it was spotted at the Baragwanath taxi rank.
PIC: CLEMENT LEKANYANE

Taxi drivers call for unity

(332) Sowetan 21/8/97

A JOINT committee of everyone involved in the taxi industry and community bodies should be formed to monitor taxi disputes, the National Taxi Drivers Organisation (Natdo) said yesterday.

"The committee will include taxi drivers, owners, commuter organisations, civic organisations, labour unions and police to monitor taxi activities on an ongoing basis," Natdo chairman Mr Themba Mgabhi said after a meeting of drivers in Johannesburg yesterday.

"The task of the committee would be to call for immediate talks whenever disputes over routes and piracy became evident."

Mgabhi said Natdo members' right to strike to ensure their safety during taxi violence should be recognised.

The meeting discussed a proposed fund to assist taxi drivers who become victims of violence in the course of their work. – *Sapa.*

Victims meet 'taxi' Minister

(332)

By Rafiq Rohan Political Correspondent

TWO taxi violence victims met Minister of Transport Mac Maharaj in Parliament yesterday to urge him to address the plight of thousands of people who over the years have fallen victim to the senseless taxi war.

The two women are Ms Shelley Barry and Ms Janine Clayton. Barry is paralysed after being shot in a gunfight between two taxi factions in Cape Town last year.

Clayton was also a passenger in one of the taxis and she was shot in the chest where the bullet is still lodged.

Sowetan 21/8/97

No recourse

The women said victims who were caught up in the taxi violence crossfire had no recourse to justice in South Africa's legal system.

Barry said there were no channels available for the compensation of those who had suffered as a result of the taxi war and victims were now organising themselves to ensure that something was done.

Barry is now the Policy Co-ordinator for the Disabled People of South Africa.

"I am conducting a nationwide investigation into this matter and am determined to be a voice for all taxi victims," she told Maharaj.

Maharaj said he had just appointed a presidential task team to investigate the matter.

He told the victims that while he did not have any immediate solutions he was open to suggestions so that there was "justice for taxi violence victims".

BULLETIN BOARD

Call for taxi industry to be smashed and rebuilt to remove illegal operators

The taxi industry should be smashed and rebuilt, Gauteng public transport standing committee chairman Elias Mosunkutu said yesterday.

At a meeting of the committee, he was responding to a remark by Lennox Mabaso, of the provincial department of transport and roads, that many in the industry accused the province of being ruthless in amending the Road Transportation Act to force taxi operators to register and obtain permits. Mosunkutu said the legislative changes were meant to be ruthless in order to stop the daily killings and violence.

He added: "I think we must smash the entire thing and rebuild it."

The transport department on Wednesday began the confiscation phase of its Operation Thiba. A long process led to taxi associations being registered and to route permits being issued, but many operators have ignored the process. Their taxis are now being taken off the roads.

"The industry is very angry with us," chief director of transportation management Eric Wise told the committee. "This is because we are now really regulating and the shoe is starting to pinch. We are not saying 'We are going to get rid of illegals', we are getting rid of illegals."

Wise said one of the department's concerns was that its officials were daily threatened with death by people in the taxi industry. "They say 'Give me a sticker (to indicate registration and permits). I know who you are, I know where you stay'. "And now that we are starting with the confiscation phase they are saying 'Stop me, take my vehicle, I'll kill you'. It's as easy as that."

Figures show there are 25 321 outright illegal taxis in Gauteng and 9 396 semi-legal ones (they belong to taxi associations but don't have route permits). – Sapa

Star 23/8/97 (332)



Cheryl Deavall, left, and her Siberian husky Alcintas Rave Review, are congratulated by Miss SA Kerishne Naicker after winning the Dogmor 1997 dog of the year competition. Picture: TYRONE ARTHUR

Mandela football club member seeks amnesty

25/8/97 BD (332)

KATIZA Cebekhulu, a key witness who vanished from SA before testifying at Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's trial for the 1989 kidnap and murder of 14-year-old Stompie Seipei, had applied from England for amnesty, the truth commission confirmed yesterday.

Cebekhulu, a former member of the Mandela United Football Club, surfaced in London, where former Conservative MP Emma Nicholson became his guardian.

Commission spokesman Christelle Terreblanche said Cebekhulu had submitted an amnesty application, but could not say what acts he was seeking amnesty for.

"If it is for gross human rights violations, the hearing would have to be in public and he would have to come back to SA," she said.

Terreblanche said that any amnesty hearing for Cebekhulu would be completely separate from the session where Madikizela-Mandela would appear. No date for her testimony had been set.

Truth commission deputy chairman Alex Boraine said on Friday Madikizela-Mandela had been subpoenaed testify at a closed hearing to help investigations into several cases, including Seipei's.

"There are a number of inquiries ... made at public hearings of the commission surrounding the deaths and disappearance of youngsters.... (It's) about seeking information relating to gross human rights violations. We think Mrs Mandela will be able to assist us," Boraine said.

Seipei's body was found in a ditch with his throat cut in January 1989. The parents of at least two other black boys who disappeared in Soweto at the time of Seipei's murder have asked the commission to try to find out what happened.

Madikizela-Mandela said she wanted to testify in public, not at a closed-door hearing.

Madikizela-Mandela was convicted and fined for kidnapping Seipei. — Reuter.

'SAPS strategy must not be made public'

BD 25/8/97 (332)

Jacob Dlamini

CAPE TOWN — It would not make sense for the SA Police Service (SAPS) to make its crime-combatting strategies public, new CEO Meyer Kahn said at the weekend.

Doing so would raise expectations and give criminals the edge over police.

Speaking at a briefing with the parliamentary safety and security committee, Kahn said the "police were besieged with too much to do". There was a need for the SAPS to scale down the high levels of activity within the force.

Kahn said he believed SAPS members were grossly underpaid, even by the worst international standards. However, he would be able to argue for the lot of the police to be improved only if they improved their performance and the service offered to communities.

There was a case to be made for the SAPS to be treated as a special service to be lifted out of the public service.

SAPS Labour Relations manager Sakkie Steyn said about 50% of the labour force had accepted the 7,05% wage increase offered. Some unionised staff had rejected the offer and demanded a 20% increase. It would cost R4,9bn to meet this demand, he said.

Twenty-three illegal taxis impounded

BD 26/8/97 (332)

Bonile Ngqiyaza

TWENTY-three taxis operating illegally in Hammanskraal and townships around Pretoria were impounded last week by the Gauteng and North West governments in roadblocks set up for the purpose, Gauteng transport spokesman Kate Bapela said.

The vehicles were impounded under "Operation Thiba" — an exercise set up in terms of extraordinary powers given last month to Gauteng and North West transport MECs Paul Mashatile and Star Vilakazi by their respective legislatures.

The operation is targeting areas north of Pretoria. Impounded vehicles would remain in custody for up to 14 days and a R500 administration fee would be charged. The fee did not include the R1 500 fine.

Sapa reports that transport and roads committee member Lennox Mabaso said that many in the industry had accused Gauteng of ruthlessness in amending the Road Transportation Act to force taxi operators to register and get permits.

However, Bapela warned the confiscation of taxis without valid permits would begin in Johannesburg soon.

olster road fund

ducing claims against the fund would be to cut down the accident rate. Committee chairwoman Patricia de Lille gave notice of public hearings on the high accident rate from September 8-10.

Gordhan briefed the committee on his department's plans to restructure the department by creating independent agencies for roads, permits, maritime and aviation. This would hopefully be finalised by mid-1999, leaving the department to concentrate on policy formulation, planning and regulation.

A bill creating the roads agency, already approved by cabinet, would be tabled in Parliament in about six weeks.

He disclosed that over the next three to four months three 30-year concessions to build roads would be made available to the private sector — the N3 between Heidelberg and Cedara, the N4 (Pretoria to Rustenberg) and the N2 (Port Edward to Port St Johns).

Diamonds stolen at police office

RED-faced police officers from Carletonville's diamond and gold unit on the far West Rand yesterday discovered their high-security premises had been burgled, and R695000 worth of diamonds and cash stolen.

West Rand police spokesman Sgt Herman Esterhuizen said the theft was discovered when the police arrived at the office yesterday morning.

The theft had taken place over the weekend when the burglars dismantled burglarproofing and forced open safes to get at the valuables.

Esterhuizen said the diamonds, worth R535 000, were exhibits kept at the station. The thieves had "struck it lucky" with the R160 000 in cash because it was unusual for such a large amount to be kept at the unit.— Sapa.

Stakeholders agree to reboot transformation at university

BD 26/8/97

GRAHAMSTOWN — The transformation process at Rhodes University is back on track with students, staff and other key stakeholders committing themselves at the weekend to restarting the process that broke down five months ago.

Rhodes said yesterday this followed Saturday's meeting of the transformation forum — chaired by a mediator from the Independent Mediators Association of SA (Imssa) — the first since deadlock was reached at a plenary session in March.

The meeting was attended by Rhodes registrar Stephen Fourie, representatives of the East London campus, SA Students Congress, Pan Africanist Student Organisation, lecturers, the student representative committee, senate, the university council, Democratic Society Convocation, National Tertiary Education Staff Union, National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union, and the Rhodes University Staff Union.

The meeting had been called to report on a four-month long mediation process brokered by Imssa after a deadlock was reached at a plenary session of the transformation forum in March. Imssa's Gary Koekemoer met with the role players several times to assist them in resolving their differences.

Most of the discussions during the mediation period centred on the structure of the transformation process and how it should be negotiated.

The 13 parties agreed on two main bodies to drive the process. The first is a plenary, and the second an executive which would utilise the various working groups.

The plenary's main function will be to give the executive committee a broad mandate and has the power to determine the agenda of the transformation by giving input on issues and monitoring its progress.

The executive will be the bargaining forum where parties will deliberate and decide on issues relevant to the transformation process.

"The relationship and overall progress will largely be dependent upon the good faith bargaining of all representatives on behalf of their respective constituencies," Koekemoer said. — ECN.

Taxi drivers refuse to work in permits protest

BD 26/8/97 (332)

PRETORIA — Taxi drivers in the Mabopane/Garankuwa area near Pretoria refused to operate yesterday morning to protest against new legislation requiring them to display permit stickers on their vehicles.

Odi public order policing spokesman Supt Steve van Heerden said about 90% of taxis belonging to the SA Long Distance Taxi Association were not running. Saldta is the predominant taxi body in the area.

He said Saldta members were allegedly intimidating commuters into not using taxis belonging to other organisations. Reports have been received of taxis being pulled off the road and their stickers removed.

"It does not appear many commuters were stranded," Van Heerden said.

"They made use of alternative transport." No violence was reported and the situation was calm by noon.

Van Heerden said Saldta representatives had not turned up for a scheduled meeting with police earlier in the day.

Police expected the protest action to continue for the whole week, he said.

Following a recent outbreak of taxi violence in the area, the governments of Gauteng and North West passed legislation forcing drivers to display permit stickers on their vehicles.

Taxi owners not adhering to the regulations would be given 14 days to pay an administration fee of R500 or face legal action. Gauteng transport MEC Paul Mashatile's spokesman, Kate Bapela, said the deadline for the issuing of permit stickers was last week.

More than 8 000 taxis had been registered to date.

Van Heerden said 22 unregistered vehicles had been confiscated since last week, six in Gauteng and 16 in North West. This had been done at roadblocks manned by about 120 police, 30 army, and 70 transport department officials.

Violence erupted at Rietgat taxi rank in Soshanguve yesterday, only hours after a two-month ban on use of the rank was lifted.

The SAPS's Capt Mercia Fryer said five men apparently attacked the driver of a minibus taxi belonging to the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association.

"According to witnesses, the driver ran after his attackers and shot one of them in the foot," she said. All six men fled the scene.

The Rietgat taxi rank, closed since June 20 in an attempt by the Gauteng government to stop continuing violence involving rival taxi associations, was reopened earlier in the day.

Bapela said that if violence continued the rank could be closed again.

Van Heerden said Saldta was demanding the release of the 22 unregistered taxis confiscated by police in a crackdown which was launched last week. —Sapa.

N K PROPERTIES LIMITED

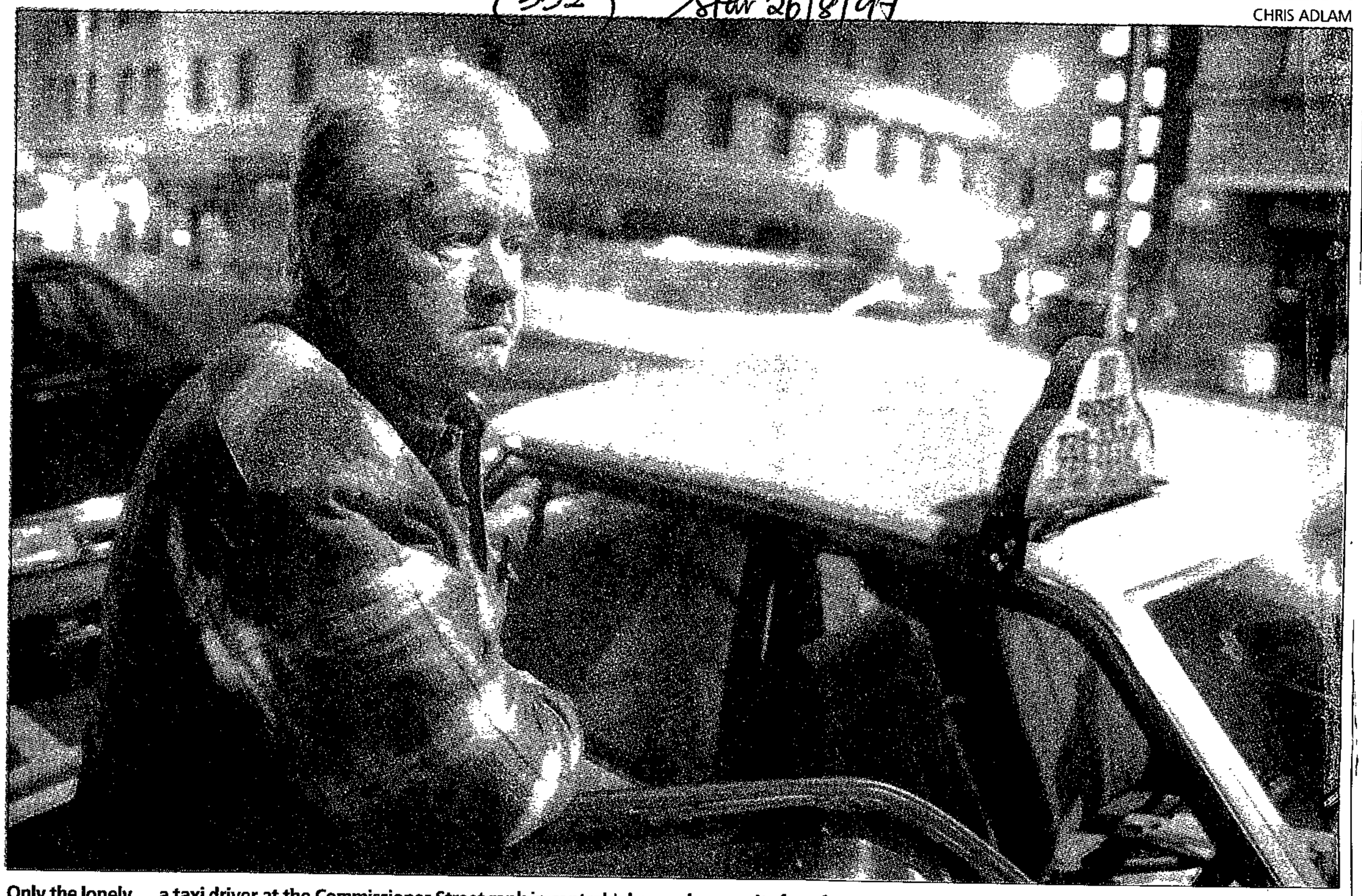
Metered taxi drivers in daily dice with death

Jo'burg cabbies are being hijacked, robbed and stabbed; now many carry guns and refuse to enter certain areas

(332) Star 26/8/97

By Matthew Burbidge

CHRIS ADLAM



Only the lonely ... a taxi driver at the Commissioner Street rank in central Johannesburg waits for a fare.

Someone once said that people in the same occupation tend to look alike the world over: waiters look the same in New York or Johannesburg, as do cab drivers.

But Johannesburg cab drivers, although perhaps quieter than their American counterparts, can be forgiven for their sullen, seen-it-all-before expressions and bad attitudes.

Many of the city's cab drivers – there are about 1 000 of them – have been shot at and stabbed, and still have to put up with grumpy passengers and corrupt officials.

In the past month, three cab drivers have been killed.

The latest victims were found in Berea and Yeoville. Five hijackings of taxi drivers were reported from May to mid-July this year.

Taxi drivers are now even more wary of taking fares to the city centre and Soweto.

They say their attackers are after their cars, cellphones or their money, or all three.

Speak to almost any taxi driver, and he'll have horror stories to relate.

"You drive past and they ignore you, because they're picking a target. They see a car they like, flag it down and then sssshhhik," says Tony (he, like others we approached, did not want his surname used). As he speaks, his hand makes a stab-

bing movement.

Wally Holiday, a director at a Johannesburg cab company and who still picks up fares, said three of his drivers have been killed in the past month.

"It's a hell of a risk – you don't know who you're picking up until it's too late."

Holiday said the drivers can work in whatever area they please, and are not forced to drive into unsafe areas.

As I approach a taxi, the driver snaps open the central locking. His massive girth rests on the wheel.

Wizz, as we'll call him, says he used to be known as the "Soweto King".

"I used to drive a Mercedes, a 280, and I would take customers wherever they wanted to go – White City, Pimville, Diepkloof, you name it."

Wizz won't take customers anywhere near these areas nowadays, preferring to sit in the suburbs, where it's safer, and where passengers don't throw up in his cab.

He was hijacked in 1995, and lost a new car, so now he carries a 9mm handgun.

You get the feeling that if someone pulled a gun on Wizz, they'd land up dead.

"You take a risk every time someone gets in that door," he says.

Other drivers trust in fate.

Emmanuelle, a staunch Lutheran, has a faded transfer in his back window – "The Lord is My Shepherd" – which he prefers to carrying a firearm.

"Every time I get home, my wife says 'You're back?', like she's surprised I wasn't killed."

Emmanuelle, like many other cab drivers outside the Carlton Hotel, will take any fare because he needs the money.

Here the drivers are hungry for fares. Most wait for hours – even an entire day – without work. Drivers at other ranks say, with a snarl, that there are many pirates who work at this rank. This may be so – but someone has to put food on the table.

Drivers outside the Carlton say there are fewer cash fares in the city than in previous years, and attribute it to people's fear of a darkened city.

Travis has been driving a taxi for about 10 years, and always keeps a few spare R10 notes in his wallet.

"These traffic police – they know me, and they know I'm from Rose, but they still try their luck.

"This guy pulls me over the other night – he said I ran a light, but it was a pretty close call.

"They ask for your ID book and then say there are a few pages missing."

The unlucky driver then has to insert a few green "pages" into his document and the officer waves him on his way – to another fare and another dice with death.

Hijackers simply pose as passengers

Johannesburg metered taxi companies have reported an increase in hijackings, robbery and murder, with 25 drivers hijacked at gunpoint and four killed in the past year.

In one company alone, Rose Taxis, three drivers were killed in the past year and seven hijacked – the latest last week.

A Rose Taxis spokesman said many drivers were robbed of their cars, cellphones and cash when they picked up hijackers posing as passengers.

The director, who declined to be named, said it was increasingly difficult to protect drivers, and that many of them were arming themselves.

King Taxis director David Debeshe said nine of his drivers had been robbed of their cars. One driver had been shot.

Seven drivers from Metro Taxis have been hijacked over the past year and a driver from Sandton was shot dead.

Director Oupa Sikhosana said hijacking had become a "common thing".

Police spokesman Captain Francois Grobbelaar said he did not recommend that taxi drivers carry guns, unless they were well trained. "Do ensure you can identify the hijacker later," he added. – Staff Reporter

Star 26/8/97 (332)

Striking taxi drivers force commuters out at gunpoint

(332) Star 26/8/97

By Tefo Mothibeli

Thousands of commuters across Gauteng townships were left stranded when taxi drivers refused to operate yesterday.

Some scenes in Sharpeville in the Vaal Triangle turned ugly when striking drivers stopped operating taxis and ordered commuters out at gunpoint.

The drivers are demanding pensions and other benefits from taxi owners and the recognition of their union.

Sapa reports that in the Mabopane/GaRankuwa area, near Pretoria, drivers refused to operate in protest against new legislation which requires them to display permit stickers.

Public order policing spokesman Superintendent Steve van Heerden said about 90% of taxis belonging to the SA Local and Long Distance Taxi Association were not running.

Two men were shot when violence flared in Soshanguve after a two-month ban on using the Rietgat taxi rank in the area was lifted yesterday.

Pretoria taxi violence unit spokesman Captain Mercia Fryer said a taxi driver was beaten by members of the Local and Long Distance Taxi Association when he stopped to pick up passengers. The driver, who shot one of the attackers four times, was arrested.

Earlier in the day, several men attacked another taxi driver. He shot one of his attackers in the foot.

Chaos before taxi rank is opened

Sowetan 26/8/97

(332)

Hundreds delayed for work as passengers are forced out of taxis

By Josias Charle

THERE was chaos yesterday in the areas north of Pretoria when hundreds of taxi passengers were forced off minibuses as a Soshanguve rank closed because of violence was due to be reopened.

Taxi drivers and owners belonging to the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta) in Mabopane, Soshanguve and GaRankuwa refused to operate and forced passengers from taxis that were running.

Hundreds of people were delayed for work during the morning peak hour and normality was restored at about noon.

Police reported one incident of shooting which took place in Block PP at about 1.30pm. A group of five armed men ambushed a taxi, but its driver returned fire, warding off the attackers.

The action to stop services yesterday appeared to have been prompted by government legislation which requires taxis operating in those areas to display special permit stickers on their vehicles.

Public order policing spokesman at Odi, Superintendent Steve van Heerden, said about 90 percent of taxis belonging to Saldta were not operating.

He said Saldta members were allegedly intimidating commuters into not using taxis belonging to other organisations. "Reports have been received of taxis being pulled off the roads and their stickers removed.

Following a recent outbreak of taxi violence in the area, the governments of Gauteng and North West passed legislation compelling drivers to display permit stickers on their vehicle windows.

Taxi owners not adhering to the regulations would be given 14 days to pay an administration fee of R500 or face legal action.

Gauteng transport MEC Mr Paul Mashatile's spokeswoman, Ms Kate Bapela, said the deadline for the issuing of permit stickers expired last week.

More than 8 000 taxis had been registered to date.

Taxi industry 'observes call'

(333) Sowetan 26/8/97

By Rafiq Rohan
Political Correspondent

ALMOST the entire taxi industry has heeded the call initiated by the Ministry of Transport to be regulated and legalised, the Minister of Transport Mr Mac Maharaj told Parliament.

He said that during the first three months of this year he held meetings with MECs, provincial officials and taxi industry leaders in the provinces to discuss registration and legalisation.

These meetings have yielded positive results so far, Maharaj said.

"To date 1 255 taxi associations nationwide have applied for registration. This represents close to 100 per cent of all existing taxi associations."

He revealed that:

- All provinces appointed registrars; and
- Taxi offices were established and staffed, had computer software for the registration installed and provinces accepted applications for registration and legalisation.

He said that the registrars were currently checking applications to ensure they complied with conditions laid down for registration but that the practical effects of registration were bearing fruit.

"Taxi route markers are now being used to regulate operations on all metropolitan routes and this has already had a dramatic effect in eliminating the violence that previously arose from unregulated competition on over-traded routes," Maharaj said.

Other initiatives from Government had also led to a decline in taxi violence, he said.

These included a meeting that President Nelson Mandela held with taxi representatives to urge them to contribute to a non-violent climate.

Minister of Safety and Security M Sydney Mufamadi also set up an investigation team to combat "the remaining pockets of organised, systematic violence by criminal elements" that opposed regulation of the industry.

"This initiative has become an integral element of a broader cooperative effort by the Ministers of Safety and Security, Justice and myself to ensure that, in addition to the usual measures undertaken by the security and justice system, special efforts are made to eradicate violence in the taxi industry."

(332)

TAXI REGULATION

FM 29/8/97

Can Mac really outlaw a war?

State wants to gentrify taxi business. But could it spark new conflicts?

Government is pressing ahead with Transport Minister Mac Maharaj's plan to regulate the taxi industry in the hope that this will end the wars between rival taxi operators. But the regulatory National Land Transport Bill, expected to come before parliament this year, has provoked fierce criticism from taxi operators and others who claim it will create new conflict.

The Bill sets out to:

- ❑ Register all taxi associations with provincial registrars;
- ❑ Create transport authorities to draw up passenger traffic profiles;
- ❑ Audit routes to ensure a healthy balance between demand and supply of taxi services;
- ❑ Grant permits to taxi operators who meet certain criteria, including those who are now "illegal;" and
- ❑ Restructure the existing permit system by withdrawing permits not linked to specific vehicles and convert radius permits into route-specific permits.

"It's a step in the right direction," says a transport consultant. But he says the new registration requirements could provoke more violence by creating a new level of competition between operators vying for rank ownership. His warning echoes that of the SA Long Distance Taxi Association.

Consultant Bill Cameron supports the legislation but is sceptical about the authorities' ability to enforce it.

The chairman of government's National Taxi Task Team, Dipak Patel, attributes the taxi violence to the informal business environment, the lack of basic transport infrastructure and oversupply of services, aggravated by the growth of Mafia-type organisations within the industry.

Patel believes that by formalising the industry through registration and by assisting operators to remain economically viable, violence will diminish.

Meanwhile, the departments of Safety & Security, Justice and Transport have set up a Presidential Taxi Violence Investigation Unit to improve policing of the sector. And the National Taxi Drivers Organisation and SA Taxi Drivers Union is demanding that government enforce better working conditions.

David Sedumedi



OBED ZILWA

Flashback: a traffic officer talks to minibus taxi drivers at the Nyanga taxi rank

Ramatlakane declares war on death-trap taxis

'We will have to take back the roads'

ARG 1/9/97 (332)

JOSEPH ARANES
STAFF REPORTER

Traffic law enforcement officers must use all their powers, including scrapping unroadworthy vehicles, to ensure that "death-trap" taxis are permanently removed from the roads, provincial Transport Minister Leonard Ramatlakane said.

Recently, with the reintroduction of traffic policing in Cape Town's townships, it emerged that several vehicles had so many defects and were so dangerous to drive that even hardened traffic officials refused to drive them.

In one case a taxi operator was driving a taxi which, instead of a petrol tank, had a five-litre plastic can next to the driver's seat with a pipe leading to the engine. Other vehicles were found to have no brakes, others were held together with rope and some had to be hot-wired to start.

Mr Ramatlakane said that the lack of traffic law enforcement, especially in black townships, changed the mindset of motorists and resulted in them driving with no regard for the rule of the road, in vehicles unfit to be on the roads.

"We cannot allow a situation to continue where the loss of life and dangerous situations remain the norm. We will have to take back the roads and ensure that traffic regulations are adhered to."

The minister said more traffic officials were being deployed. They would have to use all the powers at their disposal to enforce the law so the roads could become safe again.

"I am also appealing to owners of unroadworthy vehicles to refrain from driving these vehicles and putting their own lives and those of their passengers at risk. But the traffic cops must act harshly against those who fail to comply and scrap vehicles which are clearly not fit to be on the roads," he said.

Mr Ramatlakane said that as the law stood, officials had the authority to take away a vehicle's licence disc, legally scrap it and give the owners time to repair it before testing the vehicle again. If it passed the roadworthy test, the licence disc and public transport permit would be reissued.

"It is a known fact that some of the drivers simply ignore these regulations and continue driving even though their licence has been revoked. These cases must be followed up by the officials."

He said an increase in policing would also help change the mindset of roadusers and make motorists more responsible.

Spot-checks were being done at ranks and legislation introduced making it compulsory for vehicles to pass a roadworthy test every five years.

Taxis heading in the right direction with new law

But tensions over routes flare between the Peninsula's rival associations

ARG 13/9/97 (332)

JULIAN JACOBS

Tensions are growing between Peninsula minibus taxi operators ahead of next month's deadline for all to stick to approved routes.

The route system was established to end taxi wars over routes between rival township taxi associations.

But now Cape Flats taxi operators are being told by their associations to abstain from any form of violence as township taxi operators allegedly infringe on their turf.

A spokesman for the Peninsula Taxi Association, which represents Cape Flats operators, said there were still daily incidents of taxi violence between operators in the Peninsula which could reach boiling point.

He said his association was working around the clock to stop a major taxi war from breaking out against township taxi operators, especially on the Klipfontein Road route to Mowbray and Main Road to Cape Town.

But police superintendent Mark Splinters from the Priority Crime Unit said taxi violence had declined considerably over the last few months.

He welcomed the October 31 deadline for all illegal taxi operators to register themselves and be allocated routes which were legally enforceable.

He confirmed there were problems among taxi operators as individual taxi operators were seen forcing their way into areas traditionally not theirs.

The Peninsula Taxi Association spokesman said that taxis from the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata), driving between Bellville and Mowbray, were picking up passengers all along Klipfontein Road, which they were not supposed to do as this was the route of taxis coming from Manenberg, Heideveld and Bonteheuwel. These taxis were now operating at a loss.

In June, 12 taxi operators in the northern areas joined forces in the Reformed United Taxi Association (Ruta) to combat the alleged strong-arm tactics used by Cata which operates more than 3 500 taxis.

Cata is allegedly trying to get a share of the lucrative Bellville-Kraaifontein routes as well as other routes in the Northern suburbs.

Police said the situation was becoming even more dangerous than the days of the taxi war between the Cata and the Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta), since the new conflict had racial overtones.

The Peninsula Taxi Association has appealed to its members to wait for the October 31 taxi registration deadline which should solve the problem by enforcing routes.

The potentially dangerous situation has also been closely monitored by the Taxi Task Team set up by the Western Cape provincial police ministry and the non-government group, the Unrest Monitoring Awareness Centre (Umac).

More than 100 people have died in Peninsula taxi violence since 1989.

A provincial transport ministry spokesman said the provincial taxi office in Roeland Street was on schedule regarding registering routes for taxis, although there was still a lot of in-fighting between rival groups over routes.

In an attempt to avoid the taxi war from escalating between taxi rivals Codeta and Cata earlier this year, a temporary route permit was given to all taxi operators. This will become law on October 31.

Taxis have been given stickers with their routes printed on them to



Sowetan 23/9/97

Action pending against taxi firm

332

By Josias Charle

AN Atteridgeville, Pretoria, father intends taking legal action against a Pretoria metered taxi company after the death of his son.

Mr Jerry Sithole of Madisha Street, Saulsville, said his son Gabriel (19) disappeared on the night of September 14.

He was last seen being loaded into a taxi by a group of angry drivers. According to Sithole, Gabriel was accused of holding up one of the taxi drivers and robbing him of cash.

Witnesses to the incident claimed that he (Gabriel) was an innocent victim of mistaken identity. He said Gabriel was kicked and battered with hammers and sjamboks by his assailants.

After the assault one of the assailants, assigned to dump the body in the veld, apparently decided to drive to a hospital where he claimed that he had found Gabriel on the side of a road. Police investigations led to the arrest of a taxi driver last week. A police spokesman said further investigations were continuing.

Sithole said if his son had been involved in a hold-up he should have been handed over to the police instead of people taking the law into their own hands.

Sithole said he identified his son's body at the Pretoria Academic Hospital mortuary last week.

"I would like to follow up this matter very seriously and will take legal action to sort the whole thing out," he said.

Cops still own taxis – inquiry

Sowetan
25/9/97
332

By Simon Zwane
Political Reporter

POLICE ownership of taxis is one of the key factors perpetuating violence in the transport industry, a commission of inquiry has established.

The inquiry – conducted by Advocate Jerome Mthembu and Mr M Webber on behalf of the Free State department of public works, roads and transport – has found that policemen, some in senior positions, continue to own taxis despite directives from the provincial commissioner of police to discourage this.

In a report released this week, the commission said it was not satisfied that the commissioner had taken adequate steps to ensure full compliance with his directives.

Provincial police spokeswoman Captain Mientjie Bruwer said they had noted the contents of the report and steps would be taken against members found to be involved in the taxi business.

"The existence of these interests gives rise to bias and conflict of interest," the report said.

"Police efforts to eradicate this practice have been inadequate or are being thwarted by threats to those wishing to flush out this practice."

The commission also found that there was a "clear gap" in the law enforcement process.

Neither the South African Police Service nor the traffic department were trained adequately, if at all, regarding the provisions of the Road Transportation Act and particularly transportation permits.

As a result there was no adequate monitoring and implementation of transportation permits.

The report said police had failed to investigate and follow-up complaints laid with them.

"Certain dockets have been closed before completion of investigations while others have not been investigated at all."

It also found liaison between the police, provincial traffic management and local authority traffic departments to be "virtually non-existent".

Drivers lift the lid or

Most are forced to work rounc



HANNES THIART

Out on a limb: fired taxi drivers, clockwise from front, Mogamat Willoughby, Faried Fagodien, Abbas Kamalie, Hassiem Harris and Ismail Khan. In the taxi are Trevor de Vries, left, and Benjamin Abrahams

'cut-throat' taxi industry

the clock – for a mere R250 a week

ARG 30/9/97 30 (332)

JERMAINE CRAIG
STAFF REPORTER

Taxi drivers, considered the most unruly of road users, speeding down freeways, overloading their vehicles and weaving through the traffic, have lifted the lid on what they say is a cut-throat industry in which drivers suffer to make money for taxi owners.

In a frank interview, a group of Manenberg taxi drivers painted a picture of taxi owners who make millions without lifting a finger while drivers work extremely long hours and earn next to nothing. The men work for the Lakay family, who own a fleet of 16 minibus taxis operating from Manenberg.

In the taxi industry, drivers work for the owners – and have to pay them a non-negotiable "target" each week.

While owners maintain the taxis, drivers are responsible for the day to day operations and have to put in petrol, pay assistants who work with them and pay traffic fines they get for speeding and overloading.

The Manenberg drivers have lost their jobs after a dispute with their boss, Christopher Lakay, whose target is R1 000 a week per taxi. Drivers say they spend about R800 a week on petrol for trips from Manenberg to Cape Town and pay their assistants between R50 and R80 a day, in addition to fines accumulated.

After paying all their expenses the drivers, all of whom have families to support and depend solely on the taxi industry for their income, say they come away with about R250 a week.

After collecting the targets for all his taxis, their boss earns R16 000 a week. This amounts to an annual salary of R768 000 if all his taxis are on the road.

Recently, the drivers tried to form a union and elected a delegation to meet the taxi bosses. At the meeting, the drivers say, Mr Lakay used abusive language. When they asked him to apologise he refused and said he would up their targets to R1 120 a week from the next day. When they protested, they were told to hand in their keys and were fired.

Mr Lakay's wife Valerie, who is the assistant treasurer of the Manenberg Transport Forum, said the drivers had not told anyone of their plans to form a union. She said that on the day of their meeting they had forced drivers off the road and unloaded passengers on to the streets.

She admitted her husband had used abusive language but said this was because the drivers were "rude and abrupt" to passengers. She disputed drivers' claims that they do not make enough money: "Most of them earn more than I do. I have to pay for the maintenance and damage to the vehicles. I am one of the most lenient owners and we have been buckling under the maintenance costs."

She said she was saddened the drivers had lost their jobs as they had worked for the Lakay family for many years. "For me it was as if it was family I was losing. We had a good relationship and even though they say my husband scolded them they had a good relationship with him too."

But the drivers counter they were forced to make as many trips during the peak morning and evening period as possible to make their target. They said this explained them speeding to destinations and cramming in as many passengers as possible. There was also the added problem of unlicensed pirate taxis on the road who took a large slice of the cake from legal permit holders.

The drivers' spokesman, Mogamat Willoughby, appealed to the Government to regulate the industry and prevent pirate taxis flooding the roads to the detriment of legal permit holders.

The drivers said that in Manenberg alone, there were 26 legal vehicles and about 60 pirate taxis.

Drivers determine the fares but because they work in poor communities they said they were wary of increasing fares as this would mean their customers would also suffer.

There was always a danger of being robbed on the road and in the taxi industry there was no question of employee benefits or paid leave.

"We are forced to work around the clock to earn a living. We are all family men working to support our wives and children but in this industry there is no time for your family and when you are sick you are forced to work," Mr Willoughby said.



ROY WIGLEY

Jobless: taxi driver Trevor de Vries with his wife Claire and his sons, from left, Darryl, 18, Tyrone, 8, and Clinton,15

Trevor's road is an uphill battle

JERMAINE CRAIG
STAFF REPORTER

Every morning Trevor de Vries used to get out of bed at five to start his 12-hour day as a taxi driver to support his wife Claire and their three school-going sons.

That may well have been a hard life, but Mr De Vries now faces worse days ahead; he lost his job after a dispute with his boss and now has no means to support his family.

He is 39 and the sole breadwinner in his Manenberg family which lives in a dilapidated council flat.

His wife is unemployed, his sons Darryl, 18, and Clinton, 15, are both at a Heideveld high school and Tyrone, 9, is at primary school.

Mr De Vries worked seven days a week, coming home each night at 7pm, leaving almost no time to spend with his family.

He worked for a man who owns a fleet of taxis and without lifting a finger earns up to R16 000 a week. But Mr De Vries, at the end of all his long hours of toil, took home only about R250 a week.

He worked in a multi-million-rand industry yet earned a pittance, which he said was not nearly enough to support his wife and children.

From his meagre salary he had to pay for school fees and uniforms, clothes, accounts and had to put food on the table.

"I cannot cope on the money I earn each week. Sometimes I do not have enough money to put a loaf of bread on the table and it is not nice to ask someone else for money for bread.

"School fees are expensive and many times we suffer. I am behind with all my accounts.

"I have to pay the phone bill, the rent, the lights, I cannot cope," Mr De Vries said.

ARG 30/9/97 (332)

Stan 16/47



Nailed ... one of the men suspected of having carried out the attack at the busy taxi rank in Bree Street yesterday after he was shot and wounded in the shootout. Four more people were injured in the firefight.

Wild West shootout in Jo'burg streets

Star 1/10/97 (332)

Lightning police response ends latest round in taxi wars

I saw yesterday just how determined police are to smash crime when I witnessed an awesome display that convinced me they have the courage, will and ability to deal with the most dangerous criminals on our streets.

In a co-ordinated display of force that probably saved lives, seven different police units from around Johannesburg swooped on a shooting at the Bree Street taxi rank. Their prompt reaction prevented certain carnage and restored peace within 20 minutes.

It happened as photographer Thys Dullaart and I were sitting in a patrol van used by the Johannesburg undercover robbery reaction unit while working on an unrelated story.

A voice on the radio said: "All cars near Bree Street respond immediately, they're shooting at policemen."

We were just five city blocks away. Sergeant Sipho Msweli, the officer behind the wheel, pulled out immediately and switched on the sirens. Within seconds we were on the scene of a "hit squad" shooting. Even so, we were not the first to arrive: other policemen had already blocked exits with their cars.

The scene was chaotic. Gunfire echoing through the high-rise buildings had sent hundreds of lunchtime commuters, workers, hawkers and pedestrians scattering for cover.

A young policewoman, her blonde ponytail flying, cocked her service pistol above her head and ran towards the action. A policeman shouted to her: "Hurry. The guys shot at us!"

The shooting – police counted 56 spent cartridges afterwards – had only just ended. But already members of the public order policing unit and the SA National Defence Force had cordoned off the area and blocked escape routes.

The wailing sirens were deafening as the flying squad, traffic officials and the high-density-operations special task team – formed in April to crack down on crime in the city – started arriving.

Msweli cocked his 9mm handgun as he leapt from our vehicle, followed by Dullaart and myself. At the intersection of West and Pim streets a wounded man was lying, surrounded by policemen.

Paramedics arrived and started to treat the five injured people. The shooting was connected to taxi wars, officers said, and that the "hit squad" had arrived in three BMWs and a white Opel Kadett.

Johannesburg police spokesman Captain Francois Grobbelaar said there had been four arrests and two pistols had been recovered.

The Gauteng transport department last night said it had information that yesterday's attack could be one of at least 10 planned this week.

■ The crackdown has resulted in a decline in street crime in the past few weeks. According to spokesman Inspector Mark Reynolds, at no time are there fewer than 300 policemen in the city.

Beefed-up mobile response units have enabled police to cut vital seconds off their response times, as reflected by increasing numbers of criminals being caught redhanded.





Words by Gill Gifford

Picture by Thys Dullaart

> A young policewoman, her long blonde ponytail flying, cocked her service pistol above her head and ran towards the action. Another officer shouted to her: "Hurry. The guys shot at us!"

Star 2/10/97

Taxi drivers deliberately flout security crackdown

(332)

By Themba Sepotokele and Mike Masipa

Members of Soweto's Top Six Taxi Association yesterday defiantly offloaded township commuters from rival vehicles in full view of security forces, despite the crackdown promised by authorities in the wake of renewed taxi violence.

The Star yesterday witnessed the activities of the Top Six Taxi Association members on the Soweto highway between Noordgesig and Orlando East for close on two hours as public-order police watched helplessly.

The offloading of commuters appeared to have been in retaliation for an attack on the Bree Street taxi rank in central Johannesburg on Tuesday, in which five people were injured. The rank is used mainly by Top Six operators.

Jabu Dlamini of the Meadowlands Taxi Association, a rival of Top Six, said the violence at the Bree Street rank began when MTA leaders went to the rank to investigate claims by their drivers that they had been chased away from the facility. He said they were shot at as they arrived at the rank.

At yesterday's blockade, Top Six operators stopped taxis belonging to the MTA and those suspected of operating illegally, emptied them and forced them to return to the township. Commuters were, however, not left stranded because alternative transport was used to ferry them to their destinations.

The blockade occurred in spite of assurances given by Gauteng Safety and Security MEC Jessie Duarte and police commissioner Sharma Maharaj that additional security members would be deployed to deal with the resurgent violence. There were no signs of the promised security when The Star toured the taxi route late yesterday.

Duarte's spokesman Mbulelo Musi said yesterday that police were making every effort to end the violence. He said they had facilitated yet another peace meeting between the warring associations today to solve the problem.

GOLDEN ARROW RETIREMENT PLAN

Row over pension surplus

Pensioners angry because they weren't consulted

Financially strapped Golden Arrow Bus Services, which operates Cape Town's famous orange buses, is to get an R85m handout from its members' pension fund — though employers have been on a contribution holiday since its owners took over in 1992.

The payout has infuriated a handful of pensioners, including a former chief executive of the company's previous owner, Tollgate Holdings.

Employers have no statutory right to dip into company pension funds, though this will change under new Pension Funds Act legislation proposed by the Financial Services Board (FSB) which could become law later this year.

However, the FSB has given the green light to the massive payout — and formal approval by the Registrar of Pension Funds appears to be imminent. This follows a 1994 precedent, when the Lintas advertising company successfully appealed to the FSB to allow it to change its rules and release monies from its R5m pension fund to the company.

The FSB's chief actuary, Peter Milburn-Pyle, is reluctant to discuss the present application. "The Golden Arrow pension fund as a whole is in a delicate state at the moment," he says.

Milburn-Pyle is behind the new legislation, which will make the estimated R6bn surpluses in company pension funds available to employers.

Pressure groups are fiercely contesting such payouts. Campaigner Basil Kransdorff says he is "fighting the actuarial process of leaking workers' retirement funds to finance their employers' agendas."

Golden Arrow Bus Services was formed in 1861 under the name Cape Town & Green Point Tramways and is one of SA's oldest companies. As City Tramways it was part of Tollgate Holdings, but changed its name to Golden Arrow Bus Services after a management buyout in 1992, just months before Tollgate went into liquidation.

The buyout team included Golden Arrow's present chairman, Nic Cronjé, and MD Barry Gie.

By last year the company had a debt burden of R79m and accumulated losses of R39m. It also had a pension fund with assets and investments totalling R407m. And it is from this kitty that the R85,6m lifeline will be paid.

The assets of the Golden Arrow Retirement Plan are disclosed in a preliminary statement of funds drawn up in March by liquidator Leon Lewis, of actuaries Alexander Forbes.

Golden Arrow's Gie is chairman of the fund trustees. The company says he is overseas and unavailable for comment.

After liquidation expenses of R1,7m, Lewis states that R194m will be spent buying with-profits annuities for pensioners and R122,7m will go to a new retirement fund for "active" members.

Each pensioner would receive a 25% enhancement of their actuarial reserves and a bonus equal to one month's pension.

And R80m would be "repatriated to the employer," plus 40% of residual assets, bringing Golden Arrow's payout to R85,6m.

The term "repatriated" annoys pensioner Roy Fisher, who points out that Golden Arrow Bus Services has been on a contribution holiday since the present owners took over in 1992.

Fisher, a former bus inspector with Golden Arrow, is 62. He retired in 1986 after a heart attack. Like the other 1 190 pensioners, he received news of the proposal to liquidate the fund and revert "a minimum of R85m" to the company in a letter dated August 22 1996.

Fisher refused to sign his acceptance of the proposal, though the arrangement has nearly doubled his monthly pension, from R752 to R1 145. And he received a bonus of R1 145. "I feel the company is not entitled to any money," he says. He claims his requests to Golden Arrow for the names and addresses of fellow pensioners to call a meeting to discuss the proposal was refused.

»I'm fighting the actuarial process of leaking workers' retirement funds to finance their employers' agendas«

Though 95,7% of pensioners and 98,1% of the 1 785 active members accepted the distribution proposal, Fisher's view is shared by fellow pensioner, former Tollgate Holdings CE Johan Barnard.

"Why should the company get anything — let alone R86m?" asks Barnard.

Barnard, who is a senior advocate, says: "The crux of the matter is they didn't consult the pensioners."

On November 4 1996, three months after the proposal went to members, a new "overriding" rule, number 26, was added to the fund's rules. This allowed the balance of the fund's assets to be paid to Golden Arrow Bus Services.

The actuarial valuer of the Golden Arrow Retirement Plan, Simon Peile of Alexander Forbes, says the R400m pension fund "was not a consideration when the company was bought in 1992." It did, however, become an issue after Lintas broke the ground.

Peile agrees Golden Arrow has been on a lengthy contribution holiday.

He describes Golden Arrow Bus Services (Pty) as a "progressive company." Half its shares are owned by a community foundation — the Golden Arrow Foundation. The balance, says Peile, are held by the directors and workers.

In April 1996 the in-house newssheet *Gazette* said the R85m "reversion" would enable the company to reduce its debt and reinvest — R30m had been lost in 1993-1994 because violence prevented operations in Khayelitsha.

The aged bus fleet needed upgrading. "One new single-decker bus costs R500 000," said Gazette. "Thus the injection of enough capital into the company to allow it to build in the necessary safeguards for its survival will benefit everyone."

In the newssheet, chairman Cronjé described the pension fund distribution as "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for all members to have their benefits enhanced by a sizeable amount."

Golden Arrow still has to receive the R85m. But Melburn-Pyle says he sees no reason why the Registrar of Pension Funds should not approve the distribution. The fact that the company has been on a contribution holiday is a "red herring," he says.

"We have an obligation to all interested parties in a pension fund — and that includes the employer," he says.

Jack Lundin

Taxi groups involved in shooting fail to attend meeting

Star 3/10/97 (332)

A meeting between two Johannesburg taxi organisations who were involved in a shootout on Tuesday in which five people were injured, failed to materialise yesterday because both parties refused to attend.

Gauteng transport department spokesman Sibusiso Buthelezi said the Top Six and the Meadowlands-Dube-North taxi associations refused to attend the meeting, which went ahead between police and Johannesburg metropolitan councillors.

Buthelezi said Top Six members said they would not attend the meeting, while members of the Meadowlands-Dube-North association demanded a police escort. – Sapa

New taxi order makes headway

ARG 9/10/97 (382)

JERMAINE CRAIG
STAFF REPORTER

Teething problems in regulating the minibus taxi industry must be overcome by the Government and the industry, says Provincial Transport Minister Leonard Ramatlakane.

The Transport Department has undertaken to get taxi operators registered with taxi associations and to get owners to obtain permits.

The process is being spearheaded by a 19-member taxi representative council.

Addressing about 150 representatives of the industry yesterday, Mr Ramatlakane said 188 taxi associations had applied to be registered. These represented 4 592 operators and some 6 538 vehicles.

But an indication of the mammoth task still ahead was that there were an estimated 7 000 unlicensed taxis in the province.

Of the applicants, 81 associations had met the criteria laid down by the department for registration. So far 2 494 operators representing 3 628 vehicles had met the criteria and had been registered.

Mr Ramatlakane said there would be a moratorium on the issuing of licences while registration was under way, adding that 1 614 illegal operators had applied to be registered.

Operators who had applied for registration would not be prosecuted for driving without permits on condition they could prove they had applied.

Industry representatives complained that they sometimes were not told of meetings and not reimbursed when they had to travel long distances to attend them.

Mr Ramatlakane acknowledged that there would be problems, as this was an unprecedented venture, but he praised the industry for co-operating.

"This was never done before.

"It is the first time in the history of this country that government and the taxi industry are working together to find a lasting solution.

"We do not have a model, so we are learning as we move forward in the process of restructuring the industry."

The Government was committed to uplifting the industry and would spend R450 000 a year for the next two years on training operators and drivers. A further R400 000 a year would be spent on establishing co-operatives to make the industry easier to run.

He said part of the plan to bring order to the industry was a big traffic law clampdown, especially drinking and driving, speeding and wearing seatbelts.

Drivers found with more than the legal alcohol limit in their blood could be fined R120 000, jailed for up to six years and have their licences suspended for life.

He said this campaign was not aimed at the taxi industry but was a general war against the carnage on the roads.

responsibility" for illegal deeds ... the state ... command structures had been "de- ... would in many cases be impossible to ...

Operators plead for end to restriction on cheap taxis

(332) BD 10/10/97

Bonile Ngqiyaza

LONG distance taxi operators have expressed unhappiness over what they say are government moves to block the acquisition of cheaper minibuses from Lesotho by owners, a move they claim flies against trade agreements between Pretoria and Maseru.

Addressing a conference in Johannesburg, Southern Africa Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta) chairman Thulani Kubheka said the minibuses were reconditioned in Lesotho to being almost new, and cost up to 50% less than those built in SA.

He said: "We have tried on numerous occasions to meet the department of trade and industry to discuss this issue. However, to date they have not bothered to give us a hearing."

The four-day conference, which ends today, was also organised to celebrate the 10th Saldta anniversary.

Kubheka told delegates that the vehicles had become a lifesaver to many operators who previously could not afford replacements. "Our vehicles cannot last forever, and if we are unable to buy affordable vehicles ... our industry will suffer a slow and painful death."

He expressed suspicion that the attitude adopted by the department was a result of aggressive lobbying by SA motor manufacturers who feared the importation of the vehicles would harm the sales of vehicles in the country.

The position, he said, was unjustifiable, particularly in the face of the SA motor industry not providing for the needs of the taxi industry.

"The result has been that we are using a fleet of vehicles with an average age of more than 10 years, which are unsafe and expensive to keep on the roads," Kubheka said.

The industry came in for criticism from speakers who urged it to work towards the resolution of conflicts which threatened to cripple its potential.

Communications consultant Perfect Malemela said the industry had an image of being dominated by "butchers and highway robbers". Malemela said a stable economy and political tolerance were important for democracy. "If government does not listen to us ... we have a right to put our vote elsewhere."

Taxi industry 'needs to be competitive'

(332)

Sowetan 10/10/97

By Shadrack Mashalaba

THE survival of the multi-million rand taxi industry in South Africa will depend on its competitive capability as South Africa gears itself for the 21st century, said independent consultant Perfect Malemela.

He said the South African economy was approaching the next millennium with the possibility of a cheap currency and tougher economic conditions. "The next century will be an era of competitiveness which will require that the best survive," Malemela said.

He was addressing the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta) conference, which coincides with the 10th anniversary of the organisation in Johannesburg yesterday.

"The taxi industry is the backbone of the economy. It is well placed to exploit the multi-million rand tourism industry.

"If the industry does not create a twin brother with time management, efficiency, and productivity, it might as well bid its opportunities goodbye.

"It is incumbent upon the taxi industry to work with the captains of industry and the Government for without that it can kiss good opportunities goodbye."

"It is incumbent upon the taxi industry to work with captains of industry"

Conflict in the industry, he said, could only be resolved if entrepreneurial education is encouraged and economic empowerment benefits all".

Malemela appealed to the corporate sector to acknowledge the presence of the taxi industry in South Africa.

"This can be demonstrated through support and not handouts and joint ventures."

Saldta's conference, which is attended by more than 600 delegates, ends today.

The conference is expected to pass resolutions which will prepare the organisation for challenges to be faced in the future.

Organisation general secretary Boetie Letsoela said that he hoped by the end of the conference the voice of the taxi industry would be heard.

"Our aim is to strengthen the organisation into a meaningful business entity based on legitimate working structures," Letsoela said.

Condemned

During the same gathering, Letsoela condemned the absence of provincial chairman of the standing committee Kgabisi Mosunkutu.

The latter was expected to address the conference on behalf of MEC for transport Paul Mashatile.

The MEC could not attend because of other commitments.

Star 6/10/97

New attempt to end taxi violence spurned

332

By Mike Masipa

Soweto's biggest taxi organisation, the Top Six Taxi Association, yesterday rejected the latest plans by the Gauteng government to end the endemic violence plaguing the industry. It cast doubts on peace prospects in the wake of a conflict that has left about 120 people dead this year.

Transport MEC Paul Mashatile and his safety and security counterpart Jessie Duarte announced a plan at the weekend called "Operation Thelawayeka". The operation is aimed at ending the conflict between the Top Six, Meadowlands Dube Noord Taxi Association and the Witwatersrand African Taxi-owners Association.

Mashatile said the aim was to reduce the number of taxi associations operating in Soweto to two in the short term and only one in the long term "so as to halt the rivalry that has been fuelling the bloody taxi conflict over the years".

"Soweto is too small to have the number of taxi organisations operating in the area at present but big enough to accommodate all the taxis operating in the township," Mashatile said.

He said the government had been studying the nature of the problems in the taxi industry in Soweto over the past two years and Thelawayeka was the product of that process.

But Top Six – which has the affiliation of eight of the 10 taxi associations in Soweto – said yesterday Thelawayeka was a step backward, a return to the chaotic early days of the industry in Soweto.

Chairman Sipho Mntambo said Thelawayeka, which loosely translates into "do as you wish", suggested that the cause of the problem was lack of proper control.

"Initially, taxi operators decided there should be different associations which would be allocated certain routes in their areas," Mntambo said.

He said the idea behind that was to make management much easier.

"However, if the government wants to see people killing each other more, let them go ahead with Thelawayeka," Mntambo warned.

Taxi body to seek party for 1999 poll

(332)

Bonile Ngqiyaza

BD 13/10/97

THE SA Long Distance Transport Association (Saldta) would begin looking at political parties whose policies were in tune with its thinking with the possibility of giving its voter support in the 1999 general election, Saldta decided at the weekend.

The organisation's general secretary B Letsoela said after a Saldta conference last week the association was looking for a political party with a concrete policy to end the violence which was threatening the industry.

He said the "well intentioned move" would necessitate the amendment of the Saldta constitution which at present prohibits links or affiliations with political parties.

"This process is not going to happen overnight. A lot of parties whose manifestos and policies we would like to scrutinise, are bound to spring up in the run up to the election."

Letsoela said the shift was brought about by government's unfulfilled promises to give financial assistance to the taxi industry and a perceived lack of will to end the violence.

He said Saldta supported all initiatives aimed at obtaining cheaper minibuses from neighbouring Lesotho. "If a call from any quarter in the taxi industry was made to campaign for these vehicles, we would support it."

It was reported last week that long-distance operators had expressed unhappiness over what they said were government moves to block the acquisition of cheaper minibuses from Lesotho by owners — a move said to fly against trade agreements between Pretoria and Maseru.

At the conference, the association made clear its intention to oppose the Customs and Excise Bills being debated in Parliament — which it said would adversely affect the taxi industry.

While expressing a desire to start discussions with taxi drivers on labour related issues, the conference said the industry was in a poor state and as a result, would not be able to address adequately issues provided for under the recent Labour Relations Act.

Taxi indaba called off

Sowetan 22/10/97

By Muzi Mkhwanazi

332

THE long-awaited meeting to resolve taxi violence in Soweto was called off yesterday after Gauteng government officials from the provincial department of transport's taxi office failed to show up.

The meeting was to be held between the Soweto police, the Top Six Structure (TPS), which is composed of executive members from Soweto taxi associations affiliated to the SA Black Taxi Association (Sabta), and the government officials.

TPS chairman Mr Sipho Mtambo said his organisation wanted clarity from the Gauteng taxi office on why the police were protecting taxi associations which had invaded other associations, and who took control of taxi ranks through force.

Follow-up Meeting

He said yesterday's meeting was a follow up to a meeting held on Tuesday last week with the police area commissioner for Soweto, who had explained to them that it was the duty of the police to intervene during crisis situations, and not to take sides.

They were then referred to the Gauteng taxi office.

Mtambo said as a result of this explanation they scheduled a meeting with the Gauteng taxi office to devise means of averting bloodshed and finding solutions to removing those implicated taxi associations peacefully from the ranks of other associations.

He said, for instance, the dispute between the Meadowlands-Dube North Taxi Association and the Baragwanath-Meadowlands Taxi Association over the Baragwanath taxi rank had to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

Soweto police spokesman Superintendent Govindsamy Marimuthoo said the area commissioner had received a call informing her that members of the Gauteng taxi office could not attend the meeting because they were invited at short notice.

Taxi body signs deal to give members life cover

BD 24/10/97 (332)
23/10/97

Bonile Ngqiyaza

A TEN-year agreement which would give each National Taxi Drivers' Organisation member R6 000 life insurance in the event of death, was signed recently between the union and British company Third World Trading.

Announcing the agreement in Johannesburg yesterday, union spokesman Themba Mgabhi said his organisation had agreed to grant the company sole rights to providing its members with a range of products and services, including spare parts, oil and fuel, tyres and vehicles.

The company would also have the sole right to market food products including groceries and meat, livestock, coffins, vehicles of any description and consultancy services to the organisation and its members, Mgabhi said.

He said details of the life insurance scheme would be worked out later.

The agreement, which was signed late last week, was thrashed out over about two months, Mgabhi said. "We are trying to prove that (ours) is not just a union, but a home for all taxi drivers. We set out to look after the interests of drivers from the start."

The body — which claims to have 21 000 signed-up members in all nine provinces — said it was negotiating with financial institutions, government and big business, including SA Breweries and Standard Bank, for a similar scheme for passengers.

Mgabhi said Third World Trading would, within two months, start building a "taxi city" — which would include a complex with its businesses — at a site in Chloorkop, near Kempton Park.

He criticised SA companies' attitudes to the taxi industry, saying they wanted to dictate to the industry how to run itself before committing aid and assistance. This resulted in the union's involvement with a foreign company.

However, other players in the industry were critical of the deal, saying the terms of the agreement were too broad and had apparently not been considered properly by the union because on the face of it, they seemed to favour Third World Trading.

Mgabhi said the specific agreements relating to the conditions of the services to be rendered by Third World Trading had still to be worked out.

40 taxi drivers on strike

(332) ARG 4/11/97

NORMAN JOSEPH
STAFF REPORTER

Operations at Sea Point Radio Taxis came to a standstill today when 40 drivers went on strike for several hours, apparently after two colleagues were fired for encouraging drivers to join the South African Democratic Taxis Union.

The drivers demanded the reinstatement of Brian Weir and Eric Williams, who were allegedly told by radio controllers to bring in their cars.

Driver James Davids also alleged he had been assaulted by Ernest McDonald, also known as Elvis, who owns the company.

The drivers congregated in front of Mr McDonald's home in Mirforth Road, Sea Point, and demanded to see him.

Things turned ugly when Cape Argus photographer Obed Zilwa was attacked by Mr McDonald. His camera was broken in the scuffle.

Drivers' spokesman Stanley Smith told Mr McDonald in a heated meeting they demanded that their union be recognised, that he reinstate the two drivers and that avenues be created for them to air grievances.

Mr McDonald finally agreed to reinstate the two drivers.

NEWS

AVIATION *Airports Company at deadlock in dispute with public operators at Johannesburg International*

Transport row threatens tourist handling at airports

NCABA HLOPHE

Johannesburg — An attempt by Airports Company South Africa (Acsa) to regulate public transport at the Johannesburg International Airport has developed into a row that could tarnish the country's image as a tourist destination.

The dispute centres on different approaches to an acceptable regulatory structure proposed by Acsa and the public operators, some of whom have been accused of "harassing and intimidating passengers" through direct marketing at the airport.

Negotiations have broken down, and Acsa last week declared a deadlock, despite the presence of an external mediator from the Independent Mediation Services of South Africa.

"We are under pressure from the tourism industry to regulate the transport network at the airport after complaints that passengers had been harassed through the touting system whereby operators use the terminal floor to vie for passengers," said Rory Mackey, Acsa's general manager at the airport, last week.

While most of the transport groups operate within a structured pattern of hours, kiosks and queues, some are unscheduled and have to "tout" passengers to use their vehicles, Acsa said.

Unscheduled operators have permits, but they have been accused of harassing passengers and resisting attempts to regulate operations.

Mackey said Acsa had exhausted all avenues for a negotiated settlement and would enter into a tender process to select the operator that meets their expectations.

Aubrey Stander, the secretary-general of Airports Transfer Company Owners, which represents most of the unscheduled operators, said the deadlock was invalid because it was motivated by Acsa at a meeting from which the external mediator was absent.



AT LOGGERHEADS *Aubrey Stander, the secretary-general of Airports Transfer Company Owners, is prepared to take the dispute to court.* PHOTO: JOHN WOODROOF

ET (BR) 11/11/97

Stander said Acsa would not listen to their submissions, especially with regard to the regulation of permits and direct marketing.

"We are prepared to wear identification uniforms to distinguish ourselves from the pirate operators ... We have committed ourselves to enforcing a code of conduct among our members. We have made proposals to structure the queuing system, define points of sale and have a kiosk (and) an agent that would represent our interests," he said.

"We are prepared to go to court to defend our livelihood if need be."

Michael Farr, the executive director of Satour, expressed the need for a negotiated settlement to avoid anything that would make visiting South Africa less pleasant.

"This would have negative consequences for tourism. Satour wants to see foreign visitor arrivals increase from the 16,6 percent recorded at the three international airports from January to August this year."

Let's help the minibus taxi industry to stand on its feet

ARG 13/11/97 (330)

HAVE YOUR SAY



Earlier this month provincial Transport MEC Leonard Ramatlakane failed to meet an undertaking to write an article for the Cape Argus on problems in the taxi industry within the agreed deadline. Several days after the deadline and after he had been publicly criticised, he sent us his contribution. This is an edited version of his article.

I wish to thank Cape Argus for sponsoring the debate on public transport. I apologise for not being able to share earlier with you an update on how we are progressing to restructure this industry. It happened that on the same day when the finalisation of this input was due, I was addressing the very same issue for the benefit of the SABC radio listeners of which you are part.

The minibus taxi industry grew out of the need by commuters to reach their places of employment in the shortest time and at costs competitive with those of the state-owned or subsidised transport companies.

Increasing urbanisation and the opening up of employment opportunities resulted in an increased demand for public transport. The deregulated taxi industry expanded to meet this growing demand.

The adoption of the White Paper on Provincial Transport Policy was a milestone in the process of transforming the transport industry to be the leader both in terms of economic and operational efficiency.

The realisation of an inter-modal transportation system requires that we level the playing fields in the public transport market. The minibus taxi industry restructuring process constitutes this commitment.

Modalink, which is a section 21 company, was set up to prioritise this matter and a working committee on fare structure (integration) was established. Early indications suggest that a feeder system is realisable in the near future.

The formalisation of the minibus taxi industry is a process which is vital to the realisation of our "public transport first" vision.

The setting up of the Provincial Taxi Working Group (PTWG) has made us move with greater speed towards the implementation of the recommendations of the National Taxi Task Team.

The passing of the Western Cape Road Transportation Act Amendment Law in 1996, transformed the voluntary process of registration which the National Taxi Task Team recommended, into a compulsory process applicable to every operator.

This amendment, for the very first time, gave recognition to the minibus taxi industry by the Department of Transport And Public Works.

The regulations which were promulgated in terms of this act have been established and the provincial registrar will monitor and control the associations as well as non-member operators in accordance with regulated standard constitutions of minibus taxi associations.

The minibus taxi industry plays an important role in the socio-economic development of the province.

To drive the process a strategic plan, which involved the setting up of the PTWG, was put into place to implement the vision which is contained in our taxi industry business plan.

We are mindful of the fact that the resolution of problems is not going to be an overnight thing, but will involve persuasion and in some instances tougher action.

It is imperative to report that we have registered 188 associations which represent 4 592 operators and 6 538 vehicles. To date 102 associations have met the criteria and are fully registered representing 3 244 operators (73%) with 4 752 vehicles (75%). The registration of two federal associations in the Western Cape is near completion.

The enforcement programme started in April, continues and to date the following summonses in the Cape Metropolitan Area have been issued: Bellville – 800; Blaauberg – 200; Central Area – 1058; Oostenberg – 250; South Peninsula – 398.

The regulation with regard to permanent marking of minibus taxis has already been gazetted and the first marking of minibus taxis was scheduled to be launched yesterday.

This constitutes a remarkable achievement in the minibus taxi restructuring process.

The empowerment of operators through training, economic assistance and capacity building will go a long way in realising the vision of my department to achieve 80% commuting by public transport.

Training of drivers has already begun with more than 200 operators likely to benefit.

It is our firm belief that to get the industry right, you must empower it.

The issue of unroadworthiness is an issue of great concern to me and at the moment legislation is being drafted for an annual roadworthy test to be introduced initially for all vehicles five years old and older, proof of passing such test being a requirement prior to annual licensing and registration. Public transport vehicles will be subjected to a six monthly Certificate of Fitness examination.

In the meantime, the current legislation is clear on unroadworthy vehicles. Traffic authorities know what they should do and enforcement focus groups backed up by SAPS are in place. But commuters should not travel in an unroadworthy motor vehicle, be it a minibus or private car.

There is no question of traffic officers being unable to enforce the law under any circumstances.

What will help the situation is not to be negative about this industry. It is worth noting also that the minibus taxi industry is the only economic sector where members of previously disadvantaged communities are participating meaningfully.

It is our policy to help the industry to stand on its feet as the industry forms part of the small, micro and medium enterprises which the Government has committed itself to assist and we appeal for the support of everyone.

Before the end of the year we are going to be embarking on a consultation process to develop the Public Transport Social Charter. This is a genuine attempt to get commuters to have a say on what type of public transport meets their needs and requirements.

Once the charter is developed and finalised, which should be in mid-1998, we will develop the Public Transport Quality Charter for public transport providers for compliance.

TRANSPORT, PRIVATE - GENERAL

1998

Black-owned shipper fulfils first contract

Nicola Jenvey (332) 30/1/2/97

DURBAN — A black-owned shipping company delivered its maiden agency contract last weekend when it landed 2-million barrels of oil at Durban's offshore single buoy mooring.

Dudula Shipping Company was launched in July by former Portnet container terminal GM Sithembiso Mthethwa, after long research.

The oil contract was placed by an SA-based multinational and Dudula assumed full responsibility for logistics and discharge of the 280 000-ton crude carrier at the mooring.

Mthethwa said Dudula aimed to become a fully fledged ship-owning venture within the next few months, chartering at least two vessels on the SA-India line. It was currently operating as a ship's agent until agreements could be reached. The company was negotiating with an international partner, expected to supply the ships and financial backing in exchange for the opportunity to establish roots in this country. Agreement would be reached once Dudula had secured cargo for the line, Mthethwa said.

Dudula operations director Keren Giladi acknowledged that there were risks but said the issue had been discussed by the directors. One course was to approach the transport department for incentives to promote SA-registered ships, which would be crewed locally. Administrative staff appointments were already "demographically considered".

Mthethwa said trade with India was a key area of expansion and Dudula's next major contract involved moving grain products and dry bulk exports between SA and several trading partners.

Giladi said the company preferred to secure the cargo before securing vessels, since trade followed goods. Operating on this premise provided the potential partner with a lower-risk investment.

Dudula's southern African coverage includes KwaZulu-Natal, the eastern and western Cape, Gauteng and Maputo. A full-service Johannesburg office would open in January and first-line agency representation was planned for the Persian Gulf, Karachi and Mumbai.

Sister company Marinet concentrates on port development, international trade, maritime industry and stimulating black investment in the sector. A high-level conference has been planned for early next year to look at black empowerment in the maritime sector.

Scramble to avert strike at SA ports

~~352~~ 332

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

ARG 4/12/97

Durban – Feverish last-ditch efforts are being made today to avert a strike which threatens to paralyse Durban and other South African harbours tomorrow.

Members of the Maritime Industries Trade Union of South Africa (Mitusa), although only several hundred-strong, represent at least 80% of Portnet's key harbour personnel – including harbour pilots, tug masters and port control officers and their strike would effectively halt all national and international shipping and affect passenger and cargo fleets.

Portnet has already issued an advisory notice to shipping companies around the country, warning of possible disruptions, and said today it was sticking to its guns in the dispute over various issues, including changes to conditions of service, pay and union recognition.

Mitusa general secretary Ron Barrington-Smith said the 24-hour strike, scheduled to start at 6am, would be followed by an overtime ban and the imposition of a work-to-rule, pending resolution of issues in dispute.

Top Government officials have contacted both the union and Portnet's parent company, Transnet urging the parties to settle the dispute. And senior members of the Port Captains' offices in Durban and Cape Town are attempting to arrange talks today to resolve the crisis.

Meanwhile Portnet is pushing ahead with contingency plans to take the sting out of the strike.

"I don't want to say what our plans are, but I don't think the strike will be as crippling as everyone thinks," said Transnet spokesman Thami Didiza.

Mr Barrington-Smith said his union had never wanted the strike, and hoped talks could take place today which would resolve the dispute.

Harbour workers' strike on hold

Intervention by the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) in the dispute between Portnet and the Maritime Industries Trade Union of South Africa (Mitusa) has averted a threatened work stoppage by the union's members at the country's major commercial ports.

The 24-hour strike, which was set to start at 6am today, has now been put on hold pending the outcome of talks between Mitusa and Portnet scheduled to take place in Port Elizabeth on Monday and Tuesday.

In terms of an agreement brokered by the CCMA yesterday, Mitusa has undertaken not to embark on any industrial action in connection with the dispute.

At the same time Portnet, a division of Transnet, has agreed not to go ahead with legal action against the harbour workers' union. – Sapa

(232)

BRG 5/12/97

Wednesday December 24 1997 **SOWETAN**

Taxi violence: cop accused

(332)

Sowetan 24/12/97

By Dan Fuphe

A SENIOR police officer was accused yesterday of dragging his feet in quelling violence involving two warring taxi organisations in Benoni on the East Rand.

Benoni Taxi Association (BTA) general secretary Mr Peterson Jassop said Benoni police station acting commissioner senior superintendent Sontag Selota was dragging his feet in quelling the violence involving BTA and the Benoni Long Distance Taxi Association (Beldta).

Jassop was interviewed at the police station where he lambasted Selota in front of Benoni police services' communications head Captain Maggie Reid soon after a dangerous two-and-half-hour stand-off between the two rival taxi organisations at the Benoni railway station's taxi rank.

The situation at the rank was under control because of heavy police presence, backed by the South African National Defence Force and local traffic officers.

Selota denied dragging his feet and said both the BTA and Beldta seemed unwilling to reach an amicable solution to their conflict over disputed taxi routes.

Beldta chairman Mr MS Pitso said his affiliates were intimidated by BTA members who did not want them to use the taxi rank at the Benoni railway station and did not want the two taxi organisations to share the the route to Dennilton.

"On December 19 we met Mr Jabu Mthetwa and Mr Jabulani Mtshali in the office of Gauteng transport MEC Paul Mashitile, who assured us that we could use the rank and route together with the BTA," said Pitso.

"This assurance by Mthetwa and Mtshali, which was like sweet music to our ears, was also communicated telephonically to Selota by the two gentlemen (Mthetwa and Mtshali)," Pitso said.

Selota confirmed that Mthetwa and Mtshali phoned him about their assurance to Beldta but said they had failed to do so in writing.

Jassop said he was also telephoned with the same news but he was waiting for written confirmation of the assurance made by the transport MEC's office.

In terms of the new arrangement which had been brokered by Mashatile's office, Beldta operators were due to start working from the Benoni station taxi rank yesterday morning.

"But when we got there, our taxis (belonging to Beldta taxi operators) were barricaded by BTA taxi drivers, into an enclosure to stop us from loading" Pitso said.

Violence down as police taxi unit gets results

JOSEPH ARANES
STAFF REPORTER

The number of violent attacks and deaths in minibus taxi conflict in the Western Cape is down, largely because of the behind-the-scenes efforts of a group of policemen and a new "open" approach.

Police say 15 people have been killed this year compared with 43 in 1996, and serious attacks and counter-attacks are down to 132 from last year's 168.

Mark Splinter, head of the police taxi task unit, said it was likely this trend would continue over the festive period although tension was high in some areas, particularly between Khayelitsha and Mitchell's Plain.

He said the ending of the conflict and stabilising of the industry were partly a result of the willingness of taxi association leaders to resolve disputes peacefully.

It was also because of regulation of the industry, intensified law enforcement and the timely identification of potential hotspots enabling the police to intervene.

"If these factors continue to prevail, they will go on having a positive impact and decrease the potential for violent conflict," he said.

"But a lot will depend on our ability to

To page 3

CAPE ARGUS, MONDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1997

W Cape taxi violence down as police team gets results

From page 1

gather enough evidence to put the instigators and perpetrators of violence behind bars."

He said one of the biggest problems facing the taxi industry was that not all operators had been given their new permits, which meant other operators were still competing for passengers on the same routes.

"This cuts into their profits and inevitably leads to tension. If not kept in check, there could be open violence. Another problem is that bigger operators are also trying to muscle out the smaller guys."

Superintendent Splinter said the task team had pushed for intelligence to be used to identify possible conflict situations and to deploy other units and the defence force in areas at risk.

"This has enabled us to concentrate on our case work and solve some of those heinous crimes and murders. Since 1996 114 people have been arrested and of the 300 dockets we are investigating, most are for murder and attempted murder.

"While it's clear from our statistics and intelligence gathering that individuals from Cata and Codeta are responsible for most of the criminal activities in the industry, both groups are realising that violence is not the way to resolve their differences."

He said investigating taxi violence was one of the most difficult police tasks.

"But we are on top of the situation. And although the nature of the violence is very difficult to predict and while our mediating approach may be more open, we will continue to deal harshly with offenders."

(332) ARG 29/12/97

Call for Maharaj to quit over illegal minibus taxis

BD 30/10/97 (332)

Pule Molebeledi

TRANSPORT Minister Mac Maharaj came under attack by a Democratic Party councillor yesterday for having failed to deal with the "illegal taxi industry" and was asked to resign.

Ivor Blumenthal, a councillor in Johannesburg's eastern metropolitan substructure, yesterday said that it was also time to close the taxi industry as SA did not need and could not afford the renegade industry holding the economy to ransom.

He said the latest statistics indicated the minibus taxi industry violated many road and tax laws.

"This means the majority of the vehicles ferrying scores of people on our busiest roads, causing huge congestion and road carnage, are not roadworthy, many of the drivers do not have licences or at least legal licences and the majority of these businesses are not registered and do not pay taxes," Blumenthal said.

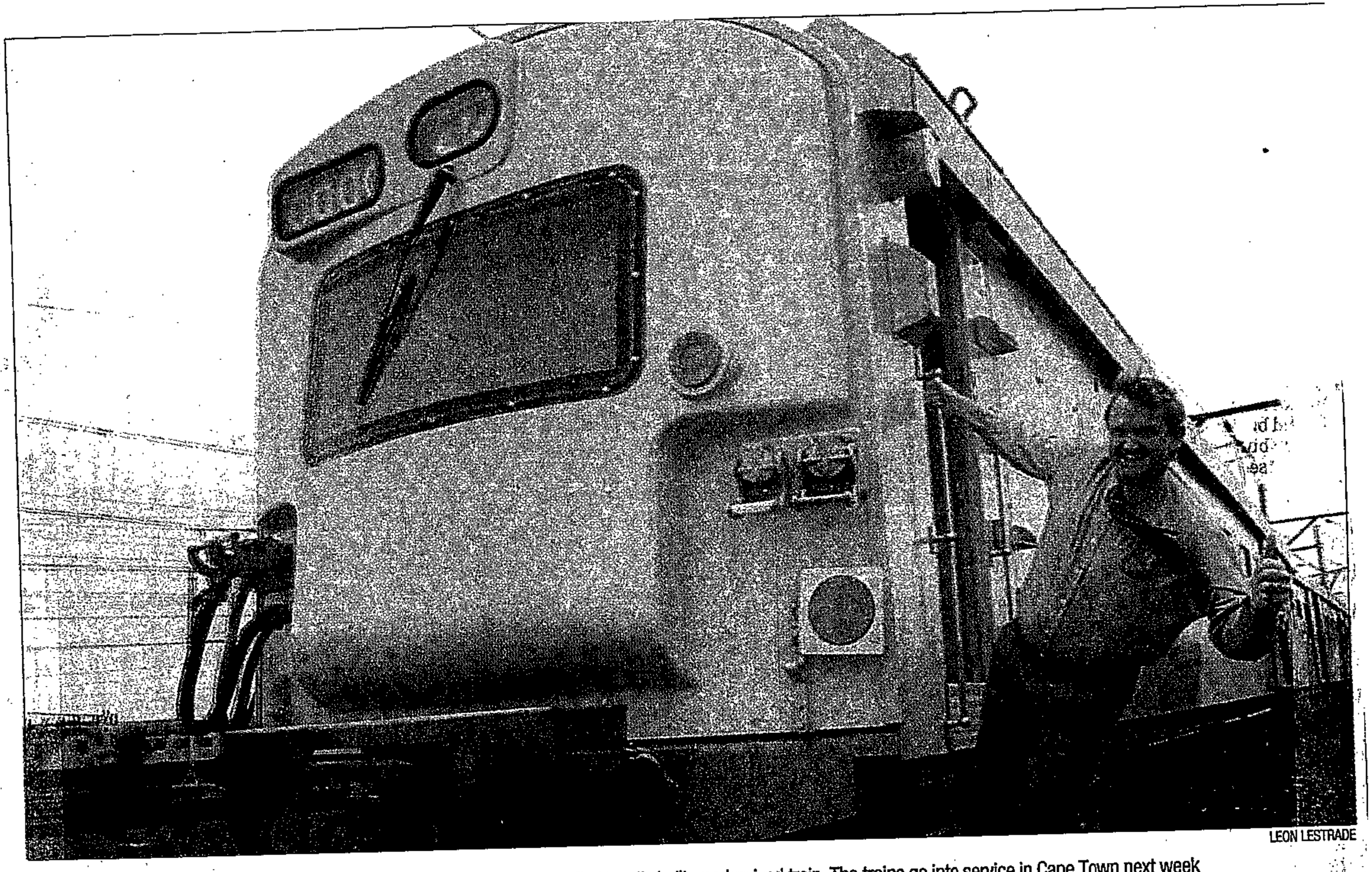
He said it was time for the authorities to undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the industry to determine whether "we can afford to continue to allow this scourge to operate legally in our country".

Blumenthal criticised the "laughable excuses" from taxi associations which were "pathetically reiterated" by government officials for the low level of legal licences among taxi drivers, namely that they could not get licenses because they are illiterate.

Saying this was unacceptable, Blumenthal said Maharaj should resign and be replaced by a minister who respected the law of his country and who did not allow his own officials to undermine the law in favour of votes from criminals.

He said that a new alliance should be forged between the transport department, police and traffic departments to drive the "scum who drive these vehicles from our streets".

He said government should live up to its responsibility of providing South Africans with adequate, safe, reliable and cost-effective public transport.



LEON LESTRADE

Train of the future: Metrorail rolling stock manager Keith Roberts with the first locally built, modernised train. The trains go into service in Cape Town next week

ARGUS 9/11/98 (332)

Metrorail unveils new 'vandal-proof' trains

(332) ARG 9/11/98 (214)

SHARKEY ISAACS
TRANSPORT REPORTER

Metrorail has unveiled its vandal-proof coaches – taking the concept of commuter rail travel a quantum leap into the future.

The first train, with coaches upgraded at a cost of R600 000 each, will be commissioned and introduced on the Simon's Town line next week.

Built at Salt River's railway workshops, the coaches were part of a nationwide upgrading programme which would reach fruition in the year 2010, said Cape Metrorail's manager of rolling stock, Keith Roberts.

He said the coaches – with an improved ventilation and lighting system – featured unbreakable windows, rip-proof seats, doors impossible to open between stations and extra fire-proofing, and had a generally more cheerful interior than existing coaches.

Mr Roberts said: "Although vandalism has highlighted flaws in existing trains, modernisation was high on the agenda when Metro reassessed its coaches.

"Vandal-proofing was only one aspect. We also needed to look at comfort, fire resistance and reliability.

"In the Cape there are 650 000 commuters daily using about 1 000 coaches and about a further million daily rail travellers using 4 500 coaches nationwide."

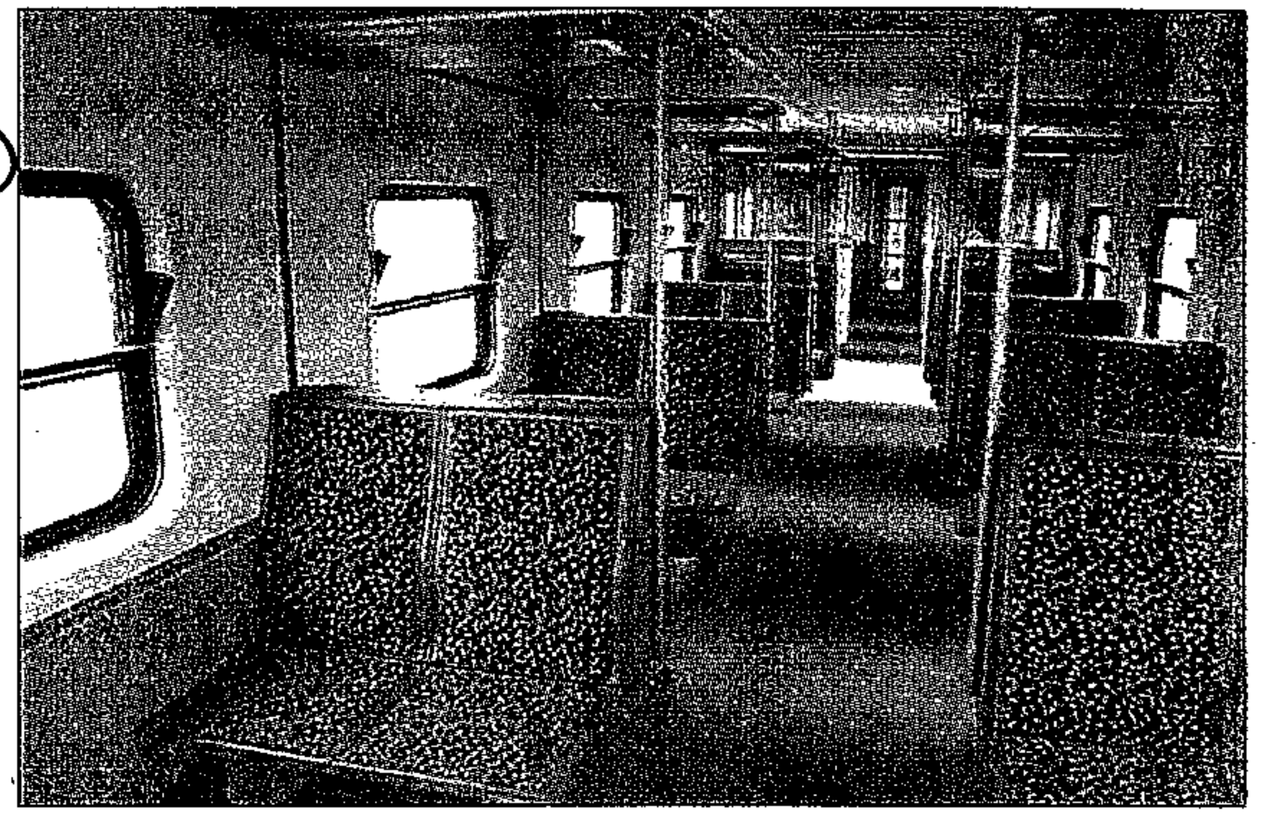
The new trains have a safety mechanism designed to stop vandals from forcing open passenger doors on suburban trains.

While the doors have a safety electronic emergency button to free someone's foot caught in them, for instance, the mechanism is designed to prevent the dangerous practice of opening locked doors and then keeping them open with a wedge.

"We have designed a passenger coach door which is controlled by the driver and it triggers off an alarm if it is forced three-quarters open, making it impossible to open between stations.

"Another safety feature is the introduction of equipment on the connecting gap between passenger coaches to prevent commuters from falling off while moving between coaches. Connecting transparent doors between coaches are another safety feature enabling passengers in a neighbouring coach to spot robbers or muggers in the next coach and alert train staff," he said.

There is also an intercom system. In addition to to its crime deterrent value, it will be used for piped music while the train is on the move.



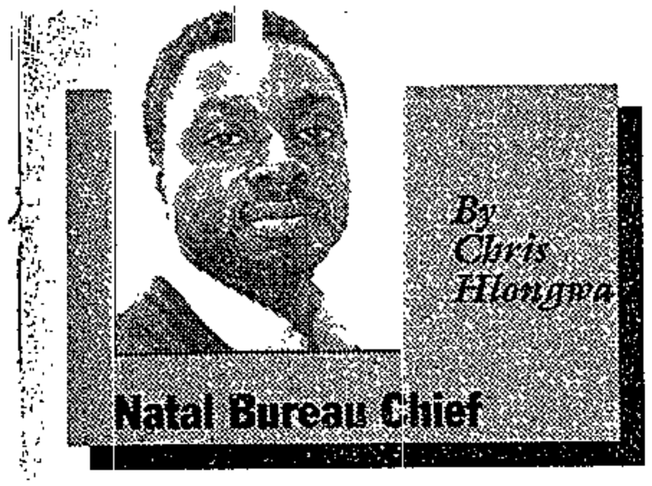
Colourful journey: the upgraded interior of one of Metrorail's vandal-proof coaches

CITY PRESS News

Ngcoya is back! – and itching to take on the taxi industry's demons

CP 1/1/98 (332)

Former Sabta chief lobbies for peace



By Chris Hlongwa
Natal Bureau Chief

IF YOU wondered what happened to James Ngcoya, the former high-profile leader of the beleagured taxi industry, he is alive, well and itching to save the industry from being closed down through violence and confusion.

He was credited with calming tempers in the volatile black business, which became characterised by killings, power struggles and dwindling business – but simply faded when things got really tense.

He admits to having gone into "semi-retirement", when he left his presidency of the South African Black Taxi Association (Sabta)..

Having spent 14 years in the hot-seat of an association that represented the most visible empowerment vehicle for blacks, he moved aside for new people to take over.

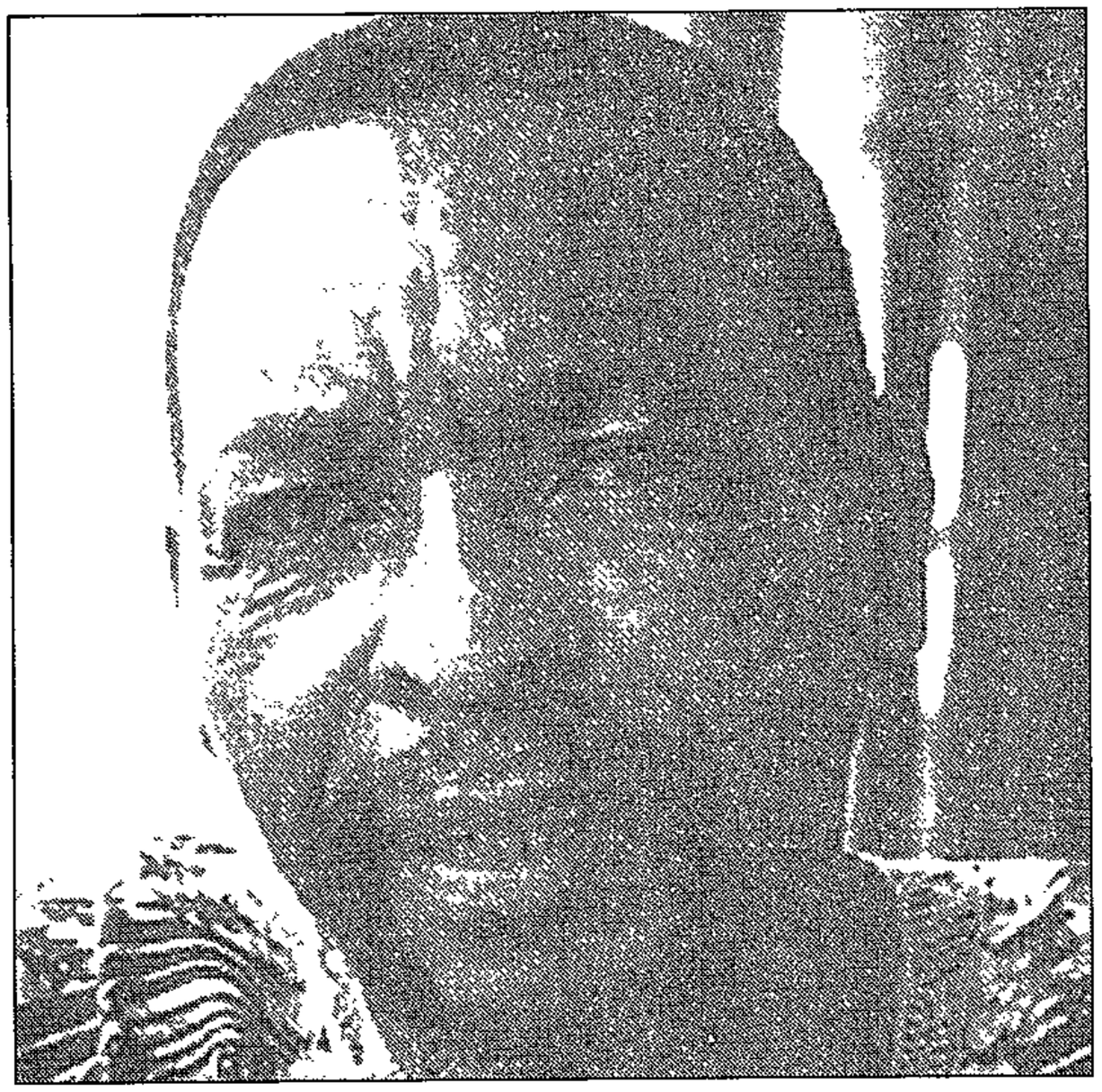
He had headed many battles, including resisting the apparent attempts in 1983 by the former government to close down the business, and also endured internal rows within the executive of Sabta. The stress seemed to finally take its toll, and he decided to "retire".

But not long afterwards they recalled him, he says, because of his experience and tested leadership.

But Sabta was still hurtling from crisis to crisis, including financial scandals, and it lacked resources to launch a revival.

"There was no money for me to take on board the new nine provinces," says Ngcoya who had been appointed a chairman of the RDP section of the association.

Still running his six taxis, he went into the meat business and at 60 he is a director in a meat company which deals chiefly in the black, small business market.



PASSIONATE OPERATOR ... *Former high-profile taxi industry leader James Ngcoyo wants to help save the taxi industry.*

Now, with big oil companies funding meetings for the formation of a single body to represent taxi operators, he has regained his passion for the business.

As executive deputy president of Sabta he will travel around lobbying for a single body, the formation of which will hopefully eliminate the chaos.

But he will have to win over disenchanted taxi operators who formed other organisations when Sabta was dogged by controversy.

Ngcoya admits: "We haven't given a full account of the monies they paid the association."

Another hurdle is the lack of communication he sees between taxi operators and the government, including on issues like the new taxi forums established by the Department of Transport.

But Ngcoya is scathing of the department: "The department did not follow the procedures we introduced during the apartheid regime and people who have no real support among the taxi owners have being appointed into the structures," he says.

"As a result they can't report back to the membership."

He cites one regional leader who recently could not gather more than 100 taxi owners for his meeting in Durban.

And such people are not in a position to report to members any good work done by the government for the industry.

Ngcoya believes the government could be forced to close down the business if the violence, which has affected innocent commuters, does not stop.

He admits the killings have abated but it is up to the industry to see that it ends once and for all.

Then they would have to look into the real problems, especially as the industry is becoming unprofitable – one of the causes behind the wars for turf.

"There is also greed! People want to take over routes and this causes jealousy," he said.

"Look, I have six taxis – I could have had 20," he said, "but people rush to make money instead of looking after the welfare of passengers first . . . then the profits would follow."

"Things were so bad because of a lack of imagination. We are losing commuters to buses and the revamped train services and can only blame our infighting."

He suggests one way of recouping the losses.

"I may be criticised for this, but I want to see 25-seater taxis being introduced. This will be more profitable for taxi operators, but it would decrease the number of taxis on the roads and lower the accident rate," he said.

But that would need legal flexibility on the part of the government which regards a 25-seater as a bus.

"I'm as passionate as ever about the business. It made me. It enabled me to send my children to technikon and university."

He has five children and lives in one of Durban's former white suburbs. His life has never been threatened in the deadly business of running taxis.

He believes his strong point is that he never takes sides when disputes arise and so he feels confident he can help bring unity to the embattled industry.

Taxi boss and son gunned down at home

(332)

Assassins strike once again in Benoni taxi feud that has already claimed 40 lives

Sowetan 12/1/98

By Dan Fuphe

THE chairman of the Benoni Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Belldta), Mr Solomon Pitso, and his 19-year-old son, Albert, were shot and killed on Saturday night in what police suspect was a taxi-related assassination.

Pitso (48) and his son were gunned down inside their home in Nkwaketsi Street, Daveyton, at about midnight.

Police Inspector CT Labuschagne of the Heidelberg Special Taxi Violence Unit, told *Sowetan* yesterday that they believed the killings were related to a feud between the Benoni Taxi Association (BTA) and Belldta.

Sergeant TP Zikode of Daveyton Police Station confirmed the killings. He said that two males were reported to have been killed during a shooting incident in that street on Saturday night. No arrests have been made.

When *Sowetan* visited the family home yesterday morning it was already filled with shocked relatives and neighbours, some of whom wept uncontrollably.

Pitso's elder daughter, Pinky, said her father and younger brother were killed "in cold blood by two men who knocked and claimed that they were policemen".

"Albert was the first to be gunned down. This was after he responded to the knock on the door. He was shot three times at close range.

"My father, who was standing behind Albert was mowed down while trying to escape from the killers. Both died instantly," Pinky said.

Albert was a grade nine pupil at the Rivoni Secondary School.

Dangerous stand-off

The killings came barely three weeks after a dangerous dispute between BTA and Belldta was thwarted by the heavy presence of police and members of the South African National Defence Force at the Benoni Railway Station taxi rank on December 23 last year.

Pitso is the second high profile Belldta official to die as a result of the taxi feud which has claimed nearly 40 lives to date.

Less than a year ago, Mr Godfrey Stone, a member of Belldta was killed after being shot at least seven times by unknown people while walking home in "Los My Cherie" section in Daveyton.

Funeral arrangements for Pitso and his son have not yet been finalised.

Cops on alert as ousted taxi group returns to route

ARG 13/1/98

Sidelined drivers defy rivals

(332)

BLACKMAN NGORO
STAFF REPORTER

Violence is feared on the Hanover Park-Cape Town taxi route tomorrow when a sidelined group begins operating in defiance of a rival organisation.

The Surran Road Taxi Association, which has been off the road since its members were ousted from the route last February, will return to its former ranks in Hanover Park and on the Cape Town station deck.

The route has been the unofficial territory of the Park-City Taxi Association, from which the Surran Road group broke away in 1994. Park-City is headed by Achmat Dyason, who is also chairman of the Western Cape Taxi Representative Council.

Surran Road members have permits to operate on the route, but many Park-City members do not.

Simon Mpembe of the police crime prevention unit said he would have a sizeable number of police on duty tomorrow.

But Alex Lawrence of the Cape Town traffic department said he was optimistic things would go well.

"Surran Road people have not been operating at the Surran Road taxi rank for a long time. We would like to see the matter resolved amicably between the two groups."

Inspector Lawrence said taxi drivers had to get their own permits from the registrar of taxis before they could operate.

"The criteria we use are not about what organisation you belong to but what your transportation permit says.

"Park-City has got illegal



HANNES THIART

In from the cold: Ismail 'Arab' Badaron, right, of the Surran Road Taxi Association and secretary Riedewaan Salie, left, discuss registration with members

operators, but we have given them extra time to be registered. They must comply with certain criteria."

The police gang unit declined to comment officially on the situation, but a source said the disputed route had potential for violence.

"If the registrar doesn't deal with the matter quickly, there will be violence. We can police only up to a certain point. The victimisation of the Surran Road Taxi Association is illegal but these two groups have been in conflict for years.

"Park-City have operated there longer. Now we hear that the Surran Road association has got legal status, which has raised questions. Park-City want to know how they managed it."

But Surran Road members claim Park-City would also be eligible for registration if the association's executive signed a pledge against violence.

The Surran Road association had signed, said spokesman Ismail Badaron.

In one clause of the pledge, Surran undertook "not to intimidate, harass, molest, assault or in any way way interfere in any manner whatsoever with any other taxi operator, taxi association or other taxi association member at any rank or along any route where Surran Road Cape Town Taxi Association members operate their vehicles".

Asked why Park-City Taxi Association was not registered, Fuzile Mbambo, who works in the taxi registrar's office, said: "I don't have to disclose the reasons why we will not register them.

"Neither do I want to inflame an already inflammable situation or cause things to go from bad to worse.

"As a member of the Government I'm required to improve the situation. A disclosure of the reasons wouldn't be good, and we can't register both. I don't think violence will flare up."

A welter of claims and counter-claims lies behind the enmity between the two groups.

CAPE ARGUS, **FRIDAY**, JANUARY 16, 1998

Taxi men 'beaten up in fight for key route'

(332)

ARG 16/1/98

BLACKMAN NGORO
STAFF REPORTER

Tension is still high between rival taxi associations battling for control of the Hanover Park-Cape Town route.

This week two members of the Surran Road Taxi Association said they were beaten up by members of the Park-City Taxi Association, and a taxi windscreen was smashed at the city station deck rank.

Surran Road drivers Jacobus Stevens and Mohammed Blakenburg have laid charges of assault against Achmat Dyason, chairman of the Park-City Taxi Association, and some of its members.

Tension has been building up for the past year, since drivers from the Surran Road Taxi Association were ousted from the route, which is the unofficial territory of the Park-City Taxi Association.

This week Surran Road operators returned to the route. They were immediately accused of interfering with Park-City business.

Later Mr Dyason was said to have become angry at the station deck rank when Surran Road drivers tried to take on passengers.

Earlier Mr Dyason told an official in the office of the registrar of taxis that the route could not support members of two associations. He also demanded that his association be registered, as Surran Road had been.

He said he had launched legal action to have the Surran Road Taxi Association deregistered, as he believed it had been registered irregularly.

Police Senior Superintendent Simon Mpempu claimed he was insulted by Mr Dyason at the station deck.

"I had been informed by the police present that Achmat Dyason had been threatening some members of the Surran Road group."

Taxi driver shot in latest feud

B32

Sowetan 19/1/98

Police presence beefed up as fears of renewed violence surface

By McKeed Kotlolo

TWO PEOPLE, including a taxi driver were killed, six were wounded and three vehicles were gutted during running battles between members of two rival taxi bodies in Soshanguve yesterday.

Several stalls belonging to fruit and food vendors at the Mabopane station were also set alight by angry taxi operators at around 11am.

The attackers removed the razor wire placed around the Rietgat Taxi Rank on the Soshanguve side of Mabopane Station during last year's taxi feud in which 30 people were killed and scores injured.

The motive for yesterday's clash was still not known but Soshanguve police said trouble started after members of the Federation of Long Distance Taxi Associations (Feldta) returned from the funeral of a colleague. Officials of both Feldta and the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta) could not be reached for comment.

Spokesman for Soshanguve police Inspector Piletji Sebola said police had monitored the funeral of a murdered taxi operator yesterday morning.

Sebola said shortly after the mourners returned from the cemetery around 10.30am an unidentified taxi driver was shot and wounded near the Falala Shopping Complex in Block F and his minibus set alight.

The driver was rushed to hospital. Another minibus was also set alight along the taxi route that cuts through blocks BB and DD.

Sebola said at about the same time, a tow truck belonging to the General Central Car Service was also burnt in Block AA next to the Mabopane Station.

The police spokesman said the situation was tense and only a handful of taxis were operating. He said members of the Public Order Police were patrolling the taxi routes.

CT 20/1/98
(332)

WITNESSES 'FEAR FOR THEIR

Kneecap

THE HEAD of a special police task team into taxi violence has said he will oppose the bail application of taxi strongman Victor Sam to "protect witnesses". **ANDRE KOOPMAN** reports.

MR Victor Sam, the alleged Crossroads warlord and taxi strongman, is to appear in the Bellville Magistrate's Court tomorrow in connection with an incident in which three Guguletu men were shot in their knees.

A fourth man, who was also allegedly fired at, escaped without injury.

Sam, a leader of the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata), was arrested last Thursday in connection with the Irish Republican Army-style shootings.

He has been arrested on kidnapping and murder charges several times in the past but has never been convicted.

Captain Tikie Theart, Western Cape commander of the elite Special Presidential Taxi Task Team, said the charges arose from a 1995 incident which occurred after Sam's wife allegedly told her husband that robbers had attacked their Nyanga home.

Sam and some of his henchmen allegedly cornered four men, aged between 30 and 40, of Langa and Guguletu, near the Bellville station. Shots were fired and three men were injured in the knees or knee areas, Theart said.

Sam faces four charges of attempted murder, four charges of assault and a charge of attempted robbery.

The victims had not been named at the time of going to press.

Theart, one of the "hand-picked 13" as the members of the presidential task have been dubbed, said he would oppose the bail application to "protect witnesses" and because of the seriousness of the offences.

The task unit was formed to bring to book "high-profile people involved in the taxi violence", Theart said.

While charges had been investigated against Sam soon after the 1995 shootings, no progress had been made until the task team arrived in the Western Cape.

Further delays had been experienced because witnesses and potential witnesses in taxi violence cases often "feared for their lives". Many could not be induced to testify, even after being offered "large rewards", Theart said.

Theart asked anyone with any further information on the Sam matter to contact him at 083 625 2481.

Sam's name has been consistently linked with the taxi violence that has plagued the Western Cape. During the taxi wars in the early 1990s, hundreds of taxi drivers were killed, often in gangland-style assassinations.

● In February, 1995 Sam was acquitted on 21 charges, including murder and attempted murder.

A month later charges for allegedly kidnapping two men on the N1 and then murdering them, were also withdrawn.

During a hearing, the court was told that the abduction had occurred three days after Sam had been granted R4 000 bail on another murder charge.

LIVES'

ping trial to start

CT 20/1/98 (332)



ACCUSED: Victor Sam is to appear in the Bellville Magistrate's Court tomorrow in connection with an incident in which three Guguletu men were shot in the knees. *FILE PICTURE*

The Star ... Tuesday, Janu

Bullets fly again in taxi dispute

Star 20/1/98

BY TEFO MOTHIBELI

Violence flared again between taxi organisations in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, last night.

Clashes in the township between members of the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta) have left two people dead and 17 injured since Saturday.

Police said a driver was wounded in a drive-by shooting in block V in the afternoon.

About two hours later, another taxi driver belonging to Felldta and a passenger were wounded in a drive-by shooting between blocks V and S. The driver's minibus was set alight after it was abandoned.

Earlier in the day, a group of men opened fire on four members of Felldta who were relaxing under a tree. Three of the drivers were critically wounded.

Police said the atmosphere was calm but tense last night and a heavy police presence would be maintained through the night.

Meanwhile, two people have been questioned in connection with the resurgence of violence in the area and police are still trying to broker a meeting between taxi organisations.

Police said thousands of passengers were inconvenienced yesterday because only a few taxis were operating.

They said the bloody clashes followed the funeral of a Felldta member at the weekend, when several taxis were set alight and shots were fired indiscriminately at commuters.

Warring taxi leaders bury hatchet, to work together

(339)

CP 25/11/98

By PHALANE MOTALE

THE leaders of the two taxi associations involved in a bloody war in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, buried the hatched and shared the peace pipe this week.

At a meeting convened by transport consultant and mediator Dumisani Daniel at a Pretoria hotel, the SA Local and Long Distance Taxi Association general chairman Edwin Ramokolo and Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association president Vuyo Manganye shook hands and embraced each other after signing an agreement to end hostilities.

The meeting was called after renewed violence erupted in Soshanguve last weekend leaving at least people three dead, some 20 injured and several taxis gutted.

The two associations agreed to a cessation of hostilities and the resumption of operations and co-operation at all ranking facilities and routes with immediate effect.

According to Daniel an agreement was reached that prohibited the groups from holding meetings at taxi ranks.

□ Meanwhile, in a joint statement last year, the the Transport Minister Mac Maharaj and the Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi, promised that hired killers in the taxi industry would be hunted down.

At the time, the government announced the establishment of a special task team of hand-picked detectives under the leadership of Director Neville Thoms, which had reportedly "identified several individuals and groups" involved in the ongoing taxi violence.

In May spokesman for the special task team Director Elf Huggett told City Press that the report from the unit would only be made public by Mufamadi "at least within two months".

Meanwhile, both leaders of the Lehlabile Taxi Organisation (LTO) Jacob Ledwaba and Dixon Mampane of Sallda were gunned down in separate incidents.

A senior police spokesman told City Press that the report from the task team had not yet been received by Mufamadi.

Last year Northern Province MEC for Safety and Security Advocate Seth Nthai said secret training camps in the area for hit squads deployed in the taxi wars countrywide were uncovered by a special police team aided by National Intelligence.

"Several arrests including that of prominent people in the taxi industry were imminent," said Nthai.

His statement supported a confidential document which was in the possession of City Press at the time that "seven members of the LTO and Sallda - whose names are known to City Press - were allegedly responsible for training and deploying hitmen recruited from neighbouring Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

These two organisations were alleged to have been largely involved in the bloody taxi wars in Gauteng, Northern Province and the North West - in which more than 200 drivers and passengers were shot dead in 1996 alone.

Court told of plan to spring taxi chief Sam 'by any means'

Task team accused of witch hunt

AR 4 29/1/98 (332)

ASHLEY SMITH
COURT REPORTER

Dramatic evidence in the bail application of alleged taxi warlord Victor Sam has lifted the lid on the special presidential task team's battle against taxi violence.

The Bellville Magistrate's Court heard testimony that Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) members were planning an escape by Mr Sam, their secretary-general, from police custody.

Mr Sam is being charged with taxi-related violence for the 13th time in five years but has no previous convictions.

He is facing four charges of attempted murder, one of robbery and four of serious assault in connection with the shooting in the kneecaps of four men at the Bellville taxi rank in 1995.

Police captain Tiekie Theart told the court that Mr Sam had evaded conviction for murder, attempted murder, arson and destruction of property in the past because "witnesses disappeared".

He also had charges of armed robbery and murder pending against him after the R1-million burglary of a private home in Engcobo, Transkei, in 1993, Captain Theart said.

Two police informants had told the taxi task team that Cata members were planning to "spring Mr Sam from police custody by any means" if he did not get bail.

Susan Smith, counsel for Mr Sam, said her client was the victim of a "witch hunt" by Captain Theart's special task team.

Prosecutor Greg Jacobs said he opposed bail for Mr Sam to protect witnesses.

Captain Theart testified that during past investigations into Mr Sam's alleged involvement in taxi violence, police had been hampered because key witnesses had been bribed or threatened into not testifying.

Statistics on taxi violence for 1997 show the Cata-controlled ranks of Bellville (seven incidents), Nyanga (66) and Kraaifontein (25) were the major trouble areas in the Western Cape.

Figures for last year's taxi violence showed 54 attempted murders, 18 murders, 11 cases of intimidation, 11 armed robberies, four serious assaults, five thefts and one case of *crimen injuria*, he said.

The hearing continues today.

Pieter van Jaarsveld was on the bench.

Taxi industry raids rank hawkers and takes liquor

Soweto 9/2/98 (332)

By Saint Molakeng

IN A last-ditch attempt to curb drinking among taxi drivers, a Gauteng combined taxi structure will this week continue to "impound" liquor from the hawkers at taxi ranks.

This move began last week when men belonging to Top Six Taxi Structure (TSTS), a body representing more than 20 provincial taxi organisations, invaded Soweto's Baragwanath, Eldorado Park and Kliptown taxi ranks and confiscated liquor from the hawkers.

Big quantities – dozens of beer cans and bottles of spirits, were impounded, said TSTS public relations officer Mr Sicelo Mabaso.

"The hawkers were crying because they had spent money on the stuff. But, much to our dislike, we had to do it. We had previously appealed to them to stop it, but had not succeeded," said Mabaso.

"Whether it is legal or not, the objective is to protect people's lives and properties."

He said the unsatisfactory behaviour and accident-prone driving of taxi drivers, after they had consumed alcohol sold at the ranks had motivated the crackdown that could have been counter to "free market principles" in South Africa.

This week the TSTS force will move on to Johannesburg taxi ranks, Mabaso revealed.

As to defiance by hawkers, he said: "No one can fight back given our numbers and preparedness. It would be naive."

Mabaso said he wished all SA taxi ranks could be freed from alcohol that tempted drivers as well as commuters.

Unruliness and accidents that existed in the industry would decline, he said.

Unitrans turnover up despite rains, strikes

NCABA HLOPHE BT(BR) 12/2/98 (392)

Johannesburg — Unitrans, the passenger and goods transport group, defied strikes and the excessive rains which shook its freight division to report a 9,9 percent increase in turnover to R453 million in the six months to December 31.

Eduardo Gutierrez-Garcia, the Unitrans chief executive, said the group had managed to contain problems in the motors division while the new and used-truck market had remained depressed.

"Prices of used commercial vehicles have stabilised and we have substantially reduced inventories and, consequently, interest costs," he said.

Headline earnings a share gained 13,3 percent to come in at 76,5c, with an additional 389 000 shares in circulation.

"We are pleased with the results considering that freight transport, which accounted for 67 percent of turnover, suffered from the three-week strike throughout the sugar industry and from excessive rains.

"The passenger division performed well and improved its turnover by more than 20 percent," Gutierrez-Garcia said.

Earnings attributable to ordinary shareholders increased by 13,6 percent to R41 million, while attributable earnings a share increased by 12,8 percent to 76,5c compared to 67,8c in the same period last year.

A dividend of 20c a share as compared to 18c a share was declared.

Hawkers plead with taximen

(332)

By Saint Molakeng

THE Greater Johannesburg Hawkers Planning Committee (GJHPC) has appealed to the taxi industry to reconsider their campaign of confiscating liquor sold by hawkers at taxi ranks.

The GJHPC was responding to threats earlier this week by Top Six Taxi Structure public relations officer Mr Sicelo Mabaso that his organisation would soon invade Johannesburg ranks to seize the liquor, following similar actions at Soweto ranks last week.

Mabaso said taximen had decided on that move after the hawkers had ignored pleas to stop selling liquor to taxi drivers.

GJHPC secretary Mr Moffat Sebolelo said that in principle the committee was not against the campaign by the taximen.

"But hawkers are not happy about how it has been conducted," he said.

Sebolelo said hawkers became afraid when a force of taximen arrived on the scene to confiscate liquor. "We know nothing about fighting. We only know business," he said.

Both Sebolelo and GJHPC chairman Mr Mannetjies Solomon appealed to the taxi industry to sit down and thrash out the issue.

"After all, the taxi industry and hawkers are one and the same as we belong to the informal sector which we want to build together," Sebolelo said.

Sowetan 12/2/98

Tough minibus law soon

(332)

CLIVE SAWYER CT 23/2/98

MINIBUSES and other public vehicles will have to display roadworthy certificates if new legislation is approved.

The interval for compulsory re-testing of roadworthiness for minibuses may be shortened to less than a year.

At present, minibuses, buses, vehicles heavier than 3,5 tons and other vehicles carrying people for profit are subject to annual re-testing for roadworthiness and operators are expected to keep these certificates in their vehicles.

The National Road Traffic Act Amendment Bill will oblige them to display these certificates.

Mr Gerrie Botha, director of traffic legislation and control, said it was possible that the period of re-testing for minibuses may be shortened to less than a year.

"We have been told some minibuses do 200 000km a year."

The legislation on displaying proof of roadworthiness could be extended to private vehicles.

It was unlikely to be applied to all private cars, because the principle was that all new cars were assumed to be roadworthy.

"In a year or two we may look at applying this to cars of about five or six years or older, or depending on kilometres — say 150 000km — as some people run up hundreds of thousands of kilometres a year."

The bill, tabled in the National Council of Provinces, provides for registration of manufacturers of number plates in an attempt to stop illegal manufacturing.

Another significant change affects the definition of who is the "operator" of a motor vehicle.

An explanatory memorandum said the change was prompted by difficulties in identifying operators of vehicles, which had caused an administrative burden.

"It is proposed the owner of a vehicle be registered as the operator, and that a person who concludes a contract to be allowed to operate a vehicle for a certain period be deemed to be an operator."

The bill also provides for training for people involved in transporting dangerous goods.

SALDRU LIBRARY

Taxi permits bribe furore

Officials reject charges

ARG 26/2/98 (332)

A gifts-for-taxi-permits scandal is threatening to explode the operations of Cape Town's Local Road Transportation Board.

Disgruntled taxi association members, who have been waiting for permits for more than three years, claim certain operators have used gifts and bribery to secure permits.

But the chairman of the board, Bernard Miskey, has rejected the allegations, saying those with proof should go to the police.

"Suspicion is raised often because some get permits and others don't. All those who qualify have been issued with permits," he said.

Members of taxi associations claim corruption in the industry is directly to blame for the violence which has claimed hundreds of lives over the past few years.

Human Rights Consultancy official Debbie Miller, who is helping the whistleblowers, claimed some bosses were able to get more and more taxis on the road, but others could not get a permit for a single taxi.

Two members of the Western Cape provincial executive, Piet Meyer, the new MEC for transport and labour, and Gerald Morkel, the MEC for community security, who also chairs the task team on taxi-related violence, have been briefed about the alleged corruption.

SPECIAL REPORT



BLACKMAN NGORO

Mr Meyer confirmed to the Cape Argus he had been present during Mr Morkel's meeting with Ms Miller.

David Frost, Mr Morkel's spokesman, confirmed that Ms Miller had met his boss and said corruption had to be rooted out wherever it was. "But people must come up with the information."

The Local Road Transportation Board was set up under the Road Transportation Act to control all passenger transport. It issues permits for metered taxis, buses and minibus taxis.

Ms Miller told the Cape Argus she had been approached by a number of taxi associations affiliated to the Western Cape Taxi Representative Council, complaining about the service they were getting from the Local Road Transportation Board.

Their allegations included:

- That past and present members of the board had accepted gifts and bribes.
- That people who did not give board members gifts or bribes allegedly waited up to three years to get a permit, if they got one at all.
- That people were paying up to R50 000 for a handful of permits when the normal cost of a permit was R100.
- That certain taxi bosses had reportedly gained undue influence over board members because of alleged gifts and bribes.
- That taxi bosses were buying permits from people who had left the business – voluntarily or involuntarily – without having the permits properly transferred into their names.

Asked to respond, Mr Miskey some people were confusing the special legalisation process with the normal one.

"If anyone applied under the special legalisation process out there, they should come forward and we will pull out their file. If there are claims someone who didn't deserve a permit was issued one and someone who should have been issued a permit was denied one, then those people should

To page 3

From page 1

ARG 26/2/98 (332)

come to us and we will also pull out their file and check," he said.

Those who decided to blow the whistle say they stand by their claims.

Ms Miller said one operator claimed to have paid R50 000 for a number of permits, some of which he, in turn, sold for R30 000 each. He said only one of the permits had been acquired legitimately. A permit normally costs R100.

The Cape Argus has copies of some of these permits. Although every permit issued should be gazetted in the Provincial Gazette, none of these appear to have been.

After Ms Miller had approached the provincial MECs, Mr Meyer undertook to investigate the allegations provided complainants were prepared to submit affidavits to him.

The whistleblowers want the province to appoint a judicial inquiry into the board's activities.

They want to be indemnified from prosecution in exchange for information on how they themselves obtained permits. And they want to keep their permits – not all obtained legitimately.

They said "gifts" to past and present board members included cash, washing machines, a tea-set worth R2 000, car services, crayfish, wine and domestic jobs. One board member allegedly had his yard paved.

The disgruntled operators claimed the taxi industry was run by about 10 taxi bosses who controlled the number of taxi permits on each route.

They alleged board members would seek approval from these bosses before issuing new permits. Usually the applicants denied permits belonged to rival associations.

The scandal has come into the open with the new attempt by the provincial Department of Transport to regulate routes.

No quick-fix solution for taxi men

(332) ARG 26/2/98

BLACKMAN NGORO
STAFF REPORTER

About 1 688 applications for taxi permits have been received by the Local Road Transportation Board since the legalisation of "illegal" taxi operators began in 1996.

More than 80% did not qualify.

By the end of January only 322 permits had been granted and about half had been issued so far, board chairman Bernard Miskey said. This was because in some cases vehicles had yet to be roadworthied.

Only taxi drivers who could prove they had been on the road before October 1996, when the legalisation process began, are eligible for permits.

But Mr Miskey said most drivers had been unable to prove they had owned a vehicle before this date and needed affidavits stating they had owned it.

They also had to submit at least two affidavits that they had been operating from a specific rank for a certain period.

Mr Miskey said a large number of applicants had failed to meet the requirements.

But Debbie Miller, a member of the Cape Town Human Rights Consultancy who has been helping disgruntled taxi operators, said some drivers had been applying for permits for five years without success.

She said the board did not have to give reasons for rejecting applications.

Mr Miskey said permits were transferable subject to filling in a form available from his office.

He said the special legalisation process was a "quick fix" solution for taxi operators who had operated without permits for years.

Two hurt in flare-up of taxi violence

(332)

MANDLA MNYAKAMA
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ARG 27/2/98

A driver was shot and hurt, and a woman vegetable hawker was wounded by a stray bullet, in a new upsurge of taxi violence.

Gcinikhaya Nopoto, who was hit in the stomach and buttock, is in a satisfactory condition in Tygerberg Hospital.

He was a former member of the Codeta taxi group and was apparently shot by members of Eyethu, a new taxi association operating in Khayelitsha.

The fight was said to have been fuelled by what operators called the "irregular manner" in which Eyethu operated.

The organisation has been accused of bypassing an agreement regulating the movement of taxis in the area. Eyethu taxis are supposed to stay in Khayelitsha, taking people to the Site C taxi terminus from where they can catch taxis to other parts of Cape Town.

But Eyethu taxis have allegedly been taking commuters direct to Mitchell's Plain in breach of the agreement between Codeta and the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Associations which brought peace after years of taxi violence.

Codeta has accused the police of doing nothing to defuse the situation.

A man has been arrested in connection with the shooting of Mr Nopoto.

Police inspector Anton van der Merwe said there had been various complaints of Eyethu and Codeta allegedly assaulting and intimidating each other's members.

Positive Manuel seeking 'realistic figure' for unemployment

(332) BD 27/2/98

Greta Steyn

THE finance ministry was working with the Central Statistical Service (CSS) to arrive at a realistic unemployment figure, Finance Minister Trevor Manuel said last night.

Manuel was speaking in a Centre for Development and Enterprise debate on the growth, employment and redistribution (Gear) strategy.

"The official figure of 32% does not strike me as real. There is no safety net, and the extended family might help out a bit, but that would not be enough for 32% unemployment," Manuel said.

Official CSS statistics were not picking up major changes in the economy, such as widespread use of independent contractors and growth in small businesses.

"The object of the exercise is not to cook the books and bring the unemployment rate down to 2%. We know it is uncomfortably high. But we must have a good enough measure that takes account of huge changes," Manuel said.

He defended government's track record in implementing Gear, saying critics made the mistake of looking at one or two indicators, such as jobs, which were not responding.

As examples of successes he mentioned that Gear's tax holidays had elicited R1,4bn in investment commitments for 48 projects which would create 5 000 jobs. "It is not enough, we know, but it is happening."

He also argued that the macroeconomic strategy was the reason why SA had held up well when the east Asian crisis swept through emerging markets around the world.

Gear was about creating the right environment for investors. As evidence of the favourable environment, he quoted from an Economist Intelligence Unit study which studied 27 countries and found SA was the cheapest one in which to do business.

Standard Bank chairman Conrad Strauss said there had been real progress in implementing Gear, except in the area of labour market flexibility.

The pace of privatisation had also been too slow and there was an absence of any discussion on investment in "human capital".

Factors beyond the control of economic policy makers had contributed to its being unable to meet the quantitative targets.

These included the fall in commodity prices, the effects of globalisation, crime and the lack of management capacity.

Picture: Page 2

Permit scam: A-G may protect those who give info

Cape Argus reporter verbally abused by angry 'Mr Big' in transport industry

ARGUS 10/3/98 (332)

BLACKMAN NGORO
STAFF REPORTER

The attorney-general's office will "probably" protect taxi operators from prosecution if they help blow the whistle on what is claimed to be a massive gifts-for-permits scam in the Local Road Transportation Board.

This has been confirmed by Chris-Thinus van der Vyver of the attorney-general's office in the Western Cape.

"There are people who would like to come forward and give evidence against some in the taxi industry," he said. "You sometimes make a decision that you are going to prosecute one person and use the other as witness. But we need proper affidavits."

These comments follow the Cape Argus exposure of alleged corruption in the granting of taxi permits.

Taxi operators claimed some officials handed out permits in exchange for gifts and bribes.

Debbie Miller of the Human Rights Consultancy – who has been working with taxi operators opposed to the corruption – said she had collected no fewer than 68 affidavits from operators seeking indemnity.

She would hand these to the attorney-general's office and believed they would strengthen the case against corrupt officials.

Ms Miller added: "Taxi operators will definitely be protected from prosecution and will have a chance of their permits being legalised as soon as a deal on indemnity is struck with the attorney-general's office."

In response to the Cape Argus report, Bernard Miskey, chairman of the Local Road Transportation Board, invited anyone who felt they had an axe to grind to come forward and have their files examined.

One operator, who was fed up with the board for not granting him the permits he had applied for legitimately, took up the invitation and asked the Cape Argus to accompany him.

When the reporter and the operator arrived at the offices of the board, they were accosted by a hostile Achmat Dyason, out-going chairman of the Western Cape Taxi Representative Council.

Mr Dyason – who is not a member of the board, but is an influential figure in the local taxi industry – angrily accused the Cape Argus of interfering in the work of the board.

Shouting at the top of his voice, he blamed the newspaper for giving the taxi industry a bad name, and "making us look like gangsters".

He was joined in the attack by a member of his own association, the Hanover Park-City Taxi Association.

The rumpus was so disruptive that a board official, Debbie Page, had to ask Mr Dyason to quieten down as there was a private consultation taking place, but he kept up his attack on the newspaper.

Later, board secretary Cathy Buzby said: "You should lay a charge against him.

"We don't encourage this kind of thing and we don't want to be held responsible, even if it took place in our offices."

Maharaj convenes talks on future of taxi industry

Pearl Sebolao (332) BD 17/3/98

TRANSPORT Minister Mac Maharaj is to convene a national taxi task team plenary next month to discuss the future of the taxi industry.

This could pave the way for the disbandment of the task team and the recognition of the Interim National Taxi Council as the industry's mouthpiece.

Yesterday Maharaj met delegates of the interim council, representing provincial taxi councils and major taxi bodies. The council submitted proposals on future regulation and outlined its work so far. It called for limited statutory powers and the transfer of the task team's brief to it.

It also called on government to assist in the process of unifying the industry and disempowering those who sought disunity. Government was requested to provide for short-term funding to assist with the peace and unity process

Maharaj said he would meet with transport MECs from the various provinces today to discuss the council's proposals. He expressed support for the establishment of a formal body for the industry, saying that if the body obtained support of all the stakeholders it would have a positive impact.

Council interim chairman Basil Nagel said there was enthusiasm within the taxi industry for the establishment of a unifying body. He was confident that everything would be finalised soon and the body launched by June. Various subcommittees have been set up, including the conflict resolution, finance, and business and marketing subcommittees.



Transport Minister Mac Maharaj, second from left, met land transport deputy director-general Dipak Patel, left, and taxi industry representatives Joe Boweni, Reuben Ndlovu and Julius Kapeng in Pretoria yesterday to discuss developments in the taxi industry.

Picture: ROBERT BOTHA

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Low wage increases anticipated as consumer price index drops

Reneé Grawitzky

BD 17/3/98

EMPLOYERS were anticipating wage increases ranging between 6% and 8% this year in view of the sharp drop in the consumer price index from an overall average of 8,7% last year to its current level of 5,7%, consultants said yesterday.

Despite high employer expectations of low single digit increases, unions were anticipating increases in line with settlements reached last year, the consultants said.

Andrew Levy & Associates' annual report stated that overall settlement levels last year averaged 9,7%, slightly down on the previous years' average of 9,9%. The report said, however, that despite a rise in the average pay per worker, unit labour costs had declined because of a rise in the average real labour productivity. The report said: "Whereas the average compensation per factory worker appears to have risen by about 10%, the average increase of around 7% in average manufacturing labour productivity limited the factory-sector unit labour cost inflation rate to only about 3% in nominal rand terms".

Durban-based consultant Pat Stone said that with inflation down and rising costs, employers wanted to settle closer to 6% and 8% rather than between 9% and 10%. Private sector employers were picking up the message delivered by government in terms of its stance on wage increases for public servants. "Government's stand will filter through to the private sector that it has a pay policy, even if it's not formalised."

Gavin Weiner of Weiner Campanella & Associates said employers had carefully watched the security industry strike which settled overall on 10% on wages with a total package of 14%. Employers, he said, were not prepared to settle above the 10% mark, with many small and medium size enterprises, recovering from retrenchments, anticipating low single-digit increases.

Taxi regulation causes row in legislature

(332)

Farouk Chotia

BD 19/3/98

ULUNDI — A row with racial overtones erupted during a session of the KwaZulu-Natal legislature yesterday, when Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) MPs tried to prevent the passage of a bill aimed at regulating the taxi industry.

IFP chief whip Mike Tarr told a specially convened meeting of the transport portfolio committee the IFP caucus was opposed to a decision by speaker Gideon Mdlalose that the bill be debated during the current session because it was an urgent matter.

The interim minibus taxi bill — piloted by ANC KwaZulu-Natal deputy-chairman and transport MEC Sibusiso Ndebele — sought to legalise taxi operators and eradicate violence emanating from conflict over routes. Tarr said correct procedures had not been followed in tabling the bill and insufficient consultation had taken place over its contents.

Ndebele denied his claims, while ANC MP Dumisani Mkhaye charged that elements in the IFP wanted to "sabotage" the bill because "not enough Africans had died" in taxi conflict.

Tarr then stormed out of the committee meeting, saying: "I refuse to hear this garbage."

In the legislature, Mdlalose held back on ruling whether the bill should be debated, saying he would do so today.

Taxi violence claims another victim

By Dan Fuphe

THE ongoing taxi violence in Greater Benoni, allegedly between members of the Benoni Taxi Association (BTA) and the Benoni Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Belldta), has claimed another life.

An unidentified young taxi driver, thought to belong to Belldta, was shot on Friday and died about 100 metres from where two minibus taxis had been attacked on the same day near the Benoni railway station taxi rank.

According to police spokesman Captain Kamal Shivinand a taxi belonging to Belldta was fired at by a number of attackers. "The driver of the kombi and his passengers jumped out and ran for cover. A passenger also managed to return fire but the driver of the kombi was chased and eventually fatally wounded about 100 metres away from the scene," Shivinand said.

The taxi violence flare-up came less than 24 hours after the funeral of BTA public relations officer Mr Bisile "Kwaito" Komane (46) on Thursday afternoon.

Komane was shot four times outside his home in Sia Street, Daveyton.

The two killings are the latest in the protracted taxi violence in Greater Benoni which to date has resulted in more than 40 such violent killings since it broke out in 1994.

BUDGET RESPONSE

Rise called a 'calculated move' by the government aimed at boosting domination of trains and buses

Taxi industry slams 10c a litre fuel levy increase

NCABA HLOPHE

Johannesburg — The 10c a litre rise in the fuel levy announced in the Budget was a calculated move by the government to squeeze minibus taxi operators out of the market and boost the domination of buses and trains, Jacob Baleni, the general secretary of the National African Federated Transport Organisation (Nafto), said yesterday.

He said the levy would result in the collapse of many operators who did not receive the subsidies enjoyed by bus operators and train operators.

"The minibus taxi industry is not subsidised, and each operator has to bear the brunt of such levy increases without any support from the government," Baleni said.

There are an estimated 130 000 taxis in the country, with about 60 000 operating illegally. The industry's turnover is about R3 billion a year.

Ketso Gordhan, director-general of the department of transport, said that although the taxi industry had a valid concern, it had to appreciate that the fuel levy was used by governments worldwide as a general tax to fund their expenditure.

The increase in the petrol levy is expected to raise an additional R1,7 billion for the fiscus but add less than 0,5 percent to consumer inflation.

Herman Lemmer, the chief executive officer of the Road Freight Association (RFA), said the increased petrol levy would cripple the road transportation industry's competition against rail transportation.

"This is an indication of unequal treatment between road and rail transportation, and the timing was bad because the freight industry is facing greater competition," Lemmer said.

But Tony Twine, a senior economist at Econometrix, said there were no grounds for the minibus taxi industry to complain about the levy because petrol prices had been rising at a slower rate than consumer inflation for the past 10 years.



IN A JAM *Nafto has warned that the 10c a litre increase in the fuel levy will result in the collapse of the mini-bus taxi industry*

Heavy police and army presence fail to put brakes on taxi violence

(332) Star 25/3/98

Despite a strong police and army presence in Soshanguve and Mamelodi townships, where taxi violence has claimed four lives and caused extensive damage, two more people were wounded in shootings this morning.

The two taxi operators were wounded in a drive-by shooting at the Denneboom taxi rank at about 6.45am.

Others have been admitted to the Mamelodi Day Hospital in a serious condition.

Police arrested two suspects shortly afterwards, bringing the total number of arrests to 13 since the violence broke out in the two townships on Monday.

While taxis were running in Soshanguve, thousands of commuters in Mamelodi were left stranded today as almost no taxis were operating from the township.

Taxi operators allegedly also prevented train commuters from boarding at the Denneboom station.

In Mamelodi the situation was still tense after the arrest of at least seven taxi operators at about 6.45am yesterday following a shootout with police.

And in Soshanguve, members of the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association kept each other under close watch – a move police feared could spark even further violence. – Pretoria Correspondent

Four die in taxi violence

(332)

Sowetan 25/3/98

By Gershwin Chuenyane

FOUR people were shot dead and five minibus taxis were gutted in separate incidents of renewed taxi-related violence in Pretoria yesterday.

By late yesterday police and army reinforcements were deployed to Soshanguve's Blue Taxi Rank, where three people – including two taxi drivers – were killed by unknown assailants during the morning's peak-hour traffic.

In Mamelodi police arrested seven suspects after sporadic gunfire at the Denneboom taxi rank. No one was injured.

According to police a 51-year-old taxi driver, belonging to South African Long and Local Distance Taxi Association, was shot twice at point blank range and killed by an unknown gunman at the Denneboom taxi rank in Mamelodi West on Monday morning.

Police also confirmed the arrest of the seven suspects who were charged with "discharging of arms in a municipal area".

Mamelodi police spokesman Captain Elias Mawela said: "We will know the reasons for the shootings once we have held a meeting with the Mamelodi Taxi Association and Mamelodi Long and Local Distance Taxi Association this afternoon."

Mawela said two previous meetings scheduled to take place at the Mamelodi West police station with the two associations failed because of the a renewed attacks.

Rosslyn police spokesman Captain John Mabaso said: "We planned a 24-hour patrol with the assistance of the army. We are going to cover the area around Transfer, near the Soshanguve police station and the Blue Taxi Rank rank."

Appeals to regulate tow-truck industry

Friction in united body claimed

(332)
ARG 26/3/98

CHARLES PHAHLANE
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

Serious friction in the United Towing Association has spurred calls for government regulation of the tow-truck industry with a parliamentary sub-committee lending its weight.

Vice-chairman of the UTA Yasmin Rabikissoon said chairman Francois Conradie was acting without consulting his committee, half the members of the association wanted him to resign and his appointment was invalid.

A letter of complaint was sent to Safety and Security MEC Gerard Morkel last month, asking him to intervene since he started the process of establishing the UTA in March last year. The UTA is an amalgamation of the Professional Towing Association and the Cape Towing Association.

The organisation is in advanced talks to have access to the accident frequency of the police radio communication system. At present, some use illegal scanners for which, if caught, they face heavy fines.

Mr Conradie's election to the chairmanship was also done in an "improper" manner, it is claimed.The letter said he railroaded his way into the position in the absence of other members and those present could not do anything because Mr Conradie "was too strong for them".

Members were afraid to speak out against him as police would be sent to raid their houses for scanners. Also, a newly appointed superintendent of Pinelands Radio Control was accused of handling the election meeting in an "unprofessional" manner.

Mr Conradie said he was willing to resign at any time and go back to the CTA, which he used to lead.

"Mr Rabikissoon is the trouble-maker. He does not want me as chairman ... they (Mr and Mrs Rabikissoon) can select a new leader and we will have two associations again," he said.

Mrs Rabikissoon claimed that police at Pinelands Radio Control were stopping them from operating in white areas, saying they should work in coloured areas because they were coloured.

The sub-committee decided that the matter was an internal one, but allegations of racism should be investigated.

The transport department is preparing legislation on regulation of the industry which will be debated in Parliament next year.

Parliamentary body to tackle industry woes

(332)

ARG 26/3/98

PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

Plans are afoot to regulate the cut-throat and lucrative towtruck industry after a towing association made a presentation to a Parliament subcommittee.

But legislation will only reach Parliament towards the end of next year as the process had to first go through provinces, a department official said.

Competition is escalating among truckers with insurance companies paying about R400 for a wreck.

Panelbeaters also raise the stakes, paying up to R600 for a wreck, as it gives them a chance to provide a quote for repairs to the insurance company.

With these incentives, the towtruck industry is fast becoming a law unto itself with operators modifying engines to reach speeds in excess of 200 km/h and listening in on police radio signals. Turf wars have erupted involving some Western Cape gangsters.

Towing fees are also irregular with people being charged exorbitant amounts for short towing distances. Problems have been encountered with the way the Automobile Association call room distributes services.

The AA pays a fixed rate of R55 for a callout of up to a maximum of 80km in the Western Cape, regardless of the actual distance travelled, but when a wreck occurs in coloured areas, a white trucker is given the job.

Small operators are squeezed out by bullying from bigger dealers who operate with support from police, said vice-chairman of the United Towing Association Yasmin Rabikissoon.

MP John Mavuso, during the submission by a faction of the United Towing Association, said: "There is no regulation to make it financially viable. I think we will have to take the same route with the towtruck industry as we did with the taxi industry.

The UTA was formed to amalgamate two towing associations in the Western Cape and to facilitate communication with the police and insurance companies.

However, the fragile unity is threatening to break.

MP Gregory Rockman said the Transport Department should conduct a study of conditions in the towing industry which will inform it on its drafting of regulatory legislation.

The committee said it was fully behind moves to regulate the industry.

"The committee fully supports the UTA and any other association in favour of regulating the industry and the department of transport's work up to this point," said Nkosinathi Nhleko, acting chairman of the subcommittee on transport.

Dissident elements may be behind Pretoria taxi violence

Star - 26/3/98 (332)

By Gasant Abarder
Crime Reporter

Pretoria taxi associations believe that this week's gunbattles between their members were caused by dissidents within their organisations, as the parties concerned had agreed on a peace pact.

A taxi driver was shot and killed in a drive-past shooting by unknown gunmen at about 3pm yesterday in College Road, Soshanguve, north of Pretoria.

He was a member of the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta).

Police spokesman Captain Morne van Wyk said a 9mm pistol and either an R-4 or R-5 rifle were used in the attack.

Two people were injured at the Denneboom taxi rank in Mamelodi earlier yesterday after shootings between members of the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta) and Felldta.

Van Wyk said that at about 6.45am a pedestrian and a taxi driver from the Mamelodi Local and Long Distance Taxi Association were injured in a shootout between taxi drivers.

Two drivers were arrested and charged.

Felldta spokesman William Sindane said his association was not directly involved, but an affiliated body, the Soshanguve Local and Long Distance Taxi Association, was.

"The conflict started last Wednesday when one of the Soshanguve members was shot.

"At this stage we have an understanding with Saldta," Sindane said.

Saldta spokesman Wesley Mpawu confirmed that an agreement had been reached with Felldta to put an end to the clashes.

"We are requesting an immediate meeting with Felldta because we believe the violence is the work of bad elements in both parties," Mpawu said.

Police believe the conflict arises because of a money struggle between taxi bosses and drivers.

"Taxi bosses want their cuts of about R50 a day from each driver. It's all about power and the monopoly of the taxi industry," Van Wyk said.

■ **Sapa** reports that KwaZulu Natal Transport MEC S'bu Ndebele yesterday urged taxi associations in Umlazi not to resort to violence with regard to a dispute over taxi routes between the township and Durban.

Task team not yet ready to tackle problems

(332)

By Gasant Abarder

The National Taxi Task Team, created three years ago after talks between Transport Minister Mac Maharaj and the transport industry, was not yet in place to resolve violence, deputy chairman Dipak Patel said yesterday.

Patel said the task team had made 95 interim recommendations to the ministry last year. A closing report was submitted this year.

It had been decided that the task team would only monitor the taxi industry, Patel said.

"Any provincial taxi violence falls in the hands of the police and the government of that province," he said.

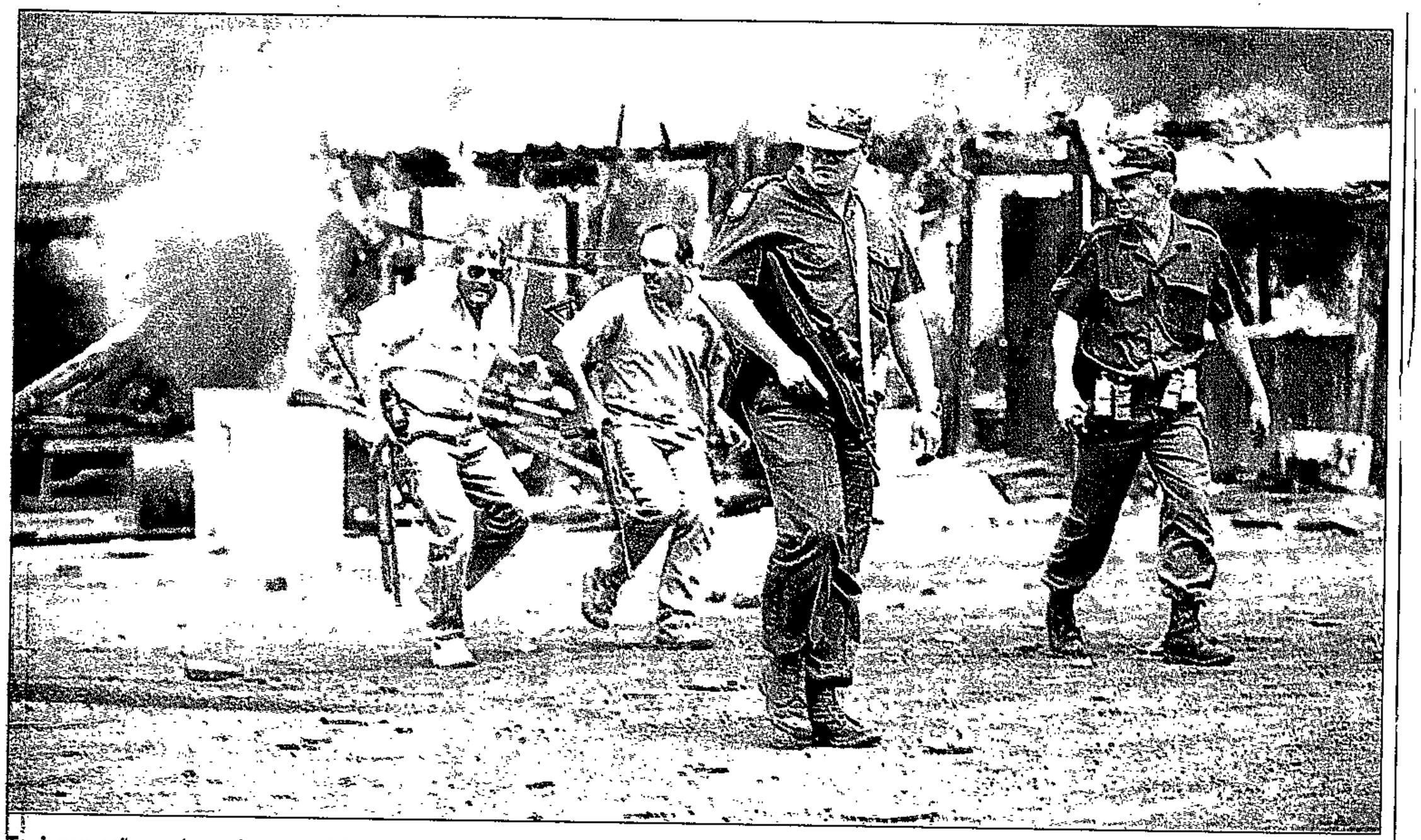
Gauteng Transport MEC Paul Mashatile said the province was trying to register all taxi organisations.

"Conflict will inevitably occur and our goal is to eliminate it completely. The taxi summit on April 4 will facilitate this," he said.

He said his department was monitoring Soshanguve and Mamelodi, north of Pretoria, where taxi violence erupted again this week. A conflict resolution team, working with the department of safety and security, was also involved.

Mashatile said he would hold talks with the Soshanguve Local and Long Distance Taxi Association today and the SA Long Distance Taxi Association tomorrow to discuss a resolution between warring organisations.

Star 26/3/98



Taxi war: police and security guards take cover as school pupils' petrol bombs set alight hawkers' shacks in Mamelodi yesterday

(332)

Five killed as taxi violence rocks Pretoria

ARG 27/3/98

Pretoria – Five people were shot dead and six people, including a schoolboy, have been injured in the taxi war that has ravaged Pretoria's Mamelodi and Soshanguve townships since Monday.

Police yesterday said a Mamelodi schoolboy was shot in the hand by a taxi driver.

The boy was part of a group of some 3 000 schoolchildren who confronted taxi operators about what appears to be a fierce turf battle between the SA Long Distance Taxi Association and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association.

After the boy was shot, the schoolchildren went on the rampage. The group used petrol bombs to set alight between 60 and 80 hawkers' shacks, two taxis and a car.

Gauteng police spokesman Captain Sipho Ngubane yesterday condemned the shootings as "an appalling waste of innocent human life".

He said since the beginning of the year there had been 57 incidents of taxi violence in which 25 people were killed. – Sapa

Taxi viol

(332) CP 29/3/98

By PHALANE MOTALE

THE ongoing taxi-related violence – especially in Pretoria – seems to be far from over after another peace agreement was broken this week.

At least six people lost their lives since Monday in Soshanguve and Mamelodi and several vehicles were gutted after another peace agreement earlier signed by the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta) failed to retain stability in the industry.

The two associations signed a peace agreement at a meeting convened by a mediator in Pretoria on January 22.

The present situation led to thousands of high school pupils in Mamelodi going on the rampage on Thursday, destroying about 100 shacks and setting fire to vehicles after protesting against the ongoing violence.

Claims by Salldta spokesman Wesley Mpawu that neither his organisation nor Felldta was involved in the present violence, but that rather a third force destined to destabilise the country prior to next year's general election could be responsible were rejected by his counterpart in Felldta.

Mpawu told City Press that both associations were at peace with each other, and only a third force could be held responsible for the recent spate of attacks on innocent operators and commuters.

"The violence is beyond people in the taxi industry or the two associations.

"A third force destined to destabilise the country prior to next year's general elections, could be responsible for all these chaos," Mpawu said.

But Felldta spokesman in Soshanguve Job Mahlo, denied the involvement of a third force.

He told City Press that if a third force was involved, why would it only target Felldta members.

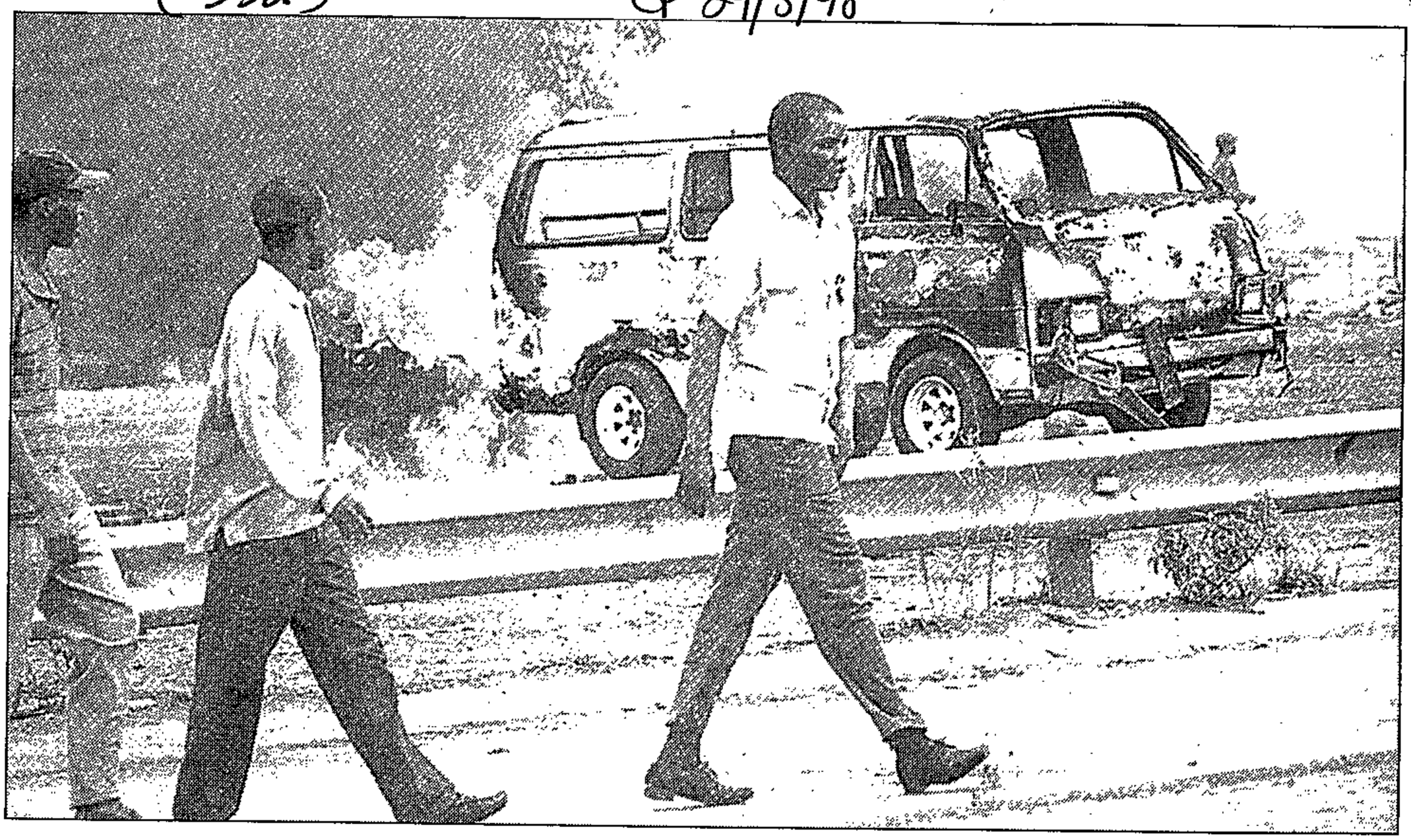
"That is pure nonsense. We have already lost four members within a week. And there is no doubt about it that Salldta is responsible for their deaths," he said.

But another Salldta member who did not want to be named said the apparent involvement of a third force became evident this week when thousands of Mamelodi pupils went on the rampage at the local Denneboom taxi rank.

According to Mamelodi chairperson of the Congress of South African Students (Cosas) Lesby Kabini, more than 3 000 pupils gathered at the taxi rank at about 11am to peacefully protest against the vi-

ence continues to claim lives

(332) CP 29/3/98



ANTI-VIOLENCE? . . . *One of several minibus taxis which were set alight by angry Mamelodi pupils during a protest march against the ongoing taxi violence.* **■Pic: JONAS MANKGA**

olence.

But at about 2pm a shot was fired at the school children and a bullet grazed the hand of one of them, he said.

"We received information that taxi operators hid weapons in the stalls and just wanted to show them that the community is tired of senseless taxi violence in the area," Kabini said.

Pretoria police spokesman Captain Morne van Wyk said: "This prompted the children to go on the rampage, setting fire to shacks and vehicles".

He said police believe the conflict in Mamelodi and Soshanguve stemmed from the ongoing struggle between Salldta and Felldta.

The group apparently used petrol bombs to set alight between 100 hawkers' shacks, minibus taxis and a private car.

Van Wyk said the protesters dispersed after police fired teargas into the crowd.

No arrests have been made.

The pupils' confrontation with the taxi operators has worried some members of the community.

Many hawkers who comprised unemployed women, expressed their concern about the involvement of the children in the taxi war.

A spokesperson for the hawkers said the incident was sparked to bring friction between them, the pupils and taxi operators.

"Though we have lost everything including our only source of income, we hold no grudge against the pupils because it is clear that there is a sinister force behind the whole incident," she said.

Mamelodi High School headmaster and former Pretoria mayor Slo Ramokhoase told City Press that the possibility of a third force could not be ruled out, though it was still early to draw a conclusion.

"Without being naive, there are no pointers at this stage that a third force could be involved. But one should also bear in mind that nothing can be ruled out in a transformation because faceless people and other forces of darkness could take advantage of the situation," he said.

Ramokhoase said the pupils of Mamelodi had marched on the taxi rank in good faith on Thursday to protest against the ongoing taxi violence which was threatening peace in the area.

Trouble started on Monday morning when a 51-year-old Salldta-affiliated taxi driver was shot dead at the Denneboom taxi rank in Mamelodi, east of Pretoria.

This was followed by isolated incidents of stone-throwing and shooting in the area later in the day, in which several people were injured and rushed to the local hospital.

On Tuesday morning the violence then spread to Soshanguve, north of Pretoria where a 58-year-old taxi driver and Felldta member Simon Mantokwane was shot dead in Block TT about 6am.

At about 7.30am, a 42-year-old pedestrian was killed at the Rietgat taxi rank when Felldta members apparently opened fire on an alleged hitsquad car.

Taxi association banned at rank

(332) Sowetan 3/4/98

By Gershwin Chuenyane

THE Mamelodi Civic Association has endorsed the barring of the Mamelodi Long and Local Distance Taxi Association (Malldta) from operating at the Denneboom taxi rank after Malldta reneged on a peace agreement signed last week.

The civic body resolved to endorse the banning of Malldta at a meeting in Mamelodi yesterday attended by the Congress of South African Students, the African National Congress Youth League and the South African Students Congress.

The civic body alleged that after the signing of the March 30 peace agreement between the rival taxi associations, Malldta and the Mamelodi Amalgamated Taxi Association (Mata), following violence which claimed two lives in Mamelodi and five in Soshanguve, Malldta informed the next meeting on March 31 that it did not recognise the resolutions.

It also allegedly said it did not recognise agreements of the previous meeting because their delegates had no mandate to sign or make any agreement.

Meeting 'illegal'

Malldta's claims were that the March 30 meeting was illegal, that they were pressured into signing the agreement, and that they wanted the Federation of Long and Local Distance Taxi Association (Felldta), the Ministry of Transport and the Gauteng department of transport to be present at future meetings.

The civic body's spokesman Mr David Ncube said: "Our position is that Malldta is not committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

"It does not have the Mamelodi community's interests at heart."

Pre-paid taxi fare card system angers passengers and drivers

(332) CP 5/4/98

By MOSES SHIBA

THE implementation of a pre-paid fare card system by a Soweto taxi association this week has angered passengers and taxi drivers.

Thousands of commuters were stranded on Thursday after drivers affiliated to the powerful Bara-City Taxi Association expressed their rejection of the system by going on strike, only returning to work on Friday.

Taxis from other associations had to ferry commuters to work.

To worsen the situation, the Chief Executive Officer of the company that introduced the taxi fare card system, Serge Belamant, threatened to take legal action against the association if the system was discontinued.

"We will take legal steps against them (Bara-City). They have to give the system a chance or we will take them to court," said Belamont.

The cards that caused all this problem cost R15 each.

After the card is used up the commuter will reload it with whatever amount they wish to spend on taxi fare – from fare for a day to up to a year.

Some taxi drivers who spoke to City Press yesterday said they were concerned they would get no more "draad" (extra pocket money), and would have to survive on their low wages. They also complained of lack of consultation.

But association chairman Sipho Mtambo disputed the taxi drivers' claims. He said drivers and commuters were extensively consulted about the card system.

Mtambo said the strike started because of taxi owners who were misled about paying the card company 10 percent of their takings.

He wants to lure back people who abandoned taxis in favour of other forms of transport.

"We have competition in the industry and we want to use the card system which will make it easier for people not to have to use cash every day," he said.

"We won't sell cards to people forcefully. We are not prepared to infringe the passengers' rights," said Mtambo.

Taxi drivers applaud closure

Star 7/4/98 (332)

By Gasant Abarder
Crime Reporter

Warring taxi organisations have welcomed the closing of a taxi rank near Pretoria in an attempt to counter the latest spate of violence in Gauteng.

The Rietgat taxi rank near Soshanguve, Pretoria, has been closed indefinitely by police because of continued fighting between members of the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta) and the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta).

Pretoria spokesman for Gauteng's anti-taxi violence unit, Inspector Tiaan Crous, said the Rietgat rank would stay closed and the police stability unit would guard the rank to prevent further attacks. He said he doubted whether the situation between the two bodies would be resolved soon because both parties wanted a monopoly of the industry.

Pretoria police spokesman Inspector Gideon Thessner said the weekend's incidents included arson and a shooting in which Felldta driver Simon Malopane (38) was killed on Saturday.

Another man suffered injuries when he ran from the shooting. The violence in Pretoria has continued for at least a month.

Thessner said the rank was closed immediately after the shooting, and no violence was reported on Sunday and yesterday.

Salldta spokesman Wesley Mpawu said the organisation's commuters felt that the shutting down of the rank was a blessing in disguise.

"When Felldta members come from a funeral they just want to attack. We are losing a lot of money, but the people we lose are far more important. The decision taken to close down the rank was a superb one," Mpawu said.

Four people who were arrested on March 31 – including a policeman from Ga-Rankuwa police station, Sergeant Raymond Botolo (33), and Zion Christian Church priest Alpheus Maake (57) – were denied bail on Friday.

They, along with two other suspects, Joseph Mabotja (29) and Jeffrey Seanego (21), face a series of charges including murder and attempted murder. The case will continue on Thursday.

Rietgat police spokesman Captain John Mabaso said that according to investigations, Botolo was allegedly involved in planning the shooting. He allegedly used lower-ranking members of the taxi organisations to execute his plans.

Mpawu said he believed there was a third force at work: "Police members are being used to carry out attacks. People are not investigating properly. I believe that even the justice system is involved."

Meanwhile, on the East Rand, Fila Mbokazi (42) of the Germiston/Edenvale Taxi Association was killed in his car by two gunmen in Primrose on Sunday night.

SAPS spokesman Inspector Michelle Erasmus said police were investigating whether the attack was related to a strike which started on Thursday because members felt that taxi owners were not treating them fairly.

The strike continued yesterday, and Erasmus described the situation as quiet but tense.

Six die in hail of bullets (332) at taxi ranks

ARG 9/4/98

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

Johannesburg – Six people were killed and eight were injured in an hour-long, violent spree of four drive-by shootings at taxi ranks in Pretoria this morning.

The attacks brought to an end a brief halt to clashes between rival taxi organisations.

A police spokesman said that it seemed as though Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta) members allegedly shot at SA Local and Long Distance Taxi Association members.

The brazen shootings lasted from about 6am to 7.15am.

The first shooting happened in Soutpan Road when a driver was shot dead and a passenger injured. Three more people were killed and five were injured in Block PP of the Soshanguve rank when more shooting broke out.

The fifth person was shot dea[illegible]lock GG and the sixth was killed in Block TT, where a taxi was also burnt out. It was not yet clear in which incident the other two victims were injured.

Death keeps on boarding the taxis in Soshanguve

(332)

By PHALANE MOTALE

CP 12/4/98

WEEKS of bloody feuds between rival taxis in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, have turned the township into a hotbed of suspicion and betrayal.

And with the cycle of violence again threatening to spill over to the surrounding areas of Ga-Rankuwa and Mabopane in the North West, the existence of third force elements in the ravaging war between the South African Long and Local Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta) is no longer in doubt.

In the past month at least 14 people died and 38 were wounded in the area. Police arrested 14 suspects.

On Thursday, the day when at least six people were killed in Soshanguve, Deputy Minister of Intelligence Joe Nhlanhla told a press conference in Pretoria that the existence of third force elements was no longer in doubt, and it was time they were dealt with decisively.

"Those who were shooting at trains in the early 1990s are now hiring themselves out for other activities, such as stoking taxi violence. The third force has become an industry out of control," Nhlanhla said.

Police spokesman, Inspector Gideon Thessner, said it appeared that in all the attacks on Thursday AK—47 assault rifles and 9 mm pistols were used on the victims, who were Salldta members.

A series of attacks during the past two years has prompted frustrated police officials to bring in an independent investigation team to break the vicious tit-for-tat shootings which have left at least 80 people, including passengers and drivers, dead in Soshanguve.

Despite police being accused of complicity in the taxi war, they made significant breakthroughs in the past month with the arrest of 14 alleged hitmen, including a police sergeant and a Zion Christian Church priest.

However, tensions have again started to rise in the area following attacks on rival operators.

A Soshanguve police spokesperson said they were preparing for the worst and have stepped up patrols in the area by various police units including the public order policing unit, the taxi violence unit and local members.

He said they were investigating the cases fully to show the community that they could be trusted to do the job properly.

At the core of the problem, according to police and involved operators, is the battle for control of the township's taxi routes.

Violence has become a way of life for several executive members of the associations.

One 47-year-old taxi owner, himself facing murder and attempted murder charges from last year's incidents, described how difficult it was to escape the spiral of violence.

"It is a living hell. I got involved by trying to defend myself from a rival association which wanted to kill me. Now they have already hired hitmen to kill me, and possibly my family.

"I just want to get out. But with the spectre of death hanging over me, I know it will be impossible. Maybe the only answer will be to take them out before they get me because at the moment I'm a walking dead man," he said.



TAXI VIOLENCE CONTINUES . . . *Different units of the police and the army manned roadblocks in trouble-torn Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, where at least six people were gunned down on Thursday. The clashes between Felldta and Salldta in the area have cost the lives of at least 14 people in the past month.*

(332)

Most dangerous taxi rank

TOM HOOD ST(CM)12/4/98

TAXI war-torn Elsies River has the most dangerous terminus in the Cape, with 19,1 crimes per 1 000 commuters reported in the six months to December.

The Cape Metropolitan Council provided 20 security staff for the terminus, which handles 16 000 commuters daily and had 306 reported cases of crime, according to a report presented to the council.

The second and third most dangerous terminuses were at Athlone, with 12,9 incidents per 1 000 commuters, and Hanover Park with 11,7 respectively, said the report.

The safest terminuses were at Cape Town (station deck taxi rank and Golden Acre bus terminus), with only 0,4 crimes per 1 000 commuters. Forty security staff looked after 98 000 commuters a day. After Cape Town came Fish Hoek (0,7), Retreat (0,9) and Mitchells Plain (1,0).

The highest number of cases of crime was at Khayelitsha with 401.

Twenty-five security staff were on duty and the terminus was used by 39 000 a day.

Another policeman held over taxi violence

Star 14/4/98 (332)

PRETORIA CORRESPONDENT

Swift action by a resident in Soshanguve, near Pretoria, led to police giving chase and arresting a second policeman suspected of involvement in taxi violence last week.

The policeman stationed on the East Rand, who cannot be identified yet, is alleged to be involved in the taxi violence that claimed six lives and injured 12 in Soshanguve on Thursday.

The arrest of the East Rand policeman follows last week's arrest of Sergeant Raymond Botolo, stationed at GaRankuwa police station, with three other men.

He was also arrested in connection with the taxi violence and appeared in court last week, where he was denied bail.

Delca Maluleka, spokesman for the Gauteng transport department, said police arrested the East Rand policeman with three other men from Pietersburg on Friday night after their white City Golf passed through a roadblock in Soshanguve.

However, a resident informed police about the car and police gave chase and arrested its occupants.

She said the weapons found in the men's possession were those mostly used by the police force.

They would appear in court today.

According to Maluleka, the men said they were offered R150 000 to carry out more taxi killings in the area. So far they had each received R2 000.

Maluleka said the men gave police a lot of information which would be used in their investigations.

"At the moment we can't divulge any information."

Two killed in taxi-related shooting

Sowetan 21/4/98 (332)

By Gershwin Chuenyane

TWO people were killed and four wounded in a pre-dawn attack as taxi violence spilled over to GaRankuwa, north of Pretoria, yesterday.

The latest drive-by shooting brings to 16 those who have died and to 42 those wounded in taxi violence in Pretoria since March this year.

A taxi driver and a queue marshall were shot and killed while four others were wounded in a drive-by shooting at Freedom Square taxi rank near GaRankuwa Hospital, north of Pretoria.

Pretoria police spokesman Inspector Gideon Thessner said unknown assailants in two green Toyota Cressidas opened fire indiscriminately with AK-47 and R5 rifles as well as 9mm pistols at the South African Long and Local Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) taxi rank at Freedom Square in GaRankuwa at 5am yesterday.

Thessner said police found 36 spent cartridges at the scene, and confirmed that a taxi driver belonging to Salldta and a queue marshall were shot dead while four others, a Salldta taxi owner, a taxi driver and two passengers, were admitted to GaRankuwa Hospital.

The two wounded passengers were in a satisfactory condition. The taxi owner was critical and the taxi driver was serious, he said.

> **"If authorities checked the armoury at Actonville police station maybe we'd find a solution"**

Thessner said no arrests had been made and police were investigating.

Salldta spokesman Mr Wesley Mpau said: "If the police authorities checked the armoury at Actonville police station in Benoni maybe we could find a solution to the taxi violence.

"We are not saying that all the cops are bad, but when one looks at the type of weapons used in the taxi violence and the fact that three policemen have already been arrested in connection with the violence, and two of those were stationed at Actonville, it confirms our suspicions that a third force is involved in the taxi violence."

Taxi violence flares up all over Gauteng

(332)

Sowetan 22/4/98

Sowetan Reporters

THREE people were killed and six wounded when a man armed with an AK-47 rifle fired shots at a minibus taxi at Eden Park on the East Rand yesterday.

Police spokeswoman Inspector Michelle Erasmus said the attack occurred at 5am at the corner of Pieterson and Leon streets. The dead were all men.

She said the injured were taken to hospital. One of the commuters, who was hit in the neck and face, was in a serious condition.

In another incident a taxi driver was shot dead and two bystanders injured when gunmen opened fire at a taxi rank in Dobsonville, Soweto.

The man, whose identity is unknown, died in Orlando East while being taken by a fellow taxi driver to Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital.

Superintendent Louis Muller of the Soweto Taxi Violence Unit yesterday confirmed the incident and said it could have been due to a build-up in tension between rival organisations.

Also in Dobsonville, several schoolchildren were injured yesterday morning when the taxi in which they were travelling was shot at.

Police spokesman Inspector John Shiburi said the taxi was full of passengers on its way to old Dobsonville when gunmen opened fire on it.

"The driver of the taxi lost control and veered off the road and children had to get out through the windows," said Shiburi.

The injured children were taken to Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital and two of them were in a critical state.

Meanwhile, three suspects, including a former policeman, have been arrested in connection with the drive-by shooting of a taxi driver at the Denneboom taxi rank in Mamelodi West, Pretoria.

Mr Jafta Mahlangu, a member of the Mamelodi Long and Local Distance Taxi Association (Malltdta) died after being shot twice in a drive-by shooting during the afternoon peak hour.

Thursday April 23 1998 SOWETAN

Taxi feud: situation still tense

(332)

Sowetan 23/4/98

By Justice Mohale

THE situation in Dobsonville, Soweto, where taxi violence erupted between the Dobsonville-Roodepoort Leratong Taxi Association and the Witwatersrand Taxi Association (Wata) on Tuesday, was still tense last night.

Soweto police spokesman Inspector John Shiburi said shots were fired yesterday at the main taxi rank in Dobsonville when members of the two taxi groups clashed. Commuters were left stranded as a result of the feud.

He said members of the Public Order Policing Forum were called in immediately and ordered taximen gathered in the area to leave, but they refused. Police fired teargas to disperse them in an attempt to avoid confrontation.

"A heavy police presence would be maintained in the area as long as this senseless violence continues," said Shiburi.

In a separate incident, Mr Goodwill Zondi was killed yesterday morning by three men in Tladi, Soweto. Shiburi said Zondi had just parked his minibus in front of a house when the three men approached him.

One of the men produced a gun and shot Zondi in the neck. Zondi died instantly. The men fled after the shooting, Shiburi said.

Five killed in attack on taxis on road to Durban

(332) Star 23/4/98

By Kim Robbison and Murray Williams

Durban – Five people were killed and at least 10 seriously injured in an upsurge of taxi violence after two minibus taxis, escorted by a BMW, came under heavy fire from another car while Durban-bound on the N3 yesterday.

Police said the two taxis, escorted by armed guards in the BMW, were travelling from Mooi River to Durban when a cream Ford Laser, carrying the gunmen, pulled up behind them about 500m from the Shongweni off-ramp.

Shots were fired at the BMW, forcing it to a halt, before the Laser sped after the taxis.

The men opened fire on the taxis, seriously injuring the driver of the first taxi and killing a woman passenger.

The driver of the second taxi lost control of his vehicle, overturned and careered into a concrete barrier. Four people were killed and at least 10 injured.

This was the third attack on taxis this week and the provincial department of transport believes it could have been averted if emergency legislation had not been halted recently.

The Interim Minibus Taxi Bill was halted because of alleged lack of consultation, and is expected to come before Parliament only early next month.

It is aimed at outlawing encroachment on taxi routes through a permit system.

In the two other incidents, two people were murdered and at least five seriously injured.

On the N2 near Mandeni, four men opened fire on a taxi from a moving car.

The driver of another minibus taxi was hospitalised after being shot by attackers in a BMW near Greytown.

Soweto taxi war alert

(332) ARG 24/4/98

Johannesburg – The army was on stand-by today and extra police units were deployed in Soweto after fresh clashes between taxi organisations.

Three people – a taxi driver and two passengers – died in Dobsonville yesterday when occupants of a white BMW opened fire on a minibus taxi.

Another taxi driver was killed in the same area on Wednesday.

Early today, police in and around Pretoria were on full alert following another murder in Eersterus.

The violence, which coincides with a nationwide resurgence in taxi warfare, has disrupted public transport in several parts of Gauteng.

Army to help curb taxi violence

Soldiers prepare to go into townships and help police keep the peace

Star 24/4/98

By Simon Zwane and Tefo Mothibeli

The army is on standby and extra police units have been deployed in Soweto. This follows renewed clashes between taxi organisations, in which four people were killed this week.

Three people – a taxi driver and two passengers – died in Dobsonville yesterday when three occupants of a white BMW opened fire on a minibus taxi. Another taxi driver was killed in the same area on Wednesday.

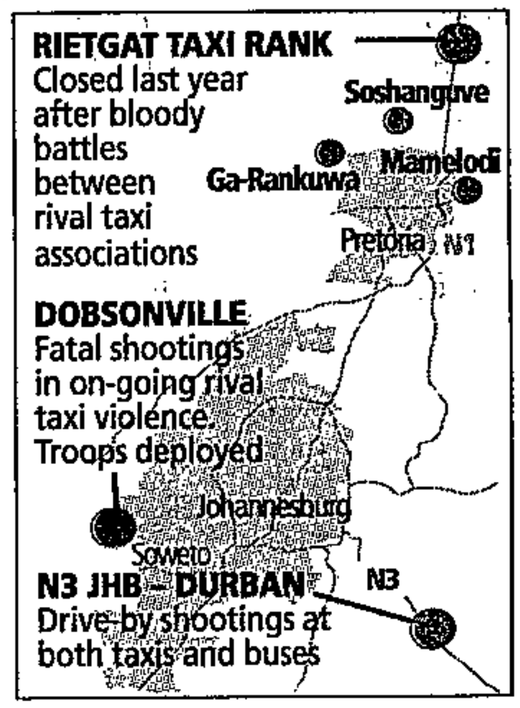
And early this morning, police in and around Pretoria were on full alert after another murder last night, when an unidentified taxi driver was shot three times with a 7,65mm calibre pistol in David Diedericks Avenue, Eersterus. Police said the driver, a member of the Taxi Organisation Peace Initiative Conglomerate (Topic), was shot by unknown gunmen travelling in a minibus and a white Nissan Skyline car.

Inspector Thessner said the driver stopped after he realised he was being followed, but was shot while trying to run away again. The killers fled in the minibus, car and the dead driver's taxi.

The violence, which coincides with a nationwide resurgence in taxi warfare, has disrupted public transport in several parts of Gauteng as many taxi owners keep their vehicles off the roads.

Two army platoons numbering about 48 men, were last night waiting to be deployed in Dobsonville to reinforce police.

Of the 61 people – drivers, owners and passengers – killed across the country so far this year, 40 died in Gauteng and eight in KwaZulu Natal.



Long-standing tensions between two rival associations in Pretoria – the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta), and the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) – have accounted for the high number of deaths in Gauteng.

Captain Mercia Fryer of the police's taxi-violence unit said 16 people had been killed and 49 injured in the Pretoria area so far this year. The East Rand had also experienced a high number of deaths.

Makubetse Sekgonyane, of the Human Rights Commission, said Operation Thiba, introduced by Gauteng's transport department in Pretoria last year, had not been effective in curbing the violence. Stickers displayed on taxis, to identify routes they had to use, had not been renewed this year.

Gauteng safety and security MEC Paul Mashatile is to meet Felldta and Salldta members in Pretoria this weekend.

The use of route stickers, initially introduced as a temporary measure, are to be enforced as a permanent feature.

Cops clamp down

Special unit uses strong measures against own

(332)
ARG 25/4/98
207

JERMAINE CRAIG

The Cape Town traffic depart ment has rejected claims that it has given up the fight against minibus-taxi lawlessness, saying it has made great strides in controlling the industry – in spite of limited resources.

The department was criticised this week after 13 people died in a collision between two minibuses in Khayelitsha on Sunday.

Alex Lawrence, the head of the Cape Town traffic department's taxi unit, said that since the formation of the unit in July last year, strong measures had been taken against taxi owners and drivers breaking laws, and nearly 1 000 arrests had been made.

He said the traffic department was enforcing the Department of Transport's campaign to regulate the taxi industry. Taxi associations had been asked to register vehicles and illegal operators were encouraged to register taxis and get permits.

The traffic department's main priority was changing the behaviour of taxi drivers and getting "death trap" taxis off the roads.

Mr Lawrence said the traffic department had stepped up its enforcement campaign on popular taxi routes such as Settler's Way, other main roads and the station deck, and was concentrating on the CBD, including Sea Point and the Waterfront, as well as Mitchell's Plain.

He said that several black traffic officers had been hired, a move that had contributed to putting a stop to the *carte blanche* enjoyed by taxi operators, especially in townships that were not policed during the apartheid era.

Mr Lawrence said that since July last year, almost 941 arrests had been made and more than 1 700 warnings issued to appear in court for offences including driving without licences, driving unlicensed or unroadworthy vehicles, speeding and overloading.

In July, 59 arrests were made and 78 warnings to appear in court were issued; in August, the figures were 60 arrests and 282 warnings; in September, 149 arrests and 203 warnings; in October, 149 arrests and 353 warnings; in November, 346 arrests and 318 warnings; in December, 20 arrests and 135 warnings; in January, 51 arrests and 117 warnings; and in February, 97 arrests and 82 warnings. Last month there were only 10 arrests and 135 warnings to appear in court.

He said the figures were an indication that the traffic department had succeeded in bringing down the number of offences and was getting the taxi industry to toe the line.

"We are sending out a message that if drivers do not comply with the law they will be ticketed, and if they do not appear in court they will be arrested. There has been an improvement and we have been very successful, especially in black areas," Mr Lawrence said.

He said the taxi associations had co-operated with the traffic department, supplying lists of their members so that the department could keep tabs on the drivers.

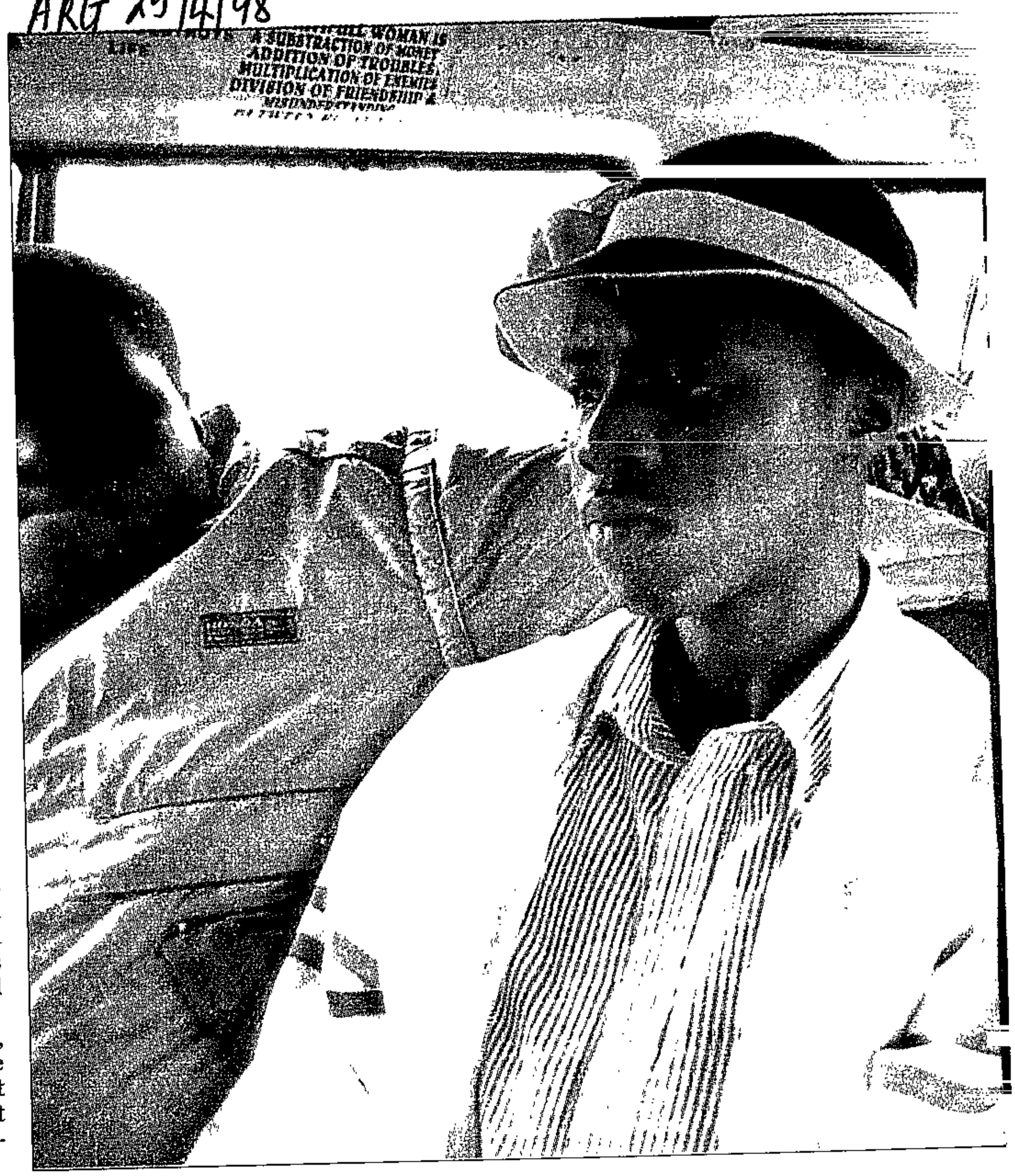
Mr Lawrence said the traffic authorities from the different local councils would compile a database of taxi operators and share information on the movements of taxis.

New legislation to eliminate the loopholes allowing taxi operators to get away with some offences was also likely to be tabled, he said.

It was compulsory for drivers to carry their identification documents with them, so that if they were ticketed they might be more easily prosecuted.

"Most of the problems we have stem from inadequate law enforcement and we are trying to sort out the problem now, but it will not be wished away," he said.

"We are saying to people that there is somebody that's interested and doing something about a problem that is not going to be wished away tomorrow."



RISKYBUSINESS: about 4 000 minibus taxis operate in and around Cape Town every day, but th

on killer taxis

ers and drivers breaking laws of the road

ARG 25/4/98 (332)



ere are no figures detailing exactly how many cause or are involved in accidents

Picture: OBED ZILWA

Speed is a big advantage – but passengers run a deadly risk

(332) ARG 25/4/98

CAROL CAMPBELL

The passengers in Patrick Depha's mini-bus taxi want a slow ride into town this week.

That horrific taxi accident last Sunday in Khayelitsha has unnerved them. Vulnerability is reflected in old and young eyes.

"Just this tin roof to protect us," says passenger Lungiswa Matshikiza, knocking the taxi roof with a knuckle.

Thirteen people died in the collision at the intersection of Swartklip Road and Lansdowne Road Extension near Khayelitsha, apparently when a taxi jumped a red robot and smashed into another mini-bus.

"It could have been any of us." she says.

There are about 4 000 minibus taxis operating in and around Cape Town every day, but transport authorities have no figures which detail exactly how many cause or are involved in accidents.

A spokesman for the Cape Town traffic department said a new form would be introduced soon in which the type and status of vehicles involved in accidents would be recorded.

"Right now we don't separate mini-bus taxis from any other type of mini-bus, so there are no statistics about how many are involved in accidents," he said.

Mrs Matshikiza boarded Mr Depha's taxi at the Site C rank in Khayelitsha and for R4 he will take her into Cape Town.

The advantages of using taxis, she says, are mainly convenience and speed.

"A train to work takes too long and there is the constant risk of being robbed. This is not an issue in a taxi," she says.

What does worry commuters is the inadequate accident insurance carried by many drivers.

"If we are in accident and I am hurt or killed, my family will get nothing," Mrs Matshikiza says.

Shaun Neels, a student, said many taxis were overcrowded and clearly unroadworthy.

"I was in a taxi this morning that overtook a bus and had to swerve to avoid a head-on collision with another taxi.

"No matter what you say to the drivers, they still do their own thing."

After Sunday's accident, he says, he was tempted never to use taxis again.

"Not all taxis and their drivers are bad. If I don't like the look of a vehicle, then I wait for the next one. Passengers do have a choice."

The passengers in Mr Depha's taxi agree he is a good driver.

Although he could make more money by rushing to his destination at Cape Town station, today he stays in the slow lane. Unlike other drivers he resists the temptation to slip onto the other side of the yellow lane and dash past the bumper to bumper traffic inbound on the N2.

"I do go into the yellow (emergency) lane sometimes, but only when I am in a big hurry."

The biggest frustration for taxi drivers on Cape Town roads is "small cars" that don't respect the taxi lane on the N2 during peak hour, he says.

The traffic department constantly pulled drivers over to check licences and the roadworthiness of vehicles.

"I went to a driving school to learn to drive and I got my licence in Parow in 1989. Before that I drove without a licence for five years, but that was only in the Eastern Cape," he says.

Cops 'joining' in renewed taxi wars

NTDO warns of bigger bloodbath

(332) CP 26/4/98

UNLESS the government takes drastic action against policemen allegedly involved in the spiralling taxi violence, South Africa could soon find itself at war with its own security forces.

National Taxi Drivers' Organisation president (NTDO), Themba Mgabi, warns that with "scores" of police officers joining the taxi industry – either as operators or hitmen, he claims – the industry could explode into a bloody war countrywide.

Mgabi also accuses Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi and his Gauteng provincial counterpart, Paul Mashatile, of "failing to save the lives of drivers and passengers who die daily in a war between taxi owners".

"The police and politicians are not doing enough to combat the taxi violence.

"Instead, they point a finger at the taxi organisations," says Mgabi.

"The main duty of the police is to prevent crime and protect citizens and property – but instead they shoot and kill innocent people."

Mgabi, whose organisation represents more than 31 000 drivers, says the NTDO has on several occasions tried to meet Mufamadi and Mashatile's predecessor, Jessie Duarte, to hand them a list of hitsquad members, but all their efforts were rejected.

"Our drivers, who know that some of their bosses are involved in the violence, have supplied us with information which we are prepared to pass on to the police, but our politicians are too arrogant to give us a hearing.

"This is despite the ongoing killing of innocent drivers and passengers by policemen who are supposed to protect and serve us," Mgabi says.

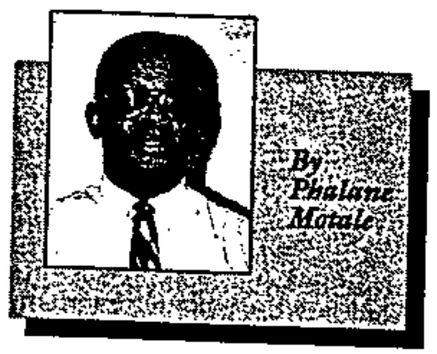
He says unless the government is prepared to meet them in the next two weeks, the NTDO will blockade all major national roads.

Mgabi has also called on President Nelson Mandela to extend the terms of reference of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to the taxi industry.

"With so many people killed in the ongoing taxi violence, I find it necessary for the government to investigate these senseless killings at the highest level," he says.

Mufamadi's spokesman, Andre Martin, could not confirm or deny the allegations against the ministry.

☐ City Press has established that since



By Phalane Matale

1996, the police's Serious Violent Crime Unit, aided by National Intelligence members, have uncovered several secret training camps for hit squads allegedly deployed in the taxi wars countrywide.

The special team also identified members of the various taxi associations who were allegedly responsible for training and deploying hitmen.

But the police are apparently hesitating to pounce on the suspects because prominent individuals are allegedly directly involved in the conflict between the taxi associations.

City Press also found that a high-level police probe has revealed that policemen are involved in the taxi wars.

Some have hired out their vehicles to hit squads or accepted bribes to not investigate the crimes properly.

In the past three years very few people have been convicted in connection with major drive-by shootings.

All efforts by the authorities to bring the warring factions together to have failed. More than ten people were killed in the past week in a nationwide resurgence in taxi warfare.

More than 60 people have been killed – 40 in Gauteng and eight in KwaZulu-Natal – since the beginning of the year.

South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association leader, Wesley Mpau, is convinced that a third force is involved in the taxi violence.

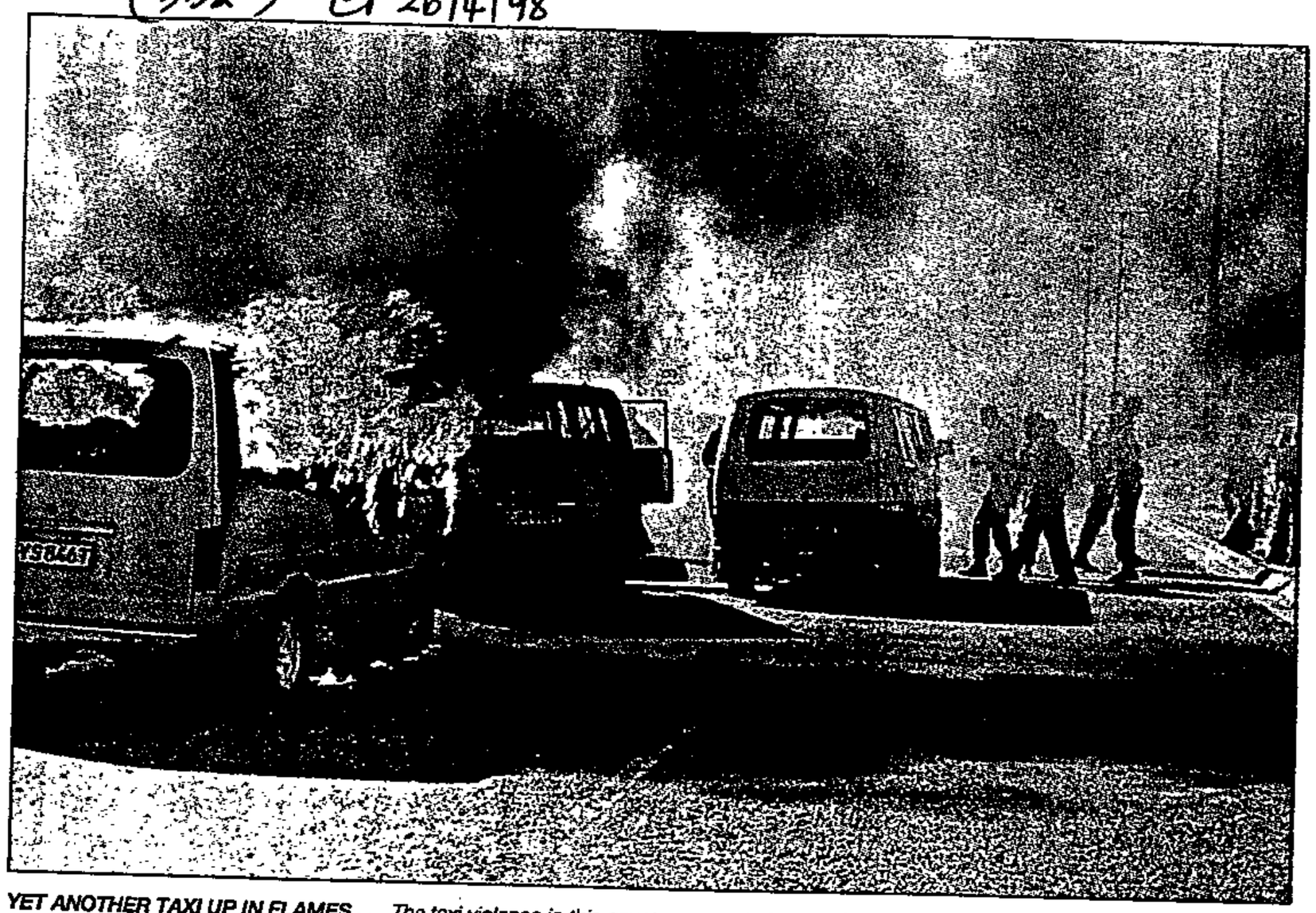
A task team comprised of members of the National Intelligence Agency, the South African Secret Service, the South African National Defence Force and the South African Police Service was established to support the Cabinet Committee on Taxi Violence by providing intelligence and advising on strategies to combat such violence – but it seems very little has been achieved.

A former member of the Pretoria Taxi Violence Unit told City Press that the government would never stop the taxi warfare because corrupt policemen were shielded by their colleagues.

"Due to the protection some policemen get from their colleagues, it is impossible to curb the ongoing violence. They are directly involved in the shootings," he said.

"The biggest problem is if you dare to talk about their involvement – the next moment you're dead meat. They are the third force behind the violence in the taxi industry."

More than 20 people have died in Soshanguve, Ga-Rankuwa and Mamelodi since the renewed outbreak of taxi violence in the Pretoria area.



YET ANOTHER TAXI UP IN FLAMES ... *The taxi violence in this country seems to be very far from abating.*

In Soweto four people were killed this week when two local rival taxi associations decided to solve their differences through the barrel of the gun.

The Gauteng government on Thursday vowed to take tough action against the taxi feuds over routes, which are continuing to claim lives.

In a joint statement Mashatile and Transport MEC Joyce Kgoadi said SANDF and public order police members would be deployed to patrol routes in Soweto andPretoria, while the North West government would fortify Gauteng police roadblocks.

Nearly 400 people, including children, have died in taxi violence countrywide in the past three years. Hundreds have been wounded.

With more than 480 taxi organisations in the country – and with three associations allegedly involved in the wars failing to resolve their disputes, and denying any part in the violence – the industry is riddled with problems.

Taxis: It's time for action

Summit this week will tackle 'ticking timebomb'

ARG 27/4/98

JOHAN SCHRONEN AND JOHN YELD
STAFF REPORTERS

Traffic officials pledged action today against the "taxi timebomb" after a wave of shock and outrage over the carnage on Cape Town's roads in the past week.

Urgent meetings have been scheduled to find ways of preventing horrific accidents like the smash involving a minibus taxi and two cars which claimed 16 lives at the notorious intersection of the R300 and Vanguard Drive in Mitchell's Plain early on Saturday.

Last week, 13 people died in a pile-up in Khayelitsha involving a minibus taxi.

Cape Town traffic chief Mark Sangster said today the time had come to defuse what he described as the "ticking taxi timebomb".

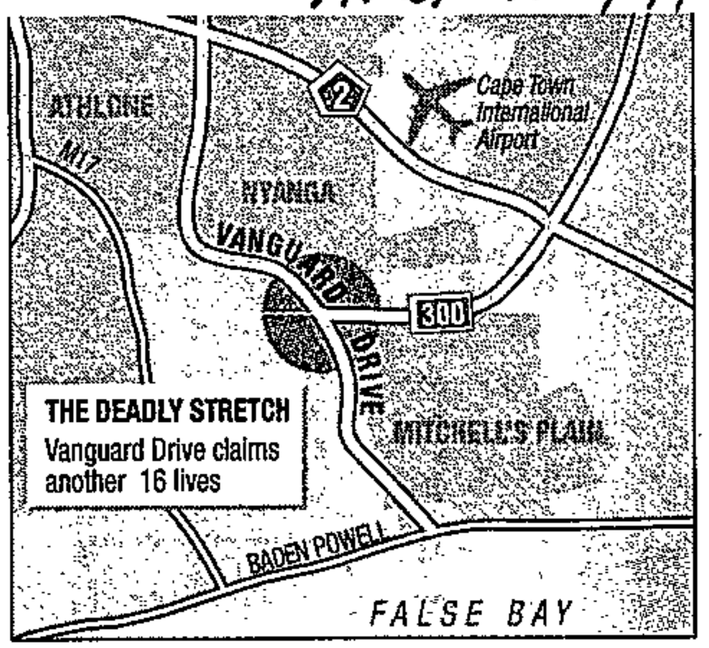
Leonard Ramatlakane, former Western Cape transport minister and now African National Congress spokesperson in the provincial legislature, lashed out at those responsible for causing fatal accidents on the roads, calling them "murderers".

Mr Ramatlakane called for a crisis summit involving the Cape Town Municipality, the police, taxi and civic associations. He said he would make a formal request for a summit to provincial Transport Minister Piet Meyer.

"Enough is enough. Our province cannot afford the carnage we are witnessing on such horrific scales," he said.

The summit would focus on direct action to make taxi routes safer, such as deploying more traffic officers and police.

A "terribly shocked" Mr Meyer said today that he had summoned traffic chiefs from all six local authorities in the metropolitan area and from the provincial traffic service to an urgent meeting on Wednesday to discuss taxis and road safety. "We will be looking especially at reckless driving and unroadworthy vehicles," he said.



"I was terribly shocked by Saturday's accident and I am very worried about the standard of driving in general."

Mr Meyer, who visited the families of nine of Saturday's victims yesterday, said he was expecting a report on the accident this afternoon from the detective who had been assigned to the case. "I will report to (Western Cape premier-elect) Mr Morkel about this tomorrow morning," he said.

Mr Sangster said too many working-class people were forced on "suicide runs" commuting to work because of inadequate public transport services.

"Commuters must have a choice of how they want to get to work," he said.

"While we know that minibus drivers are the grassroots offenders, the operators of taxi fleets are the real culprits." Pressure from taxi owners forced drivers to behave "like hooligans" to make enough money.

Mr Sangster said many taxi owners also forced their employees to drive poorly maintained and unroadworthy minibuses.

"I want an owner-onus principle to be enforced so that the problem of taxis can be addressed at its root.

"Perhaps the demerit system, which is on the cards, whereby offenders would get penalty points for serious traffic offences and eventually have their licences suspended, would make a difference."

■ Two Newspaper House canteen employees – Angie Samuels, 47, and Rachel White, 39 – were among the victims of Saturday's crash.

The other identified victims are Elizabeth Minnies, 33, Marion Roslyn Johnson, 22, Rodha Kriel, 2, Auried Jordaan, 25, Rushieda Prins, 21, Mogamat Zain Davids, 62, and Beatrice Melon, 40.

Police are still trying to contact the families of four men and three women.

Reinforcements called in as 5 die in Soweto taxi conflict

(332) ARG 27/4/98

Johannesburg – Detectives from the Heidelberg Taxi Conflict Unit have been called in to help local police quell ongoing taxi violence on strife-torn Soweto routes.

Louis Miller of the Soweto taxi violence unit said the detectives were called in yesterday to help protect commuters, who were caught in the cross-fire between feuding Witwatersrand African Taxi and Dobsonville Taxi associations.

Five people, including taxi drivers, were killed and five commuters wounded in four separate taxi-related incidents in Soweto, Roodepoort and Johannesburg on Saturday.

Soweto police spokesman John Shiburi said three members of the Meadowlands-Taxi Association were shot in Orlando East.

Two died on the scene and a third was in a critical condition at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital.

In another incident in Orlando East, along Klip Valley Road, a Wata driver was killed and three others were injured when their minibus taxis came under fire.

Inspector Shiburi said two commuters wounded at Ikhwezi station were taken to the Tshepo-Themba clinic in Dobsonville.

Superintendent Miller said one taxi driver was shot and killed in Roodepoort and one in Doornkop squatter camp on Saturday night.

Johannesburg police spokesman Mark Reynolds said the Soweto violence had spilled over into the city centre.

He said that shortly after midday on Saturday, armed men attacked taxi drivers who had converged on the corner of Commissioner and John Page streets near Jeppe.

Shots were fired and some taxis were hit, but nobody was injured.

Wata drivers were attacked at the corner of Commissioner and Von Weilligh streets later in the day.

"More than 10 shots were fired, and one man was wounded in the ankle. Taxis were damaged and two car radios and cash was stolen," Inspector Reynolds said.

Police were investigating charges of attempted murder, robbery and malicious damage to property.

Inspector Reynolds said no witnesses or victims had been identified for fear of intimidation.

Sicelo Mabaso of the Top Six Taxi Structure, a group of Soweto taxi associations, blamed the Gauteng Transport Department for not acting on information provided about the possible out-break of taxi violence.

Mr Mabaso said a minor scuffle broke out yesterday when police searched taxis for firearms at the Southgate Shopping Complex.

Detectives deployed on taxi routes

Star 27/4/98

Five people, including taxi drivers, die and four onlookers are wounded

(332)

By Themba Sepotokele and Sapa

A team of police detectives from the Heidelberg Taxi Conflict Unit were deployed on strife-torn Soweto routes yesterday to help local police quell ongoing taxi violence.

Superintendent Louis Miller of the Soweto taxi-violence unit said the detectives were called in to help protect commuters caught in the crossfire between feuding Witwatersrand Taxi (Wata) and Dobsonville Taxi Associations.

Five people, including taxi drivers, were killed and five commuters wounded in four separate taxi-related incidents in Soweto, Roodepoort and Johannesburg on Saturday.

Soweto police spokesman Inspector John Shiburi said three members of the Meadowlands Taxi Association were shot by unknown people in Orlando East. Two died on the scene and a third is in a critical condition at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital.

In another attack in Orlando East, along Klip Valley Road, three members of the Witwatersrand African Taxi Association were injured when the minibus taxi they were driving came under fire. One was killed.

Shiburi said two commuters were taken to the Tshepo-Themba clinic in Dobsonville after they were wounded at Ikhwezi station.

Miller said a taxi driver was shot and killed in Roodepoort and another was killed in Doornkop squatter camp on Saturday night.

Johannesburg police spokesman Inspector Mark Reynolds said the Soweto violence had spilled over into the city centre. He said shortly after midday on Saturday, armed men attacked taxi drivers who had converged on the corner of Commissioner and John Page streets near Jeppe.

Shots were fired and a number of taxis were hit, but nobody was injured.

Wata drivers were attacked at the corner of Commissioner and Von Wielligh Streets later in the day.

"More than 10 suspects fired shots, and one man was shot in the ankle. Taxis were damaged and two car radios and an amount of cash were stolen," Reynolds said.

Police are investigating charges of attempted murder, robbery and malicious damage to property. Reynolds said no witnesses or victims had been named for fear of intimidation.

Sicelo Mabaso of the Top Six Taxi Structure, which includes various Soweto taxi associations, blamed the Gauteng Transport Department for failing to act on the information provided about the possible outbreak of taxi violence.

SANDF sent to Soweto to curb taxi strife

(332)

10 people killed in weekend violence

Star 28/4/98

By Mbangwa Xaba

At least 15 people have been killed in taxi-related violence in Soweto in the past week, prompting police and the defence force to deploy extra units in the township yesterday.

All members of the Soweto Public Order Policing Unit as well as an SANDF company were sent in to patrol the Soweto taxi routes and ranks as the violence escalated in the area, Gauteng police spokesman Nati de Jager said.

Gunmen open fire from car

Fierce fighting between rival taxi organisations left at least 10 people dead at the weekend.

"After a top-level meeting of all the taxi violence units in the province on Sunday, a decision was taken to deploy more police personnel and the army in Soweto.

"We are doing everything in our power to stop this indiscriminate killing of innocent people," De Jager said.

But three people died shortly after 4.30am yesterday in the strife-torn Orlando East/Klip Valley Road area.

Two drivers from the Bara-City Taxi Association and a passenger were killed in separate incidents when two men opened fire on taxis waiting for early morning passengers at the Klip Valley Road and Chakana taxi ranks.

Eight other passengers were wounded. Five of them were admitted to Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, where their conditions were described as serious. The other three were treated and discharged.

According to survivors, the shootings – which happened 15 minutes apart – were carried out by a group of men travelling in a white Citi Golf.

Sibusiso Ngubane (38), who was hit by a bullet in the buttocks, said two men armed with a pistol and an AK-47 opened fire on the taxis. "I am lucky to be alive," he said.

Survivor Thokozane Mlangeni (30), a driver on the Bara-City taxi route, said he was not going to work yesterday.

"How can I work when I have just survived death?" he said.

The taxi violence, which is on the rise, has claimed the lives of at least 40 people in Gauteng this year.

Star 28/4/98 (332)

CHRISTINE NESBITT



Lucky escape ... street vendor Sarah Silanda narrowly escaped death during a taxi-related shooting early yesterday.

Hawker prays after brush with death

By Mbangwa Xaba

Sarah Silanda (40), a vetkoek hawker at the Bree Street taxi rank in Johannesburg, did not join in the Freedom Day festivities yesterday, after she narrowly survived death.

Silanda was unscathed after a taxi-related shooting during which a taxi driver was killed and four passengers were injured at the Klip Valley Road taxi rank at 4.30am.

A shack dweller in a cluster of makeshift homes in a yard in Orlando East, Soweto, Silanda had never heard a gunshot in her life, and said she thought something was wrong with a nearby taxi.

"I heard these rapid sounds and saw smoke inside the taxi and thought the taxi was burning," she said.

She was seated close to the sliding door of the minibus and said she realised she was in a life-threatening situation only when fellow commuters screamed at her to open the door.

When The Star arrived at her shack, she was still kneeling on the floor praying and thanking God for her survival.

The shocked woman said the money she makes from her vetkoek business is used to support four of her eight children who are still at school in QwaQwa, where they stay with her mother.

Silanda does not have electricity, but works until 11pm every night on a paraffin stove, baking her stock of vetkoek which brings her R150 a day.

She catches the early morning taxi in order to sell her cakes to drivers.

Old taxi permits on way out

(33a)

Sowetan 29/4/98

By Muzi Mkhwanazi

THE Gauteng transport department is to speed up the taxi registration process following the recent spate of taxi-related killings in Soweto.

Department spokesman Mr Sibusiso Buthelezi said yesterday they anticipated the whole process to be completed within the next two months.

"In the next two months we will withdraw the old permits and introduce new permits with identifiable stickers so that law enforcement agencies will be able to arrest and prosecute taxis operating on routes designated for other associations," Buthelezi said.

He said the new system would enable law enforcers to avoid ambiguity as to where a certain taxi association should operate because stickers will carry vital information about where a certain association should legally operate.

Taxi-related killings have claimed the lives of more than 15 people in the past week and left scores of passengers without transport.

In respect of the current taxi wars in Soweto, Buthelezi said his department was engaged in protracted negotiations with key leaders of warring parties to seek an interim solution to the taxi violence.

He refused to divulge the contents of the meetings and claimed that the negotiations were at a very critical stage. He said both the Witwatersrand African Owners Taxi Association and Top Six were involved in the talks.

"We held a series of one to one meetings with these leaders and we are still trying to hammer out an interim solution to the violence in Soweto," he said.

Buthelezi said the Government had managed to convince both the Soweto Taxi Drivers Association and the Soweto Commuters Association not to embark on their threatened mass action.

Rules to protect commuters aren't worth the paper they're written on

ARG 29/4/98

(332)

DI CAELERS AND CAROL CAMPBELL
SPECIAL WRITERS

Passengers in minibus taxis get plenty of protection in terms of the Road Traffic Act – on paper. But unless taxi owners and drivers obey the law, millions of lives are in danger each day.

Minibus taxis transport about 2,5 million people throughout South Africa daily – more than buses and trains combined – and as the law stands, the only real financial protection they have in the event of an accident is third party insurance.

Although it would appear the minibus taxi did not cause the horror accident in Mitchell's Plain that claimed 16 lives, Cape Town area traffic manager Gerald Sobotker said the fact remained that the minibus was apparently overloaded.

Tonie Muller, Western Cape deputy provincial traffic chief, said the safety requirements for minibus taxis, in terms of the Road Traffic Act, were stringent.

These included prescribed seating capacity, a compulsory fire extinguisher in the vehicle, the driver required to have a professional driving permit and the vehicle checked annually.

There must also be an emergency exit which could be a kick-out back window or easily accessed side windows.

"The rules are stringent. The problem is that if a driver drives recklessly, they count for nothing," Mr Muller said.

Discussing compensation for victims of road accidents, Didi Moyle, spokeswoman for Transport Minister Mac Maharaj, said new legislation was being prepared which would address the issue of full medical cover for taxi passengers.

"Currently, any kind of passenger may claim a maximum of R25 000 in terms of the Motor Vehicle Fund," she said.

Mr Muller said the weekend's accident, and the one in Khayelitsha a week previously that claimed 13 lives, had come as a major blow to the Western Cape's successful Arrive Alive road safety campaign.

He said more visible traffic officers were essential to help get the situation under control.

Toyota South Africa's John Nimmo, commenting on the manufacturer's safety requirements for minibuses, said regulations were based on European standards and covered things like front seat belts, size and strength of seats, amount of window space, braking and tyres.

The back windows of Toyota minibuses could not be kicked out and the side windows were regarded as emergency escape routes, which met Japanese regulations.

But if vehicles were overloaded they could become dangerous.

Matt Gennrich of Volkswagen said because their buses were only 10 seaters they were not popular as minibus taxis.

Meanwhile, Ms Moyle disclosed the Transport Ministry had a long-term plan to introduce bigger, 27-seater taxis running on diesel.

She said these would cut down on traffic congestion and bring down overhead costs for the industry.

Ibrahim Ijambo of the Mitchell's Plain Taxi Forum said he believed that if the taxi involved in the smash had been a bigger vehicle more people might have survived.

Cops, troops in bid to quell taxi war

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT (332)

Johannesburg – Police and troops have poured into Soweto after a long weekend which saw 15 people die in taxi-related violence.

Several trouble-torn taxi ranks in Soweto were under heavy police and army guard from as early as 2am yesterday.

The army maintained a strong presence at Orlando East, where three people were killed early on Monday. There was also a strong army presence at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital taxi rank, Soweto's biggest.

The Gauteng Transport Department, which has been negotiating with all affected taxi associations, will issue a statement on its endeavours to end the violence today, a spokesman said.

ARG 29/4/98

Hair Care CLINIC



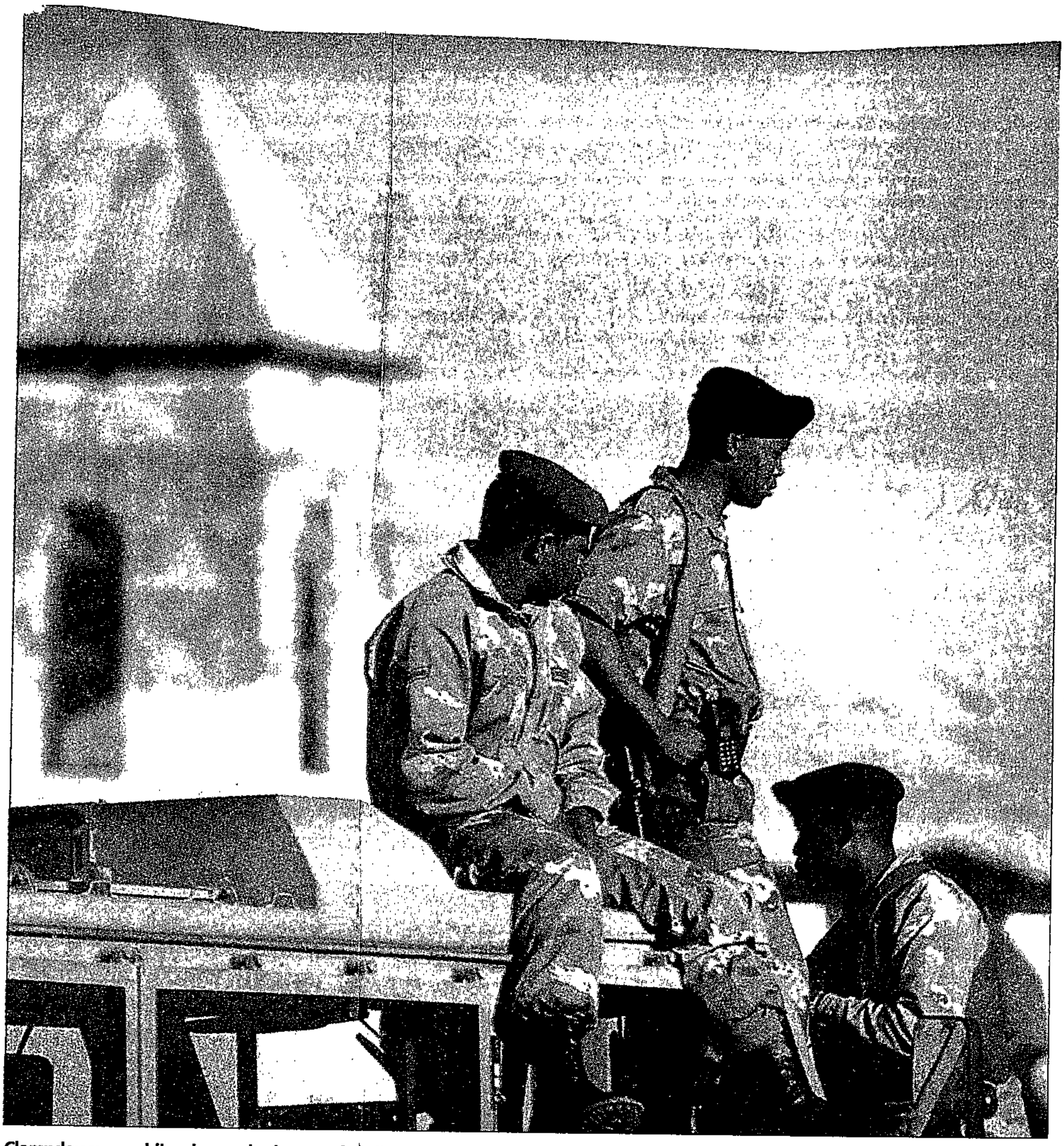
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Clampdown ... soldiers keep a lookout at the Klip Valley Road taxi rank in Orlando East, where three people were killed on Monday.

Police and army pour into Soweto to put the brakes on taxi strife

(332) Star 29/4/98

By Mbangwa Xaba

Police and soldiers have flooded into Soweto after a long weekend which saw 15 people die in taxi-related violence.

Several trouble-torn taxi ranks in Soweto were under heavy police and army guard from as early as 2am yesterday.

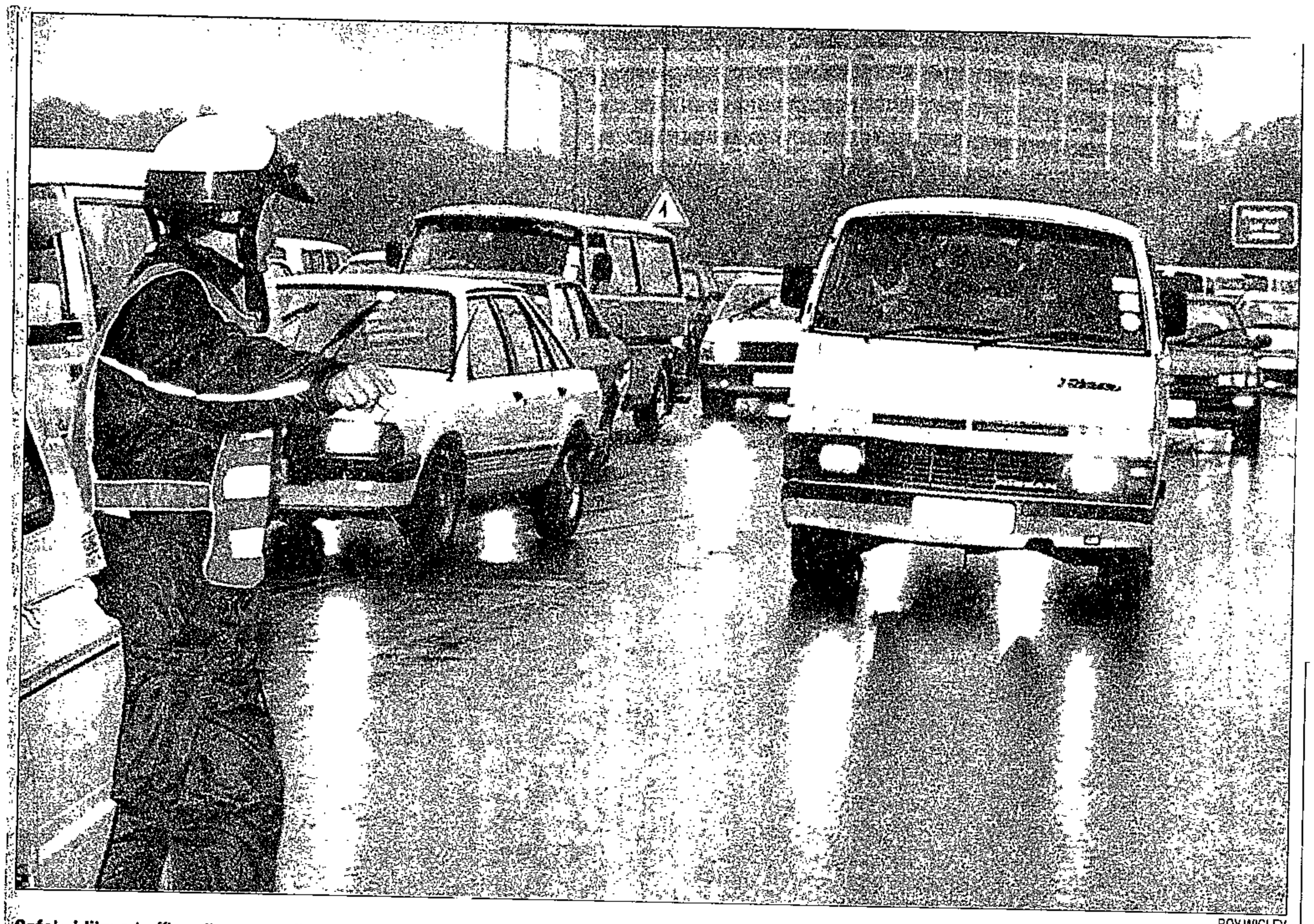
At the Ikwezi rank, where members of the Witwatersrand Taxi Association were on guard, visibly fearful commuters lined up for taxis despite the tense situation.

The army maintained a strong presence at Orlando East, where three people were killed on Monday.

There was also a strong army presence at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital taxi rank, Soweto's biggest.

The Gauteng transport department, which has been negotiating with all affected taxi associations, would today issue a statement on its attempts to end the violence, spokesman Kate Bapela said.

The department is expected to offer a solution to the violence, which has claimed the lives of more than 40 people in the province this year.



Safety blitz: a traffic policeman halts one of the hundreds of taxis stopped in the Peninsula today to check for roadworthiness, overloading and licences

ROY WIGLEY

Hundreds stopped in minibus taxi crackdown

ARG 30/4/98 (332)

SHARKEY ISAACS AND JOHAN SCHRONEN
STAFF REPORTERS

Hundreds of minibus taxis were stopped and checked by traffic police at road blocks across the Western Cape today.

The roadblocks were co-ordinated with military precision on all key taxi routes, from Cape Town to Worcester, between 6.30am and 8.30am.

Taxis were checked for roadworthiness and overloading and drivers were asked for their licences.

Many motorists were caught in tailbacks and complained they were late for work.

At a roadblock opposite Youngsfield in Wetton, 95 minibus drivers were fined for unroadworthy vehicles.

Defects included smooth tyres, poor brakes, cracked windscreens which obscured drivers' vision and broken lights.

Tickets were also issued to drivers whose vehicles did not have fire extinguishers. An officer at the roadblock said vehicles carrying passengers were compelled by law to have extinguishers. He said taxis were also checked for defective door handles which could prevent passengers from escaping a fire after an accident.

A spokesman said police had full co-operation from drivers and other motorists. Roadblocks would continue to be set up to clamp down on taxi-related offences.

on minibus taxis

CT 30/4/98

safety blitz

ROAD CARNAGE: TRAFFIC DEPT PUTS ITS FOOT DOWN

MEASURES BEING implemented to reduce the carnage on Western Cape roads could cause inconvenience and anger some motorists, but the authorities stress that they are working for the community, not against it. Political Writer **KARIN SCHIMKE** reports.

(332)

A CRACKDOWN on unroadworthy and overloaded taxis is to be launched on Cape Peninsula roads today in response to public outrage over two mini-bus taxi accidents that together claimed 30 lives in the past two weeks.

But without the co-operation of road users, traffic officials seem certain that they cannot succeed.

At a press conference yesterday, Western Cape transport MEC Mr Piet Meyer outlined measures the provincial and municipal traffic departments will take in coming months to avoid serious road accidents.

These include increasing traffic police visibility by marking unmarked patrol cars and using one co-ordinated control room for all the municipal traffic departments in the metropole.

Legislation on overloaded passenger vehicles and trucks will be enforced more vigorously and the training of traffic officers is to be improved.

Provincial traffic chief, Mr Sherman Amos, appealed to motorists to co-operate with traffic officials.

"We are often insulted and sometimes assaulted by passengers when we ask a driver to abandon his vehicle because it is overloaded," he told the *Cape Times*.

"Because of a lack of personnel, there is usually only one officer in a patrol car, and if a taxi driver refuses to leave his car, what can we do?"

The South African Police Service had, however, given its assurance that police would support traffic officers as far as possible in enforcing traffic regulations.

"If we get support and compliance from the community — for instance, they could boycott overloaded or unroadworthy taxis — our job will be much easier."

With road blocks dotting the metro at peak hours today, for officers to check passenger vehicles, some road users were likely to get angry at the hold-ups. But the understanding of the public was absolutely necessary to bring down the road death toll, Amos said.

These measures would be maintained for well over a month.

"We are working for the community, not against them," said Amos.

Meyer also called on the public to report particular problems on roads they use daily to the traffic police.

> ***If we get support from the public our work will be much easier***

Mr Leonard Ramatlakane, Meyer's predecessor and ANC spokesperson on traffic affairs, said yesterday that many of the issues brought up at the press conference were already policy. He agreed with all of the measures, but said none was new.

"The policy is there. The question is: What has been done about implementing it?"

Ramatlakane added that provincial traffic policy also stated that public support for road safety was necessary.

"We won't do this by putting traffic officers on every corner. We need to deal with the attitude of motorists."

Ramatlakane is calling together a road safety summit and later today will make an announcement on when this will take place. The idea would be to convey a sense of civic responsibility among road users.

Meanwhile, traffic officials — using back-up from as far afield as Vredenburg, Worcester, Somerset West and Caledon — will be setting up road blocks to enforce traffic laws about overloaded and unroadworthy vehicles.

Communication 'can stop feuds'

(332)

Sowetan 1/5/98

By Gershwin Chuenyane

BETTER communication among taxi associations and improved conflict resolution skills between associations' members could break the culture of violence within the taxi industry says Greater Pretoria Metropolitan Taxi Forum chairman Mr Leonard Kutumela.

He said this week that the executive committee and the forum represented all taxi associations in the Greater Pretoria area, which includes among others, Mamelodi, Atteridgeville, GaRankuwa, Soshanguve, Hammanskraal and Mabopane.

He said the forum would act on achieving consensus and support for the executive as a first step to addressing the issue of violence.

"We will be calling a chairpersons' council where different taxi associations will be well represented in an effort to create unity among taxi association leaders of all Greater Pretoria taxi associations.

Conflict resolution skills

"We will enlarge the conflict resolution sub-committee to include representatives of the various taxi associations and develop the conflict resolution skills of members.

"For this to work we need to build strong links between the chairpersons' council and the conflict resolution sub-committee to ensure that decisions taken are based on solid information, which is supported by top leadership of all associations," said Kutumela.

Some of the forum's objectives:

- To speed up the establishment of cooperatives.
- Strengthening the bargaining power of the taxi industry and
- To connect their industry with other businesses, ensuring that members benefitd from the industry and to combine efforts of government and the industry to formalise the industry in the Greater Pretoria area.

Kutumela said the forum was committed to legalising illegal taxis, developing taxi drivers' driving skills and improving their communication skills.

'LAW ABIDING CITIZENS JOINING THE ROAD RAGE'

Traffic chief blasts N2 taxi lanes

(33a) CT 1/5/98

MAKING A PROFIT in the minibus taxi industry has become harder in recent years, contributing to the recklessness of drivers. Metro Editor **CLAUDIA CAVANAGH** reports.

THE minibus taxi lane — built into the N2 three years ago to alleviate peak traffic congestion — has made the road more dangerous, says Cape Town's traffic chief Mr Mark Sangster.

After a week marred by the minibus taxi smash near Mitchells Plain on Saturday, which killed 16 people, Sangster detailed events that had led to the "apparent lawlessness" of minibus taxi drivers, in a report to the City Council yesterday.

The extra lane, built by the province, had merely added to frustrations on the highway, he said. Drivers say that instead of alleviating congestion, the lane actually exacerbates it.

"Law-abiding citizens have joined the road rage which characterises the N2 in the early mornings," said Sangster. "Many blame the poor road design and the lack of planning."

The lane — stretching from Vanguard Drive to Black River Parkway — is to be extended, but motivation for this will only be made in the next financial year.

"We'll be faced with this engineering nightmare for a considerable time to come," said Sangster.

Judging from complaints received by the traffic department, there is great "public disquiet" about minibus taxis — especially on the N2.

"Their poor driving habits have created an extremely poor image of the minibus taxi operation," he said.

But these aberrations have developed over the years as taxi drivers find it more difficult to make a living from their industry.

"They face high finance charges, loaded insurance premiums, increased costs of vehicle repairs, fuel, oil and driver wages, and consequently they cannot attain the profit margins which may have been possible some years ago," said Sangster.



'GREAT DISQUIET': Cape Town traffic chief Mark Sangster

So the drivers come under great pressure to squeeze in as many trips as possible during the comparatively short peak periods.

"Some owners set an amount per day or week which drivers must pay before they can receive wages and compensation for petrol. The target amount is often unrealistically high.

"As a result, drivers attempt to change lanes indiscriminately, exceed the speed limit and generally drive in an unacceptable manner," he said.

Despite severe staff constraints, 2 500 warrants of arrest for taxi violations on the N2 had been successfully executed since August last year. This included 950 arrests of drivers.

The current team dedicated to the minibus taxi industry consists of only 11 officers who deal with more than 80 complaints a day.

So what is being done to alleviate the situation?

The warning signs

THE chain reaction thatCape Town's Traffic Chief Mark Sangster says leads to the "apparent lawlessness" of minibus taxi drivers:

- **High costs**
- **Low return on investment**
- **Need to increase share of business**
- **Bad driving habits**
- **Poor vehicle maintenance**
- **Enforcement by traffic officers**
- **Frustration and resentment by drivers**
- **Aggressive reaction by drivers**

- A dedicated "N2 enforcement unit" made up of a supervisor and 10 traffic officers working on an overtime basis was launched on April 6.
- Senior prosecutors have offered to help officers preparing dockets for inconsiderate and negligent driving.
- The attorney-general's office has given the go-ahead to use video cameras for prosecutions.
- Permission is being sought to introduce temporary line delineators along the N2 at Pinelands and the M3 off-ramps to deter illegal and unnecessary lane-changing.
- At least once a week a camera will be used to enforce the legal use of the bus and minibus lane on the N2.
- Errant bus companies transporting children to school in District Six will be approached and prosecuted if no improvement is observed.

Sangster will be involved in all future meetings about the minibus lane. Fines for "moving violations" were increased from the beginning of this month.

"Whatever action is taken in the longer term, the traffic branch will do everything in its power to prevent the taxi drivers and other N2 road users from becoming a law unto themselves," he said.

See Page 3

2 die as taxi violence continues to spiral

Star 6/5/98 (332)

Commuters caught in the crossfire as rival operators attack each other in Soweto

By Themba Sepotokele and Mbangwa Xaba

Two people were killed in the internecine taxi violence in Soweto as five people were fired on in Rockville's Pietersburg taxi rank early this morning.

The driver of the taxi died on the scene and another victim died on arrival at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital after a drive-by shooting at 5.30am this morning, police spokesman Inspector John Shiburi said.

The other three victims are said to be in a serious condition at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. Shiburi said an unknown group of men in a white BMW opened fire on a stationary taxi hitting all the five occupants.

This brings to three the number of attacks on the taxi ranks belonging to the Nancefield Dube West Taxi Association since yesterday.

Thousands of commuters were left stranded in Soweto and Johannesburg last night after armed clashes between warring taxi associations left two people dead, two injured and six minibuses damaged.

Commuters, including schoolchildren, waited in long queues before resorting to trains and buses.

The army and police poured into Soweto 10 days ago after four people were killed during a drive-by shooting in Orlando East. After a week of relative peace the troops were withdrawn.

Harry Havenga, head of Johannesburg's taxi violence unit, said Themba Mdluli (23) and Brutus Shezi (30) were killed in Sandton yesterday.

Havenga said Shezi, who belonged to the Alexandra Taxi Association, confronted Mdluli, an alleged pirate taxi operator. An argument ensued and both were shot dead.

In Soweto, Eric Makuyane (32) suffered a slight head injury and a passenger was shot in the left leg near Club 707 in Orlando West when a taxi in which they were travelling came under fire.

Police arrested a suspect hiding in the bushes opposite Club 707 after the shooting.

In another drive-by shooting, taxis from the Nancefield Dube West Taxi Association were damaged while parked at the Maponya taxi rank in Dube yesterday.

THYS DULLAART



Lucky to be alive ... Eric Makuyane (32), a taxi driver, recovers after a narrow escape when the minibus taxi he was driving came under a hail of bullets in Orlando West, Soweto.

6/5/98

Taxi group wants Govt to stop violence

Sowetan 7/5/98 (332)

By Charity Bhengu

AN EXECUTIVE member of the Nancefield, Dube and West Street Taxi Association (Nenduwe), two of whose members were killed in taxi violence in Rockville, Soweto, yesterday, has appealed to the Government to intervene.

Nenduwe spokesman Mr Scelo Mabaso said the ongoing attacks on the association's members were part of a feud between two rival taxi organisations operating in Soweto.

Mabaso condemned the "senseless killing of innocent people" and said the situation had become uncontrollable.

He said yesterday's attack at the Pietersburg taxi rank in Rockville was the fifth on members and passengers and added that taxi violence had claimed about nine lives since it started two weeks ago.

Two taxi drivers were killed and three injured passengers were reported to be in a critical condition at Chris Hani-Baragwanath Hospital after the drive-by shooting at 5.30am.

A witness said four gunmen jumped out of a BMW car and fired shots at people. They then drove away.

Soweto police spokesman Inspector John Shiburi said no one had been arrested and that the motive for the shooting was still unknown.

He could not rule out the fact that taxi violence in the area was the reason for the attack.

"Four unknown men, travelling in a white BMW, which had no registration plates, opened fire on the minibus taxis at the rank. An R5 rifle and eight cartridges were later found at the scene," Shiburi said.

Mabaso alleges Nenduwa members were killed by members of a rival taxi organisation which was known to them.

"This is the fifth attack on us. The rival association in the area started the attacks in Orlando East. They assaulted drivers, stole money and damaged cars. They went on and attacked our members at Klipspruit Valley Road and in Fordsburg where they stole our cars and intimidated passengers.

"The situation became tense last week when they killed about six drivers and passengers," Mabaso said.

Road safety summit

Meanwhile, the African National Congress transport section convened a road traffic safety summit at Mitchells Plain in Cape Town yesterday in a bid to reduce road deaths and taxi violence.

ANC spokesman Mr Leonard Ramatlakane said among the resolutions of the summit was that taxi drivers and operators should receive appropriate training without delay.

He said traffic police should carry out roadworthy tests at taxi ranks and that the Arrive Alive Campaign should be sustained in order to deal with bad attitudes and aggressive driving.

Councils could soon close violence-hit taxi ranks

BD 7/5/98 (332)

Pearl Sebolao and Deborah Fine

NEW legislation enabling Gauteng's local authorities to shut down temporarily or permanently taxi ranks plagued by violence was on the cards for July this year, the province's local government MEC Sicelo Shiceka said yesterday.

He was speaking at the launch of the new R12m Jack Mincer Park taxi rank in Joubert Park, Johannesburg, which was expected to be completed by developers Grinaker Projects and Properties in October this year. The rank will provide facilities for about 2 000 city taxis.

The new laws will empower municipalities to close down parks plagued by crime and to block off roads as a means of crime prevention.

Taxi associations in the Johannesburg city centre vowed yesterday to keep the new rank free from the renewed violence which had broken out at several ranks throughout the province in recent weeks.

In the latest spate of incidents, two people were killed and three others injured when unknown gunmen opened fire on a stationary taxi at the Pietersburg taxi Rank in Rockville, Soweto, yesterday morning.

Police attributed the shooting to continuing violence between rival taxi associations in the area. The incident brought to at least six the number of people killed in taxi-related shootings in and around Johannesburg since Monday.

Sapa reports that in Pretoria yesterday, a Mamelodi taxi driver was shot near the Union Buildings after taking part in a protest against the dangerous working conditions of taxi operators.

Police said the victim, Frans Makoa, was driving from the gathering at the Union Buildings with a passenger about 3.15pm when a car with three occupants forced his taxi off the road. The attackers pulled him from the taxi and shot him in the head.

He was admitted to Pretoria Academic hospital in a critical condition, police said.

Land transport deputy director-general Dipak Patel said the absence of a proper regulation framework for the taxi industry in the province resulted in some taxi operators using violence to secure routes.

The challenge for the province was to identify these areas and move in with a clear plan to stop the violence.

The transport department, province and police were putting together "sustainable operations" to formalise regulations for the taxi industry through passenger plans, route markings on vehicles and other properly planned measures. These would include the re-launch of "Operation Thiba" in Pretoria next week, followed by similar projects in Soweto, Patel said.

This winter treat yourself to a luxury getaway

Competitiveness defended

(160)

Wyndham Hartley

CAPE TOWN — Trade and Industry Minister Alec Erwin has defended the competitiveness of SA's industry, saying this was the reason the US was taking action against some local products.

In a debate in the National Assembly, Erwin said SA had one of the most effective antidumping units in the world. It took more measures against foreign products than the US did. BD 7/5/98

Replying to a question on trade and industry policy from his African National Congress colleague Ben Turok, Erwin questioned the view that SA had not been successful in attracting foreign investment. He said that with foreign direct investment (FDI) of more than $2bn, SA was among the top 10 destinations in the world for FDI.

Erwin said employment statistics were not reflecting some of the gains that had been made.

Two more drivers die in taxi violence

Star 11/5/98

PRETORIA CORRESPONDENT

(332)

Two drivers were shot dead and six people injured in the taxi violence in Soshanguve today.

This brings the number of operators killed over the past 24 hours to four and the number killed in the past week to seven.

Yesterday two drivers of the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta) were killed – one near the Union Buildings in Church Street and another in Simon Vermooten Road outside Mamelodi.

Rietgat police spokesman Captain John Mabasa said there were five drive-by shootings this morning in which two cars were involved. All the drivers shot at are members of the SA Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta), he said.

Capt Mabasa said the first incident happened at 4.45am when two cars cornered a taxi in Block KK and opened fire from both sides of the minibus. The driver and two passengers were injured. In all, 11 shots were fired, he said.

In another incident a Salldta taxi driver was fatally shot after being wounded in the back. This happened in Block P at 5am.

The Gauteng ministry of transport and public works and various community-based structures will meet in Pretoria today to discuss a strategy to end the taxi violence.

Govt calls indaba on taxis

Sowetan 11/6/98 (332)

By Khangale Makhado and Gershwin Chuenyane

THE Gauteng ministry of transport and public works will meet behind closed doors with various community-based structures to discuss a strategy for ending violence that plagues the taxi industry.

The meeting, to be held in Pretoria, follows a spate of attacks in the industry since the beginning of the year, especially in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

In Soweto alone nine people died in the past two weeks following heavy fighting by rival taxi groups while vehicles and property were destroyed. More than ten people have been killed in Pretoria in taxi-related violence.

Attending tomorrow's meeting will be representatives from taxi organisations, women's groups, youth, church and business structures as well as civic organisations and community policing forums.

Solution

Spokeswoman for the department Ms Kate Bapela said yesterday she hoped a solution would be found at the end of tomorrow's meeting that would put an end to taxi violence.

"It is the feeling of the government that we have now exhausted all avenues of negotiations and mediation with the taxi industry and it is important that we address the issues as a collective in a partnership process," Bapela said.

Tomorrow's meeting will culminate in a rally on Sunday at the Odi Stadium in Mabopane that will be attended by the premiers of North West and Gauteng.

Meanwhile the situation remained tense in Pretoria's Mamelodi township yesterday where taxis have not been operating since Thursday last week after fights over routes.

Local taxi commuters could be left stranded again this week if no solution is found to the renewed hostilities that have left two taxi drivers dead since the beginning of this month.

The latest incident took place on Saturday afternoon, when a Mamelodi Amalgamated Taxi Association (Mata) taxi driver, who ventured beyond the boundaries of Mamelodi, was shot and wounded in the leg.

Police said the man was forced off the road by two vehicles in Simon Vermooten Avenue near Samcor Park.

He jumped out of his vehicle in an attempt to flee but was shot in the right leg. He was admitted to hospital.

Threatened

According to the taxi violence unit, the current violence was sparked last week when Mata members were threatened and ordered by Mamelodi Long and Local Distance Taxi Association members to stop using their (Malldta's) Church Street route from Mamelodi.

Taxis have not been operating since Wednesday night because of the feud.

Local ANC Member of Parliament Mr Moss Chikane said yesterday he would arrange a meeting of all local community-based structures in a bid to resolve the issue.

Chikane said he had discussed the matter with Gauteng's ministry of transport. He said the option of closing the Denneboom taxi rank in an effort to stop the violence could be effected if there was no end to the taxi war.

Spokesman for Mata Mr Dan Masilela said they were prepared to meet the rival association (Malldta) so long as it was within the borders of Mamelodi. He said they had not yet approached Malldta about the meeting because the situation was tense.

Simple rewording could be solution

BD 14/5/98

Removing provisions in the proposed Employment Equity Bill that will once again polarise SA along racial lines will ensure greater private sector co-operation in implementing the legislation, argues Ewald Wessels

NEGOTIATIONS over the proposed Employment Equity Bill have reached a conclusion and cabinet approved it yesterday. Concessions have been made, but in its current form the bill will still reintroduce race into law.

Racial thinking is so ingrained in the collective unconscious of SA that it has made otherwise reasonable people blind to alternatives.

The bill introduces race classification by proceeding from the implicit assumption that, in the absence of discrimination, the composition of the workforce in every company, and at every occupational category, would have approximated the national or regional demographic mix.

Companies will be required to classify their employees to determine the underrepresentation of "designated groups" (everyone other than "white" able-bodied males) at every level. Where "white" males are "over-represented" in any category, a company will be required to practise racial discrimination to "rectify" the situation over time.

What is wrong with this approach? To start with, the members of the task group who drew up the proposals clearly have little understanding of mathematical statistics. Natural variation will normally ensure that even the most fair and equitable of employment practices results in large differences in the composition of the workforces of different companies. To impose an artificial uniformity on the economy would take a fearful toll in economic inefficiency.

At the moral level, the consequences of passing the bill in this form would be profound. The principle of individual rights rests on the notion that every person has the right to be treated on his or her own merits. Martin Luther King once said: "I have a dream my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will be judged not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character." No one has the right to place any person in some category and assign rights to that person according to some presumption concerning the category.

For this reason, many companies refused to supply racially classified data to the former government. They were not prosecuted. The draft employment equity bill threatens to penalise repeatedly any employer who continues to be true to this principle, with fines ranging up to R900 000.

Why have employer representatives in Nedlac not argued more forcefully against the racial elements of the draft bill? They have a dilemma. Organised business recognises the need to redress the effects of past discrimination and is sympathetic to the basic objectives of the bill. The overwhelming majority of companies would like to see every individual able to rise to the level of his or her abilities and aspirations.

How is one to implement affirmative action if one does not re-introduce race classification?

The answer is clear. The racial and "group think" blinkers should be taken off and concepts such as disadvantage should be defined functionally. The problem lies in the use by the bill of the term "designated groups", which is defined to be "black people, women, and people with disabilities" to describe those who would qualify for preferential treatment.

There is an illusion in the apparent logic that leads from statements such as "black people, women and people with disabilities are the most disadvantaged groups in our country" to the conclusion that all members of these groups should therefore be favoured. As with many such sweeping statements, the devil is in the detail.

Realistic analysis of the practical effects will soon show that the harmful consequences of a bill based on simplistic thinking of this kind would greatly outweigh any advantage. The thought that companies in Nelson Mandela's SA could be required to treat people according to the colour of their skin, rather than the content of their character, is bizarre.

Is it possible to remove the racial element of the draft bill without robbing it of its force? The main practical measure of the bill is the duty placed on employers to analyse their employment practices, to eliminate any discrimination, and to prepare, submit and implement a plan detailing positive actions that will result in greater employment equity.

Very little, if any, of the positive effect of this measure would be sacrificed if the racial and group elements in the definition of people qualifying for preferential treatment were deleted. Since the great majority of people against whom there has been discrimination in the past are black, women, or disabled, such people will automatically be in the majority among beneficiaries of almost any honest plan to implement employment equity. But the courts should not be obliged to accept skin colour as a sufficient criterion, on its own, to justify discrimination in employment decisions, as the current wording of the draft bill would require.

By simply replacing the reference to "designated groups" in the draft bill by a reference to "designated people", defined as "people who are at a disadvantage because of discrimination suffered by them in SA in the past", much of the objection to the current draft bill could be met. The purpose of the bill should be to advance as rapidly as possible South Africans who have not been able to achieve their potential because of past discrimination.

For an individual company, the rate at which people can be employed or promoted is determined by the growth of the company and by the personnel turnover. Both these factors are normally related to the size of the company. The existing racial composition of the workforce is almost irrelevant.

It is logical, therefore, to evaluate the affirmative action plans that companies will be required to submit to the labour department against the number of people employed by the company, not against the racial composition of its workforce. Only where a company claims that its past employment practices have been such that it requires no corrective action, should it be required to submit evidence that would exempt it from the equity planning requirements.

Such evidence could include data on the composition of its workforce in terms of the race classification determinations of the previous government. The current government should not embroil itself in attempts at race classification.

In deciding whether an individual is entitled to preferential treatment in terms of the bill, companies should be required to determine whether that individual is disadvantaged as a result of past discrimination in SA. The first point of reference should be gender, disability status, and whether the individual was classified by the previous government as anything other than "white".

However, the favouring of immigrants — on the basis of skin colour — who did not suffer discrimination in SA, and the "poaching" of people who have already reached their full potential to convey an illusion of equity, is immoral and should not be encouraged. Where uncertainty exists over the "disadvantaged" status of individuals, the Labour Court would soon develop a body of case law which would provide guidelines in the application of the act.

There is going to be a severe problem of administrative incapacity in implementing the bill regardless of its detailed content, and the willing co-operation of the private sector is vital if the aims of the bill are to be met. A bill that does not again polarise SA along racial lines will obtain this co-operation much more effectively.

□ *Wessels is a member of the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry executive and the Seifsa council.*

CLICKS

New Clicks Holdings Limited
(Incorporated in the Republic of South Africa)
(Registration number 96/00645/06)
("New Clicks")

Acquisition by New Clicks of the Priceline Unit Trust and the Second Priceline Unit Trust (collectively "Priceline")

Plan to end taxi war fails

(332)

Pearl Sebolao

PD 1115 198

THE Gauteng transport department admitted at the weekend that its current strategies aimed at curbing the taxi warfare in the province had failed and appealed to the community "to assist in finding a lasting solution to the taxi violence".

"It is the feeling of the government that we have now exhausted all avenues of negotiations and mediation with the taxi industry with little success," the department said.

It said that if the associations had agreed to lay down arms and subject themselves to law and order, as well as respect human lives, the violence would have stopped long ago.

The continuation of the violence had forced the provincial government to re-evaluate its strategy. The revamped strategy, which would take into account all the breached agreements between the provincial government and the industry and the failure of taxi associations to honour arbitration awards, would be made public this Thursday, department spokesman Dorcas Moeketsi said.

Taximen threaten blockade

(332) Sowetan 14/5/98

By Justice Mohale

THE National Taxi Drivers Organisation (Natdo) has threatened to barricade all main routes leading to major towns and cities tomorrow in protest against the Government's alleged failure to curb taxi violence.

The resolution was taken by Natdo's executive committee in Johannesburg yesterday. Taxi drivers demanded that President Nelson Mandela appoint a commission of inquiry into the ongoing taxi violence.

Natdo president Mr Themba Mgabhi said members of his organisation would barricade the roads from 5am until the afternoon because they were tired of the Government's promises that it would curb the violence.

He said last month his organisation gave the Government 14 days to meet taxi operators but the meeting had not materialised.

Mgabhi said if that meeting had taken place they would have given the Government the names of the alleged instigators of violence in the taxi industry.

"We know that our actions are going to stop people from reaching their workplaces on time but we want the Government to feel the pain," said Mgabhi.

He said the organisation was forced to embark on mass action because they received no positive response from their previous meetings with officials of provincial governments.

Mgabhi said roads leading to Johannesburg would be the main targets for the barricades. He attacked the Government, saying it had failed to take decisive action against the instigators of violence because some of its officials owned taxis.

He said his organisation's investigation revealed that certain MECs in Mpumalanga owned taxis.

"We have a list of officials who have taxis in the industry and we are prepared to present it to President Mandela so that he can take appropriate disciplinary action," he said.

Mgabhi said taxi operators had decided to barricade the roads until Mandela intervenes. He accused taxi owners of involving defenceless drivers in the taxi war instead of fighting among themselves.

Drivers claimed that they were also concerned about roadblocks erected by "bogus" policemen. A driver who spoke on condition of anonymity said he was stopped last week and robbed of his takings.

Waste of time

"We do not trust the police because they fuel the violence by being biased towards some associations," he claimed.

Mgabhi said the Government was unfair in the way it dealt with violence because it targeted taxi drivers who were not involved. He referred to a taxi indaba initiated by the Government in Pretoria as a "waste of time".

Natdo also demanded that the Government deploy more soldiers to help the police to effectively combat the taxi violence.

Transport department spokeswoman Ms Didi Moyle said that Natdo had not officially informed her department about the planned action.

She could not reveal the kind of action the Government would take if the blockages went ahead.

Free cover for some in taxis

(332)

BUSINESS EDITOR

ARG 14/6/98

Passengers on some Western Cape taxis will get free life insurance after an agreement between Sanlam and taxi owners.

The insurance, known as Taxicover, is taken out by the taxi owner and gives each passenger free life cover of R5 000 if he or she dies in an accident.

Taxis which have taken out the insurance will display special stickers.

The insurance would be available only to taxi associations which endorsed Sanlam's requirements on road safety, said Sanlam Group Benefits senior actuary Nick Sides.

By taking out the policy, taxi owners undertook to ensure their vehicles were not overloaded, were roadworthy and licensed and driven by sober people with valid licences.

Crackdown on taxis

New Act brought in to combat violence in the industry

Sowetan 15/5/98 (332)

By Justice Mohale, Noxolo Nxusani and McKeed Kotlolo

GAUTENG and North West provinces yesterday proposed a 24-hour security operation and also called for tough action against the perpetrators of taxi violence in both provinces.

Gauteng Premier Mathole Motshekga, Gauteng MEC for transport Ms Joyce Kgoali and her North West counterpart Mr Frans Vilakazi announced yesterday that the two governments had passed the Taxi Act to implement strict measures in an attempt to regulate the raging taxi violence.

The announcement, at a news conference in Johannesburg yesterday, followed a taxi indaba held between the Gauteng ministry of transport and various community-based structures on Monday to discuss strategies for ending the taxi violence.

The recommendations included the 24-hour deployment of police and soldiers to hot spots in the townships and the registration of taxis.

"The registration of taxis will ensure that every association is allocated stickers that will identify the routes its taxis are supposed to use. Violators of the agreements will compel the government to consider serious measures," said Motshekga.

Scores injured

Kgoali said Motshekga and his North West counterpart, Mr Popo Molefe, would approach senior officials of the South African Police Services, Correctional Services, Intelligence and the South African National Defence Force to make concerted efforts to root out the instigators of the taxi violence.

More than 150 taxi commuters were killed and scores injured in the two provinces since January.

Despite the tough proposed action the National Taxi Drivers Organisation (Natdo) vowed yesterday to go ahead with their planned action to barricade all main routes leading to major towns today. This resolution was taken by Natdo on Wednesday.

Natdo president Mr Themba Mgabhi said members of his organisation were forced to embark on mass action because they had received no responses to their previous meetings with officials of the provincial governments.

Shortly after the announcement of tough action against taxi violence perpetrators, police reported that two taxi operators were shot and killed in Pretoria yesterday ahead of the planned weekend rally to curb the scourge.

The bloody feud between affiliates of the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association has already claimed about 35 lives and left many wounded in the area since the beginning of the year.

Pretoria police spokesman Captain Morné van Wyk said a 53-year-old member of the Mamelodi Amalgamated Taxi Association was killed while off-loading passengers at the intersection of Hans Strijdom Drive and Lynnwood Road in the city yesterday.

Revenge attack

Van Wyk said the taxi had just stopped when a white Toyota Cressida stopped next to it and opened fire on the driver, hitting him twice on the head. The driver died on the scene.

In another incident a member of the Mamelodi Local and Long Distance Taxi Association was killed near the Denneboom Station taxi rank, Mamelodi in an apparent revenge attack.

Van Wyk said the incident occurred at about 11.15am.

Meanwhile, free transport have been organised to ferry Mamelodi, Atteridgeville, Soshanguve, Mabopane, Winterveldt and Garankuwa residents to the launch of the Operation Thiba 2 rally at Odi Stadium in Mabopane on Sunday.

The rally is to be addressed by Motshekga and Molefe, Gauteng and North West safety and security MECs Mr Paul Mashatile and Mr Satish Roopa as well as Kgoali and Vilakazi. It is scheduled to start at 9am with an inter-denominational prayer service.

Meanwhile, a prayer meeting was held at the St Francis Anglican Church in Rockville, Soweto, yesterday afternoon.

National president of the inter-denominational women's prayer, Masechaba Mabaso, urged women to unite and fight the taxi violence.



Transport war: In the past two weeks, 20 people have died and 21, including two policemen, have been arrested for crimes related to taxi violence around the country

Drivers blame cops for taxi violence

M+G 15-21/5/98 (332)

Wonder Hlongwa

Police have been blamed for the latest spate of taxi wars in Gauteng, which has claimed 20 lives in the past two weeks.

Both the provincial transport department and taxi organisations say police either turn a blind eye to taxi-related crime or are involved in the crimes themselves.

In the past two weeks, 21 people, including two policemen, have been arrested for crimes related to taxi violence, says the co-ordinator of the South African Police Service's national taxi violence investigations, Vincent Harris.

"Two policemen were arrested for their involvement in violence in the Soshanguve area," says Harris. Because of the sensitivity of the case, he could not supply more details.

At a meeting organised by the Gauteng Department of Transport and attended by representatives of trade unions, women's groups and youth structures this week, communities reiterated their call for a judicial commission of inquiry into the violence.

The department's Kate Bapela says the violence is complicated by the involvement of civil servants, especially police officers who own taxis.

Pretoria's Soshanguve township has been hit the hardest, with 24 deaths in five months related to taxi violence.

Disgruntled taxi drivers in the township have threatened to blockade major national streets to get the government's attention.

Themba Mgabhi of the National Taxi Drivers' Organisation, which has a membership of 35 000, says his organisation knows who the killers are and it wants to submit their names to the government, but it has not had an opportunity to do so.

He says members of his organisation have told him about government officials who also own taxis. His list includes the names of a provincial MEC and a number of policemen.

"In Germiston we submitted five names of known hit men to the police, but they have not been arrested. We think the owners also work hand-in-hand with the taxi violence investigating team," says Mgabhi.

His organisation is demanding the immediate arrest of all known hit men, a commission of inquiry and the dismissal of all government officials who own taxis.

Bapela says that nine months after the adoption of the provincial taxi Act, the government is still registering taxis in an attempt to regulate the industry and control routes wracked by violence.

In KwaZulu-Natal, police have also been implicated in taxi violence which has cost 10 lives in the past six weeks. But police representative Vishnu Naidoo denies this.

Says George Mahlalela, KwaZulu-Natal's provincial director of transport: "I wonder why he is denying such an obvious thing. Although we don't have concrete evidence, we know that policemen own taxis.

"If a taxi owner's association is fighting with another association, he protects the one in which he has interests."

KwaZulu-Natal's Interim Minibus Taxi Bill will be tabled again towards the end of this month. The provincial Cabinet rejected it in March on the grounds that the transport department had not consulted properly before tabling it.

Email: fmproperty@tml.co.za



Robbie Tshabalala

Transport for the masses *. . . is it too little, too late?*

INNER CITY RENEWAL

Taxi crisis: Business to the rescue

(332)
FM 15/5/98

Taxi ranks and shopping facilities planned for Johannesburg CBD

Big business is starting to put its money where its mouth is — the Johannesburg inner city.

In November, Grinaker Projects & Properties bought the Union Grounds site from the Greater Johannesburg Metro Council (GJMC) for R4m to build a shopping centre. Those funds, together with a further R8m contribution from the GJMC, will be used by Grinaker to transform the Jack Mincer parking garage into a taxi terminus.

GJMC inner city manager Graeme Reid sees the reopening of the Mincer taxi rank — main component of the Western Joubert Park Pilot Project — as a serious attempt by the private sector to play its part in renewing the Johannesburg CBD. A further R6m has been jointly pledged by the Department of Transport and Gauteng province for a top deck to accommodate "midi" buses — buses slightly larger than minis, taking up to 25 people — which will also be privately run.

But is it all too little, too late? Sanlam Properties MD Banus van der Walt claims that "it'll be a wasted effort if government does not come up with a co-ordinated plan. We can build all the taxi ranks and hawker markets in the world; what is really needed is for politicians and officials to work with us. The business community wants a government contract spelling out a determination to enforce law and order."

Grinaker is looking for investors in its R51m, 1 500 m² convenience shopping centre and has hired Amlease and Propquo to let space. The idea is to provide space for 2 000 taxis, and banking and entertainment facilities.

The derelict site, bounded by Klein, Plein, Twist and Noord streets, is an eyesore and health hazard.

Grinaker Projects & Properties director David Cort says the shopping centre is certain to succeed because "it will interface with residents in the precinct".

The complex, 8 600 m² altogether, will be known as Park Central and is expected to be complete by October.

The taxi facility will comprise two basement levels of the parking garage, upgraded and converted into holding areas, and a ground level passenger loading area. It will accommodate operators to Soweto and Alexandra.



Robbie Tshabalala

Isaac Mogase and David Cort*. . . centre will interface with residents in the precinct*

The biggest worry is to ensure that taxi operators play the game. Prince Makoena, a member of the Taxi Rank Control Committee, is optimistic for peaceful coexistence among the six taxi groups that will initially use the site. He says that since the project's inception four years ago, the operators have grown "to be a family".

But talk is cheap; finer points still have to be worked out.

Local government MEC Sicelo Shiceka warns that new legislation will enable local authorities to shut down taxi ranks plagued by violence. His threat comes after more taxi-related shootings in and around Johannesburg.

A hopeful sign is that inner-city residents have a vested interest in making the development a success. Seven Buildings Project chairman Presage Nyoni says Joubert Park dwellers have been caught in the crossfire of taxi violence. With the removal of garbage and oil from the streets, property values should improve. "The Mincer project could be a step forward in creating a more pleasant environment and enhancing investments," he says.

Van der Walt says that, after interviews with Shiceka, he is more confident that the necessary political will "is more or less in place". Sanlam, like Anglo, Sage and Old Mutual, "is keen to protect its investments and prevent further deterioration".

Sanlam has already invested R1m-plus on the Central Johannesburg Partnership. "Like New York 15 years ago, Johannesburg can be turned around," Van der Walt says. But he argues that as long as developers are given rights outside the city there will be no move back to the CBD.

Retailing is vibrant downtown, but many black shoppers with more money go to malls like Southgate and Eastgate. Mothballing the Carlton Centre and the failure of a casino bid are additional blows to the CBD.

Two other inner-city taxi ranks are planned. One is being built by Intersite at Park Station for long-distance operators. But the much-discussed Metro Mall on the corner of Bree and Sauer streets (called "hijack corner") has yet to get off the ground.

Margot Cohen

Efforts to avert a mass blockade of taxi routes fail

PD 15/5/98 (332

Pearl Sebolao and Pule Molebeledi

LAST-minute efforts by senior government officials to dissuade the National Taxi Drivers' Organisation from carrying out its threatened mass blockades of national routes today failed as the organisation declared that it would continue with its planned action.

The organisation, which claims to have a membership of 40 000, met Gauteng Transport MEC Joyce Kgoali, her North West counterpart Frans Vilakazi and Dipak Patel, land transport director-general in the national transport ministry.

Gauteng police will deploy maximum manpower throughout the province and the SA National Defence Force will be on standby. Anyone involved in the taxi blockade would be arrested and their vehicles impounded, provincial police spokesman Insp Natie de Jager warned yesterday.

Themba Mgabhi, the president of the taxi organisation, said the campaign would commence at 5am with the closure of Commissioner Street in Johannesburg. Thereafter, drivers and commuters would march to the Library Gardens and wait for President Nelson Mandela. Drivers in Mpumalanga and North West are also expected to participate in the protest.

Amid the blockade threats, the Gauteng and North West governments unveiled urgent plans yesterday to deal with the renewed taxi violence. These included the relaunch of Operation Thiba to enforce the new Minibus Taxi-Type Service Act aimed at regulating the industry.

A judicial commission of inquiry with "vast powers" would be instituted as soon as deliberations with other provinces and the office of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki were concluded, Gauteng Premier Mathole Motshekga said.

A high-level meeting to address taxi violence is scheduled for today in Mpumalanga. It will be attended by the province's transport and safety and security MECs, the provincial taxi council, police commissioner and civic bodies.

Meanwhile, Sapa reports that two taxi drivers were shot dead in the Pretoria area yesterday morning.

Police spokesman Capt Morne van Wyk said a man was shot dead at Denneboom taxi rank in Mamelodi. He was apparently a member of the Mamelodi Long Distance Taxi Association.

A member of the association's main rival, the Mamelodi Amalgamated Taxi Association, was shot dead when he stopped to drop off a passenger.

In another incident, a Witwatersrand African Taxi Association member was shot dead while driving along Koma Road in Zondi, Soweto, on Wednesday night, police said yesterday. They attributed his death to a taxi feud in Soweto.

Traffic dept out to target minibus taxis on video

ET 15/5/98 (332)

DAN SIMON

THE Cape Town Traffic Department wants to start prosecuting errant motorists with evidence obtained from video cameras.

This will be aimed particularly at minibus taxi drivers who regularly flout traffic laws, leading to casualties.

Should the traffic department get the go ahead from Cape attorney-general Mr Frank Kahn, it aims to set up video cameras — some hidden — on freeways and at other "dangerous locations", where traffic officials feel that pulling motorists over will either inconvenience motorists or endanger their own lives.

This was disclosed yesterday by Cape Town traffic chief Mr Mark Sangster, who, with Western Cape Transport and Labour Relations MEC Mr Pieter Meyer, paid respects to the family of part-time traffic official Mr Labhabha Mlityalwa, who was knocked down and killed at a pedestrian crossing in Philippi on Monday by a minibus taxi.

Sangster's visit to Mlityalwa's family home in Nyanga came a day after another of his traffic officers, Mr Andrew Nkomo, was almost run down by a minibus taxi at exactly the same spot where Mlityalwa was killed.

Said Sangster: "We're looking at introducing of a video-processing unit where your officer would set up a video camera, sometimes unobtrusively, where the vehicle as well as the registration and the person behind the wheel would be videoed.

"The offender can then be traced and prosecuted from the information that we receive from the camera footage."

Sangster said the "legalities" of the proposed plan would first have to be cleared by Kahn. A meeting was set up for next Tuesday with Kahn, who would be fully briefed on the proposed law-enforcement method.

If approved, his department would look at targeting, in particular, the Lansdowne/Philippi corridor, where traffic violations occur regularly.

In addition, Sangster said he would deploy more officers in the corridor to root out irresponsible drivers.

"Enough is enough," he said. "We've got a structured programme already, but this will be the first of a series of serious and very strict law-enforcement activity."

Sangster said that since the department started making out spot-arrests for outstanding violations in August last year, more than 1 100 taxi drivers had been arrested and prosecuted.

Operation clean-up for taxi industry

(332)

SHARKEY ISAACS
TRANSPORT REPORTER

ARG 15/5/98

Western Cape Transport Minister Piet Meyer has called on the Government and taxi operators to look at ways of improving safety in the industry.

He was addressing a workshop of the Western Cape Provincial Taxi Council convened to identify ways in which the taxi industry could improve standards.

Referring to recent fatal accidents involving taxis he said: "Government departments will be working together from now on to root out the dangerous element in the taxi industry."

The National Taxi Task Team had completed its task of gauging the needs of those linked to the industry and would publish its recommendations in August.

The first round of registration of minibus taxi associations should be completed before the end of June, he said. Once completed, the Government would start a focused enforcement drive to rid the industry of illegal operators.

Meanwhile, marking taxis would continue until every one had a sign showing the route on which it was allowed to operate.

He believed poor employment practices went hand-in-hand with the industry's informal nature and poor economic state.

"I appeal to you, as leaders of the industry, to work with my department at addressing labour issues."

These were:

- Drivers working on a quota or target system.
- Failure by operators and owners to register with Department of Labour health safety and insurance funds.
- Payment of minimum wages.
- Recognising and negotiating with a representative union in the industry.

ET 15/5/98

Drivers to protest nationwide against taxi industry violence

(332)

JOHANNESBURG: The National Taxi Drivers' Organisation (Natdo) would carry out its threat to block main roads leading to major cities today to protest against taxi violence, the organisation said yesterday.

Natdo leader Mr Themba Mgabhi told a news conference here that government officials had failed to meet the organisation's demand for a commission of inquiry into taxi violence.

The organisation is also demanding the immediate arrest of known taxi killers, the dismissal of government officials and policemen who own taxis, and a declaration of a state of emergency to deal with taxi violence.

"We are going to blockade all the freeways, all the entrances to towns and cities countrywide. We are sick and tired of the violence," he said.

The drivers here planned to begin the blockade at 5am. At 9.30am they intend to block Commissioner Street. At 10am they will gather at Library Gardens "to await President Nelson Mandela's response to our memorandum of grievance".

It would be faxed to Mandela's office last night.

Natdo's executive committee met the transport MECs for Gauteng and the North-West, Gauteng's director-general of transport, and Mr Dipak Patel from the office of Transport Minister Mac Maharaj yesterday.

"Natdo made it clear that we were willing to engage in ongoing discussions, but we could not agree on suspending the blockade. The government was given 14 days to respond, but found it appropriate to respond at the 11th hour.

"This kind of happy-go-lucky attitude from government officials displayed their insensitivity of the families of the victims of taxi violence and millions of South Africans."

Gauteng police Commissioner Sharma Maharaj warned earlier that the law would take its course if roads were blocked illegally. "Police will deploy maximum manpower and any persons involved in the barricades will be arrested and their vehicles impounded."

Asked to comment, Mgabhi said: "I am aware they will be harsh with us. They will have to arrest me first because I will be the first to blockade.

"We hope we will get support from the people affected by taxi violence. We transport 18 million passengers a day. They enter taxis and get shot. When drivers say goodbye to their wives, they do not know if they will see them again. We are fighting for peace in the industry," he said. — Sapa



More lives lost ... commuters say they have to use minibuses, but are afraid. This collision, in which three people died, happened on the Soweto Highway near Crown Mines yesterday.

Fearful commuters afraid to confront reckless taxi drivers

Star 15/5/98 (332)

By Gasant Abarder

Commuters who live in townships and rely on taxis to travel to work every day fear for their lives but are too scared to confront reckless drivers.

The fear has been sparked by a spate of accidents involving taxis in which 51 people were killed in Gauteng in the period from October last year to just after the Easter weekend.

Several people interviewed at work and at taxi ranks yesterday said taxis were the only practical way to get to work. Buses were too expensive and trains too dangerous, they said.

Thandi Mabuza (36) of Protea North, Soweto, said: "If we tell the drivers to drive carefully, they glare at us and say 'why don't you drive?' "

Isaac Khumalo (41) of Zola, Soweto, was beaten up by a mob about a month ago after asking a taxi driver if he could be transferred to another taxi that was going to his destination.

"I was headed for the Bridge taxi rank in North Street and asked the driver if I could get into another taxi going there. He ignored me and when I protested we started to argue.

"He stopped at West and Commissioner Streets, where a group of his friends were standing. Without saying a word they beat me up," Khumalo said.

An accident in peak-hour traffic involving two minibus taxis claimed the lives of three commuters on the Soweto Highway near Crown Mines yesterday. Ten others were injured.

"When I heard about the accident, I felt scared but I had no choice but to take the taxi," Fikile Dube (33) said.

Arrive Alive campaign spokesman Hester Pretorius said their offices were inundated with reports of taxi-related accidents – so much so, that up-to-date statistics were not available. From October 1 1997 to the end of January this year 43 people died in taxi accidents. The national figure stood at 236.

Over this year's Easter weekend, eight people were killed in accidents in Gauteng and 33 nationally.

Pretorius said police stations in the worst-affected areas often under-reported taxi accidents.

This is an emergency – taxi men

(332)

Blockade called off but drivers want to reveal names of known assassins

Star 15/5/98

By Gill Gifford

Taxi drivers are demanding that President Mandela impose an industry state of emergency, an independent judicial inquiry into taxi wars and the immediate dismissal of government officials who own taxis.

They also want the Government to compensate victims of taxi violence and immediately arrest known taxi assasins.

These demands follow the National Taxi Driver Organisation's suspension of a taxi blockades after police threatened harsh action if they went ahead. A planned blockade of all major routes in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Nelspruit was called off at the last minute by organisers.

Themba Mgabhi, spokesman for the National Taxi Driver Organisation – the body calling for the blockade, said members met at 3am today to discuss provincial commissioner Sharma Maharaj's threat to arrest protesters and impound their vehicles.

"We were told yesterday that if we set up blocks the police would come with teargas and impound our vehicles. So by 5am we decided to call off the blockade and started phoning all our members to tell them to work as usual," Mgabhi said.

The organisation planned the blockade to demand sterner measures to stop taxi wars following the recent surge in taxi-related violence.

"We believe corrupt policemen are involved in the taxi industry. And these threats against us reflect what we have been saying all along."

However, taxi drivers this morning began trickling in to the Johannesburg Library Gardens where they were to hold a protest meeting. Mgabhi said they would wait there for Mandela, Transport Minister Mac Maharaj, Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi and Defence Minister Joe Modise to accept a memorandum from them.

The organisation wants to meet the ministers to hand over the names of known taxi assassins and the people responsible for recent incidents of violence.

Police today reported that all was quiet in Johannesburg and Pretoria and traffic was moving normally.

Gauteng MEC for Safety and Security, Paul Mashatile, said: "We appreciate that drivers are among the victims taxi violence and we share their concerns." He added that evidence pointed to the possibility some policemen "have an interest in the taxi industry", but the matter was under investigation.

▶ Commuters afraid to confront drivers
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The Star ... Tuesday May 19 1998

Crack team to fight Gauteng taxi violence

Star 19/5/98 (332)

Government is involved in pilot projects to make the industry financially viable

By Jovial Rantao
Political Correspondent

Cape Town – The elite presidential team that has been responsible for the reduction of taxi violence in Eastern Cape and Western Cape is to be deployed in Soweto and Pretoria.

These flashpoints of taxi violence in Gauteng have claimed over 50 deaths in the past four months.

Dipak Patel, deputy director-general of transport, said the team, led by Superintendent Neville Thoms, had already been briefed about its mission to Gauteng.

In a briefing yesterday to Parliament's select committee on transport, Patel said the full might of the law should be felt by those responsible for taxi violence.

"They're criminals and they must be treated as such. They have no role to play in this era. Individuals who have become rich in the taxi business were behind the recent wave of taxi violence," he said.

The perpetrators could be identified, he added.

He said measures were being taken to ensure co-operation at national and provincial level, and between the transport and safety and security departments to eliminate the violence.

Patel added that among the long-term solutions proposed by the Government was to help the taxi industry to become financially viable.

He said the Government was involved in pilot projects through which taxi owners would form co-operatives and run multipurpose taxi ranks which would have facilities such as petrol stations and fast-food outlets.

The co-operatives would be able to access government subsidies and would gain access to state tenders. Pilot projects were being conducted in North West, Free State, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Northern Province, Patel said.

'We want taxi war (332) to stop'

Sowetan

By McKeed Kotlolo 19/5/98

THE Mamelodi Amalgamated Taxi Association (Mata), one of the two feuding taxi rivals, welcomed the weekend's launch of Operation Thiba 2 in the township to end the current taxi violence in the area.

Mata chairman Mr Solomon Moloko told *Sowetan* yesterday that his association "welcomes any effort to bring the violence in the local taxi industry to an end".

He said Mata was ready to meet anyone with plans to stop the bloodshed. His organisation was also keen to meet officials of the Mamelodi Local and Long Distance Taxi Association Malldta) which is also involved in the feud.

"I am more than willing to meet Malldta to negotiate an end to the violence," Moloko said.

Attempts to contact Malldta officials yesterday were unsuccessful.

Taxis to and from the township have stopped operating as a result of the violence. Putco Bus Company has increased its services in Mamelodi to help stranded commuters.

Putco regional manager Mr Niel Groenewald said his office had applied for additional buses from head office to deal with the increased commuter volumes.

"We cannot cope with the demand but we are doing our best to see to it that commuters reach their destinations on time," Groenewald said.

He also said there was cooperation between his company and the taxi associations.

"They even asked us to assist in the transportation of commuters between the city and Mamelodi," he said.

Elite taxi team moves to Gauteng

ST 19/5/98

JOVIAL RANTAO
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

THE elite presidential team that has reduced taxi violence in the Eastern and Western Cape is to be deployed in Soweto and Pretoria, where more than 50 people have been killed in the past four months.

The team, led by Superintendent Neville Thoms, has been briefed by the Minister of Transport Mac Maharaj about its Gauteng mission. (332)

Mr Dipak Patel, deputy director-general in the Department of Transport, said yesterday restructuring the industry and the re-registration of taxis remained the core of the government's approach to resolving the problems in an industry that was once hailed as the black economic miracle.

The full might of the law should be felt by those responsible for taxi violence, he told Parliament's select committee on transport. "They're criminals and must be treated as such."

Individuals who had become rich in the industry were behind the recent wave of taxi violence, Patel said.

"They can be identified and we intend to bring the full might of the state against them. They have no role to play in the era."

To help curb the violence, measures were being taken to ensure co-operation at national and provincial levels between the transport and safety and security departments.

One of the long-term solutions proposed by the government was to help the taxi industry become financially viable, Patel said.

The government was involved in pilot projects enabling taxi owners to form co-operatives to run a business, such as a multi-purpose taxi rank with facilities like filling stations and fast-food outlets.

The co-operatives would have access to government subsidies and state tenders.

Pilot projects were being established in North West, the Free State, the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Northern Province.

If these were successful, co-operatives would be established in all major towns.

Women demand end to taxi strife

Sowetan 20/5/98 (332)

By McKeed Kotlolo

A BUSLOAD of Mamelodi, Pretoria, women yesterday threatened to stage a sit-in in the Pretoria office of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki.

This was in an effort to force the Government to do something about taxi violence in the area.

The women, from various religious denominations, were met by chief director of international relations in Mbeki's office Mr Thembi Majola, who told them that Mbeki was out of the country.

Majola assured the women that their "grievances and concerns" would be passed on to Mbeki, who was due back in the country late yesterday.

The women, who did not carry placards or present a memorandum, said they were there to request protection from the Government "we have voted into power".

They claimed the Government had the resources to bring the continued bloodshed in the taxi industry to an end.

One of the leaders Ms Kona Makhoere said they feared the violent situation would soon be used by other parties in next year's elections.

She said they intended to occupy Mbeki's office until the Government made a commitment to bring the violence to a stop.

Meanwhile, chairman of the Mamelodi Amalgamated Taxi Association Mr Solomon Moloko yesterday dissociated himself from a statement which said his association was ready to meet their rivals, the Mamelodi Local and Long Distance Taxi Association, to end the violence.

Taxi driver slain in Pretoria

Star 20/5/98 (332)

BY GASANT ABARDER
Crime Reporter

A taxi driver was shot dead and another driver and three passengers were injured in two drive-by shootings in Pretoria this morning.

The attacks follow the deployment of a Presidential Taxi Unit this week to assist the Taxi Violence Unit in Pretoria with their investigations.

Some 50 people have been killed in taxi violence in the province this year.

Police spokesman Inspector Gideon Thessner said a Mamelodi Amalgamated Taxi Association driver was shot in his taxi on the corner of Rossouw Street and Simon Vermooten Drive in the Willows early this morning and died in Wilgers Hospital.

In the second shooting, four people were wounded at 6.10am when the occupants of a Volkswagen Golf pulled over a taxi on the corner of Kent Street and Simon Vermooten Drive, Meyers Park, and fired on the driver and passengers.

The driver, a Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association driver, was hit once in the head. A passenger was hit in the body. A second passenger was shot in the hand and body and a fourth in the hand.

Taxi violence claims three outside court

CT 22/5/98

(332)

DURBAN: Three men were shot dead and nine people, including a policeman, injured in a massive shootout outside the High Court here at lunchtime yesterday.

Chaos erupted when between 10 and 12 men armed with handguns and AK-47s opened fire on people gathered outside the main entrance to the court at 1.15pm.

Policemen at a nearby restaurant chased the attackers, who fled down the Victoria Embankment, where they engaged the public order policing unit.

Six attackers were arrested and a number of firearms, including at least one AK-47, seized.

Many of the wounded, who included three suspects, were treated at the scene. Others were rushed to the Addington and King Edward hospitals.

Sergeant Craig van Zyl of the Durban dog unit was shot in the head and treated by paramedics before being taken in a critical condition to hospital.

A shopowner told journalists some of the alleged attackers gathered in the entrance to his shop minutes before the shooting. He asked them to move, but they ignored his request. Minutes later they unzipped a large black bag, removed firearms and began shooting.

"It was absolute chaos," he said. He said the attackers appeared to be nervous and had been hanging around the area for most of the day.

The shooting was believed to be related to a court case involving taxi violence.

In a statement released shortly after the incident KwaZulu-Natal transport MEC S'bu Ndebele said he had been informed two taxi-related cases involving rival factions were being heard in court.

The cases were about a shooting incident at the Durban station taxi rank.

Earlier Ndebele and provincial safety and security MEC Nyanga Ngubane had discussed taxi violence at an emergency meeting with the police's serious and violent crime unit. Ndebele said recent incidents indicated that the nature of taxi violence in KwaZulu-Natal was changing.

"Incidents of violence were previously confined within taxi associations where operators would target and kill each other.

"However, the latest incidents reflect that we are dealing with a situation of open warfare where innocent drivers, passengers and bystanders are coming under fire. These incidents call for immediate action on the part of government to get to the bottom of the problem and deal with it effectively."

It was agreed at the meeting that a legislative framework to deal with the conflict was needed. Agreement was also reached that the Interim Minibus Taxi Bill would be tabled next week. Ndebele urged all involved to ensure the bill was passed and implemented.

A task team would try to deal with the conflict at the Durban station rank and police teams dealing with taxi violence would be beefed up, Ndebele said. — Sapa

4 die as taxi hitmen open fire at High Court

ARG 22/5/98 (332)

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

Durban – Four people have been killed and several others injured in a shootout between a taxi hit squad and police on the steps of the Durban High Court.

Among those killed yesterday were a policeman and one of the hitmen. Police are still trying to establish whether the other two were one of the hit squad's targets – an accused in a taxi violence trial and a witness in the case.

About 10 bystanders, including court staff and passers-by, were injured in the shootout.

The drama started shortly after 1.30pm when a group of about eight men heavily armed with AK-47 assault rifles and 9mm pistols opened fire in a parking lot at the side of the High Court on men on trial for the murder of taxi boss Moses Gcaba.

Quick reaction by two members of the city police and a SAPS policewoman led to the initial arrest of six suspects at the scene of the shooting.

However, after questioning only three have been linked to the midday massacre.

Two of the suspects are in hospital while the third is in custody.

Investigators have confirmed that the motive appears to be related to the ongoing and bloody taxi war.

SAPS provincial head Chris Serfontein expressed shock and dismay at the shooting incident.

He said: "This not only displays a total disregard for the safety of fellow human beings, but also the present culture of lawlessness that prevails in the taxi industry."

The shooting happened at almost the same time that a high-level meeting to address taxi violence was taking place between Commissioner Serfontein and the provincial ministers of transport and safety and security, Mr S'bu Ndebele and Chief Nyanga Ngubane.

Durban murder and robbery unit detectives are investigating. Three AK-47s and five handguns have been recovered by police.

North West taxi owners stretch out hand of peace

(332) P24/5/98

By DAN DHLAMINI

WHILE BROTHER kills brother in the unabated taxi violence in Soweto and Pretoria, taxi owners in North West's Stilfontein town are locked in reconciliation.

Last week executive committee members of the Khuma and Stilfontein United Taxi Association (Khusuta), visited Moses Mmusi, an injured taxi owner of a rival association.

The injuries of Mmusi, from the Buffels Taxi Association in the Klerksdorp area, were not a result of taxi war, but a road accident last year which has since confined him to a wheelchair.

Andries Xhuma, chairman of Khusuta, and committee members Spokes Sekwele, Paul Motswenyane and Elias Sibanda said they reached out to Mmusi as a "comrade in business".

Mmusi could not be reached for comment, but Xhuma said he (Mmusi) was grateful and had pledged his support for unity among black taxi owners.

Xhuma said his association extended a hand of friendship by buying the Mmusi family groceries in a bid to encourage tolerance and unity among black taxi operators in the area.

He said the taxi industry belonged to blacks and it was not necessary to kill each other. They should rather follow his association's motto which is "Passenger is king, together we build, divided we fall".

Regarding the ongoing killings of taxi operators in Soshanguve, Xhuma said people in the Klerksdorp region must pray that the taxi war does not spill over.

He said the government should act decisively to end the carnage and stop ignoring local taxi associations because they had a lot of information at grassroots on who the warlords were and how they could be arrested.



HELPING THE INJURED . . . *Injured taxi owner Moses Mmusi and his wife Suzan Lee receive groceries from Khuma and Stilfontein United Taxi Association executive members Spokes Sekwele, Andries Xhuma (Chairman), Paul Motswenyane and Elias Sibanda.* ■ ***Pic: VUSI SELLO***

New taxi cards a fare

Codeta is taking the computer route for payment by pa-

ST(CN) 24/5/98

BABALWA SHOTA

THE taxi industry has taken a leap into the world of modern technology with the introduction of a new card payment system.

From next month some passengers will use computerised cards and machines instead of cash when they board taxis of the Consolidated Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta).

Khayelitsha-based Codeta will run a pilot project for three months where one taxi on each of its nine routes will operate the card system instead of taking cash.

Codeta spokesman Reggie Malimba said most of the organisation's taxi owners gave their full support to the project.

"Other owners are sceptical because we tried this in the 1980s, but because we did not have the right resources it failed. But now we are confident that the project will work."

Malimba stressed that owners were not being forced to operate the card system and passengers still had a choice of paying cash.

Commuters can buy weekly, fortnightly or monthly cards at kiosks to be set up at the Site C taxi rank.

"When passengers get into a minibus taxi they will insert their cards into the machine inside the taxi while the driver monitors the process. It will register the amount and the destination," said Malimba.

"A second machine automatically connected to a bank will belong to the owner. He can transfer the recorded information and his money will go to the bank and he can collect it any time," he added.

The cards and the machines will be made by Umziwoxolo Taxi-Link, whose representatives are teaching commuters, drivers and owners how to operate the system.

A UCT survey found that many commuters were not enthusiastic about the scheme. But Malimba said he was confident they would respond positively once they knew how to use it.

The pilot project will begin in a few weeks' time when the machines and cards have been installed in taxis. Malimba said this would cost R2 500 per taxi, but the fare would not increase unless petrol prices went up.

He explained that Codeta had chosen the computerised system, instead of clip cards, because minibus taxis were owned by individuals and not a company and the system let owners monitor their own business more closely.

Although passengers would still be allowed to use money, said Malimba, the long-term plan was for commuters to use cards only.

"The scheme will save money for owners, and passengers will be able to plan their travelling budget better. Drivers will not have to spend time counting the money," Malimba said.



WAY TO GO: Taxi driver Mzukisi Masi shows off the new machine and card

deal

ssengers

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Taxi violence 'out of control'

ARG 25/5/98

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

(332)

Durban - KwaZulu-Natal Minister of Transport S'bu Ndebele admitted yesterday that taxi violence had gone beyond his department's control.

He urged his colleagues to approve urgent intervention by the army and police after shootings outside the Durban High Court and at Durban taxi ranks last week.

Emergency interim legislation aimed at regulating the industry and reducing conflict will again be tabled in the provincial parliament this week.

An emergency cabinet meeting to address the crisis was held on Friday. A second cabinet meeting this morning is to be addressed by SAPS Commissioner Chris Serfontein on ways to deal with the violence.

Backing for tough steps against taxi wars

(332)
Sowetan 26/5/98

By Wilson Ramothata

THE Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) has called on the Government to implement the National Taxi Team recommendations.

TGWU said these would help regulate the taxi industry as a matter of extreme urgency and effectively close loose ends that may enable perpetrators to continue fomenting violence in the industry.

The union told *Sowetan Business* at the weekend that it was in the process of integrating the South African Taxi Drivers Union (Satdu) to ensure organised taxi union under Cosatu – aimed at curbing resurgence of taxi violence.

The union's taxi sector coordinator, Maurice Bokaba, said the move follows the Government initiative through its National Taxi Team (NTT) recommendations to regulate the industry. He said the process to ensure that taxi drivers were organised under one umbrella body was at an advanced stage.

Extremely concerned

Bokaba said the TGWU always supported the Ministry of Transport through its NTT recommendations to regulate the industry with the implementation of the legislation into the Gauteng Taxi Act.

"We are extremely concerned about the ongoing deliberate lawlessness, which has resulted in the loss of innocent lives. We still maintain that tougher measures are the only way to stop the killings."

Time frames, said Bokaba, should be given to all provinces to submit legislation to ensure national implementation.

The union wanted to know why the recent implementation of phase one of Operation Thiba in Gauteng and North West, which it said in the beginning played a significant role in curbing taxi violence around Soshanguve and Mabopane, was subsequently stopped.

Bokaba said the union fully supported the forthcoming launch of the Ministerial Taxi Task Team envisaged to assist the wage board in investigating conditions of employment in the industry.

The TGWU also called on taxi driver worker organisations to refrain from giving the Government ultimatums to curb the violence but to direct their grievances at taxi bosses.

"We are repeatedly calling on taxi drivers to join hands with us and assist the Government in eradicating violence and bringing perpetrators to book," said Bokaba.

Pta taxi violence spreads east

Sowetan 26/5/98 (332)

By McKeed Kotlolo

THE taxi violence which has claimed about 40 lives in Pretoria has spread to Mpumalanga, where two drivers were killed and an unknown number of passengers wounded at the weekend, according to police.

Siyabuswa police reported a spate of drive-by shootings in the Matshiding-Waterval villages in the former KwaNdebele. These resulted in the death of two operators on Friday evening.

Those killed in the attack, which started outside the Matshiding Taxi Rank at about 7pm, were Veli Tlou (29) of Weltevrede village and Sergeant Mnguni (24) of Matshiding village.

Both victims are members of Thathazakho Taxi Association, which is affiliated to the Taxi Operators Peace Initiative Conglomerate .

Opened fire

Spokesman for Siyabuswa police Sergeant Mandla Mabena said occupants of a white Volkswagen Jetta allegedly opened fire with handguns on Tlou while he was attending to his broken minibus outside the Matshiding Taxi Rank.

He said the assailants then sped off in the direction of Waterval village. On their way they fired on taxis along the road, hitting four and killing a second driver (Mnguni). Both Tlou and Mnguni died on the scene.

Sources in the area said a number of passengers were reported injured in the drive-by shootings but police said they only knew about the drivers who were killed.

Mabena said no arrests had been made, adding that the weekend attacks were an extension of the Mamelodi violence because the attacked taxi rank "is used by Thathazakho Taxi Association whose members operate between Mpumalanga and Pretoria".

He said the link was established during an interview with taxi operators yesterday morning as part of the investigation of the incident.

Thathazakho is also a sister association of the Mamelodi Local and Long Distance Taxi Association which is involved in a bloody feud with the Mamelodi Amalgamated Taxi Association in Pretoria.

Meanwhile, Pretoria police reported a violence-free weekend on the taxi front.

Task team set up to tackle chaotic taxi industry

BD 26/5/98 (339)

CAPE TOWN — Government said yesterday it was setting up a special task force to tackle the mayhem in the taxi industry.

The task force will investigate labour conditions and draw up minimum standards of employment and safety.

"Taxi drivers are underpaid, work long hours, the conditions of service are very poor and some are forced to drive unroadworthy taxis," the labour department said in a statement announcing a Ministerial Taxi Task Team.

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj said a major drive to regulate the industry was under way.

"More than 95% of taxi associations have been conditionally registered," he said during a debate on his ministry's budget.

He said he deplored the intermittent warfare between rival taxi groups in some areas, involving shootings and murders. Those who engaged in violence had to be treated as criminals and not as members of the industry.

Another special task force was making some progress in identifying the chief culprits and bringing them to book, Maharaj said.

National Assembly transport committee chairman Patricia de Lille (PAC) said: "Government must provide commuters with a better choice of transport." — Sapa, Reuter.

SEMINAR

CONTRACT LAW IN THE CONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENT (DAY 1) and HUMAN RESOURCE ISSUES (DAY 2)

New plans to curb taxi wars unveiled

By Mike Maspra

The Gauteng and North West governments announced new plans to curb taxi violence yesterday, declaring themselves ready for the challenge after learning lessons from past mistakes.

Security Minister Sicelo Shiceka jointly announced the Transport and Manshatile Makwarela phase of a government initiative aimed at regulating the taxi industry.

Thirty-three Masibuses and 10 metered vehicles would be used to operate the routes.

Shiceka said the second phase would start in April next year.

Transport MEC Paul Mashatile said the provincial government would spend R500 million on the project.

Security MEC Nomvula Mokonyane said the taxi industry would be consulted and regulations would be put in place.

Mokonyane said the new plans would be different from the past as they would be driven by the taxi industry.

"The taxi industry will be responsible for the operation of the buses and will employ its own security personnel to ensure that there is no violence," she said.

Mokonyane said the provincial government would also provide training for taxi drivers.

"We will also train taxi drivers on how to treat passengers with respect

Call to form taxi umbrella body

Sowetan 27/5/98

By Justice Mohale

THE Amalgamated National Commuters Organisation (Anco) is to present a document to the National Taxi Task Team (NTTT) calling on the Government to establish an umbrella body for all taxi associations across the country.

The document outlines various methods to effectively curb violence in the taxi industry.

President of Anco Mr Joel Mageza said the document, *Taxi Violence National Plan and Strategies*, contains methods that could effectively quell taxi violence.

These include the involvement of South Africa's chief magistrates and senior police officers in community forums to assist in legal issues; the separation of the taxi industry business from political violence; formation of a taxi regional council which will include officials from the ministries of Justice, Safety and Security, Transport, taxi owners, drivers and representatives of commuters.

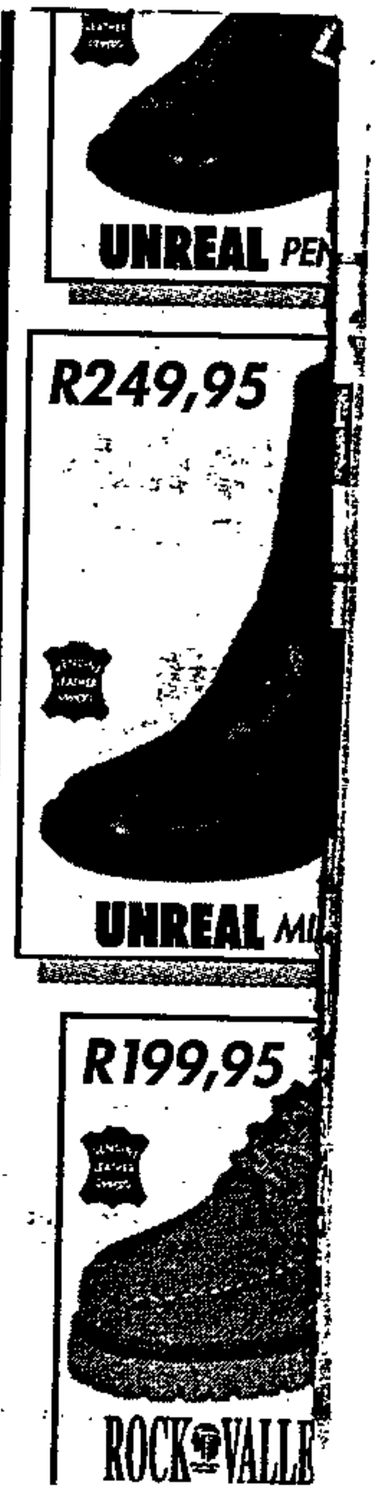
"We hope the intervention by Government officials will play a vital role in making the taxi industry more user-friendly to commuters than it is now," said Mageza.

Convenient

He said the taxi industry was the most convenient means of transportation for the poor and for that reason the Government should play a proactive role to ensure the security of commuters.

Mageza said the Government should establish forums in which taxi associations could discuss their differences rather than hiring hit squads to eliminate their rivals.

"The same forums were formed during the height of violence on the East Rand seven years ago and the taxi violence was effectively dealt with," claimed Mageza.



Taxi violence is at an end – director-general

Sowetan 7/5/98 (332)

THE latest wave of taxi killings could be the last round of serious violence in the industry, deputy director-general of transport Dipak Patel said yesterday.

"I am tempted to say this is a last-ditch effort by Mafia-type elements clinging to their positions of power as the restructuring of the industry is shaping up," Patel said.

He said a spate of killings in the last few weeks was not a symptom of the industry falling apart, but the actions of vested interests threatened by moves to restore order.

"We have to break their stranglehold, and are intent on doing so."

Other experts agreed that the taxi industry was being held captive by elements sowing mayhem for their own purposes.

"It is in the grip of an incorrigible culture of anarchy," said an urban transport expert at the University of South Africa, Mrad Shahia.

"There is only one way to deal with this — an approach of total law enforcement and concerted steps to regulate the taxi industry."

Five people died at the Durban High Court last week in a shooting apparently linked to the trial of two suspects charged with the murder of a taxi boss. In the Pretoria area at least 10 people were killed in the past two weeks.

The national death toll due to taxi violence since the beginning of the year was at least 140, said Superintendent Vincent Harris, national coordinator of taxi violence investigations.

Patel said those stoking the violence were not concerned about the taxi business.

"They are hooligans accustomed to high revenues from extortion and protection fees. This group is seeing their reign of terror coming to an end, and is clearly hoping to benefit from the impending changes in the industry."

Moves to transform the taxi industry were well under way. Some 95 percent of the country's 1 200 taxi associations had registered with the department, indicating their willingness to adhere to standard codes of conduct.

Patel said the violence was in essence not a transport problem, but a criminal one. – *Sapa.*

Plea for one umbrella taxi body

(332)

Sowetan 27/5/98



Flashback ... yet another victim of taxi violence in South Africa. Inset: Transport Minister Mac Maharaj.

By Justice Mohale

THE ongoing taxi violence has turned hundreds of people into widows, widowers and orphans in many parts of the country.

At least 150 people have been killed and many more injured in North West and Gauteng since January this year.

A delegation from the Amalgamated National Commuters Organisation (Anco), led by its president Joel Mageza, will present a document to the National Taxi Task Team on Thursday on how to curb taxi violence.

In its first proposal, Anco – which was formed in 1993 and has 9 500 registered members – calls on the Government to establish one umbrella body.

One national structure

They suggest that all taxi associations throughout the country should belong to one national structure to eliminate infighting. Mageza said this would unite them and prevent the ongoing conflict over routes.

He said the taxi industry was the most convenient means of transport for the poor, so the Government should bring it under central control to ensure safety and security of commuters.

In a 25-page document, Anco outlines a process to establish such an umbrella body. Mageza said initially local taxi associations should come together to form a forum that would meet on a monthly basis.

The monthly meetings of these proposed local taxi associations could be held at the local police headquarters to ensure openness and fairness.

Anco suggests that these local associations form a district taxi federation (DTF). Representatives in the DTF will come from commuter organisations, politicians, civic organisations, media and the police.

The ministries of Justice, Transport and Safety and Security as well as other high-ranking Government officials would also serve on this regional structure. Issues to be discussed by the DTF will include how to build mutual respect among local taxi associations and the role of the police in ensuring stability in the taxi industry.

The organisation strongly believes that taxi associations should form a strong administration (although the daily management should rest with the individual associations without interference by Government officials).

The DTFs will come together in the national umbrella body. This structure will also include officials from the ministries of Justice, Safety and Security and Transport, taxi owners, drivers and representatives of commuters.

They also propose the involvement of chief magistrates and senior police officers in community forums.

"We hope the intervention by (Government) officials could play a vital role in making the taxi industry more user-friendly for commuters," said Mageza.

The marketing of new routes was also of concern to Anco. According to the organisation, this should be the responsibility of a special working committee comprising representatives from local taxi associations.

"The associations should not market themselves individually to avoid conflict over scarce resources," he said. "The working committee should also decide on a quota of taxis from each association to operate on the new routes.

"This will promote peace and understanding among associations because they will be getting equal shares (of the profits in the industry)."

Another area of concern to Anco is that of policy formulation. It fully supports the Government's proposal to register all taxis and to allocate them permits and routes.

Before this process starts, it suggests, each taxi owner must submit a *curriculum vitae* and the Government must open a special file for him. This will help the community to know whose taxis operate in their areas.

Guarantee safety

"Before the registration of any taxi in their prospective associations, the owner must submit a police clearance."

Anco believes that if their guidelines are followed properly, there will be visible progress – it could enhance the smooth running of the taxi industry and guarantee the safety and security of commuters.

Mageza said the Government should be committed to help these proposed forums in which taxi associations could discuss their differences rather than hiring hit squads to eliminate rivals.

"These strategies have proven beyond doubt that, if implemented properly, taxi violence would be something of the past, as was the case seven years ago on the East Rand."

The organisation has a proud record of mediation.

It was established in 1993 against the background of political and taxi violence in various parts of the East Rand.

Mageza said the unabated conflict between supporters of the African National Congress and Inkatha Freedom Party in this area spilled over into the area of public transport.

That prompted railway, bus and taxi commuters' forums to merge to form Anco.

But their real work started in January 1994 when Anco successfully facilitated reconciliation between two rival taxi associations which ferried commuters between Vosloorus and Germiston.

In July the same year, Anco organised a march to the traffic department in Elsburg and to the district police headquarters in Germiston after unknown gunmen shot at a taxi full of commuters.

A month later, the organisation arranged a taxi conference to plead with taxi operators to refrain from political involvement.

It was attended by police officers from various East Rand police stations and residents.

Protest marches

In July 1995 Anco successfully mediated between the warring Kempton Park Taxi Association and the Edenvale Taxi Association. After a series of protest marches, reconciliation was achieved.

A year later, Anco launched a national campaign for safety and security, aimed at ending the rivalry between the long-distance taxi associations. "For the first time we brought reconciliation between the Letlhabile Taxi Association, the South African Long Distance Taxi Association and the National United Long Distance Taxi Association."

With this rich background of successful mediation, Anco believes that it can play a meaningful role in restoring peace in the taxi industry in other parts of the country as well.

Protection for taxi drivers gets going

FRANK NXUMALO
LABOUR EDITOR

Johannesburg — The department of labour yesterday inaugurated the process of establishing formal mechanisms to enforce a package of labour legislation in the taxi industry.

The package includes minimum wages, and the Labour Relations, Basic Conditions of Employment, Occupational Health and Safety and the Unemployment Insurance Acts.

The department said yesterday that it was setting up basic standards and minimum wages for the industry to prevent extremes of exploitation, encourage productivity and stability and ensure equity between workers.

"At present the drivers are victims of violence, are underpaid, work too long hours and are forced to drive unroadworthy taxis," the labour department said.

Les Kettledas, the deputy director-general in the department, said the South African taxi industry was characterised by the "absence of adequate regulation of working conditions, long working hours and persistent social, health and safety problems".

A ministerial task team that includes the departments of labour, transport and public works, the South Taxi Drivers' Union and the Transport and General Workers' Union has been charged with overseeing the process over a period of between 10 and 12 months.

Kettledas said that at the end of the period the task team would have to report to the minister of labour on its findings in respect to the conditions of employment in the taxi industry. It would advise and recommend to him ways of improving labour relations and establishing one labour market for the industry.

He said members of the team would be remunerated according to rates stipulated by treasury regulations.

The rate had been set at R378 a day.

Labour analysts said the formalisation of the industry would open up a massive tax base for the government.

Talks postponed as taxi industry employers fail to attend (332)

Jonny Steinberg

TAXI industry employers snubbed the labour department yesterday as employer representatives from seven provinces failed to attend the first day of a summit convened in Johannesburg to establish employment regulations in the industry.

Among those who failed to attend were representatives from the troubled province of Gauteng.

The summit has been postponed pending further consultation with employers.

Transport and General Workers' Union spokesman Morris Bokaba said: "The failure of employers to attend the summit is a serious setback for the industry. It is an indication employers are not concerned about their poor relationship with drivers and passengers."

This is not the first time an initiative to bring employment regulations to the industry has failed. In November 1996 the wage board suspended an investigation into the taxi industry to facilitate the establishment of a national bargaining council. Only one preparatory meeting between employers and unions was held.

Les Kettledas, deputy director-general of the labour department said: "These are precisely the problems we expect to face in an unorganised and unregulated industry. There is no question of giving up."

BD 28/5/98

'Taxi bosses hired assasins'

M+G 29/5-4/6/98 (332)

Mzilikazi wa Afrika

Police are investigating allegations that taxi bosses in Mpumalanga employed 40 Mozambicans as hired assassins.

Investigators say taxi bosses hired the Mozambicans as the foreigners would be harder to track down than local hired assassins.

"Our intelligence unit has found out that the Mozambican hit men are armed with powerful automatic rifles," said Mpumalanga MEC for Safety and Security Luckson Mathebula.

He said it was suspected that police who owned taxis arranged for the Mozambicans to enter South Africa. "We've already identified the leaders of the Mozambican hit men and where they are based in Mozambique."

Over the past two weeks, six South African hit men — five of them members of the Federation of Local and Long Distance Taxi Associations, and one a police officer — were arrested in Mpumalanga. Four suspects appeared in the Mapulaneng Magistrate's Court, near Bushbuckridge, on Wednesday in connection with taxi murders. They were refused bail and the case was postponed to June 19.

Last Friday, Sergeant Kenneth Mathebula (33), a member of the visible policing unit in Bushbuckridge and the South Africa Local and Long Distance Taxi Association, appeared in the Lydenburg Circuit Court. He allegedly shot dead two taxi drivers four weeks ago. He was not asked plead and was refused bail.

The trial of Sam "Mamelodi" Mbonani will resume in the White River Magistrate's Court on June 8. He was caught driving a car allegedly used in more than 10 drive-by taxi shootings.

Lowveld police representative Captain Ben Mkhonto says 28 people have been shot dead in the region in the past six months. "The R40 ... between Nelspruit and Bushbuckridge has become a killing field ... a *slaghuis*, for these taxi killings," Mkhonto said.

Jackson Mthembu, Mpumalanga MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport, says 942 taxi owners illegally operate 1 143 taxis in Mpumalanga, and 33 taxi associations refuse to register with the department.

"Something terrible has gone wrong in the taxi industry. We must appoint one association as the mother body of all associations to put a stop to the violence," he suggests.

Mthembu and Mathebula have been accused by the president of the National Taxi Drivers' Organisation, Themba Mgabhi, of owning and operating taxis. Mpumalanga Premier Matthews Phosa denies these allegations and has appointed them, with other MECs, to a special African National Congress task team to investigate taxi violence in the area.— African Eye News Service

Taxi industry meets to discuss working conditions

(3M2) BD 29/5/98

GOVERNMENT met employers and employees in the taxi industry in Johannesburg on Wednesday and yesterday to look at ways of improving poor working conditions in the troubled industry.

Opening Thursday's meeting, labour department deputy director-general Les Kettledas said long working hours, persistent health and safety problems, and inadequate regulation of working conditions were some of the problems bedevilling the industry.

He proposed the setting up of a ministerial task team that would look into conditions of work in the industry.

Meanwhile, a report from Durban said the Interim Minibus Taxi Bill to regulate and restructure the taxi industry in KwaZulu Natal was tabled in the provincial legislature in Maritzburg yesterday.

Provincial transport MEC S'bu Ndebele said: "The bill's purpose is to formalise, restructure, legalise and regulate minibus taxi registration and services during the period leading up to the enactment of national and provincial land transport legislation."

In terms of the bill, several processes would have to be followed by taxi owners in order to operate legally.

The bill also provides for the conversion of all taxi permits from radius permits to route-based permits or permits to operate within certain designated areas.

In future route-based permits would commit taxi operators to the routes and areas they would service, and commuters would be able to rely on stable, fixed service providers, Ndebele said. — Sapa.

CAPE ARGUS, TUESDAY, JU

Homes bombed in taxi fare row

(332)

NORMAN JOSEPH
STAFF REPORTER

ARG 2/6/98

Three houses in Lwandle, Strand, belonging to taxi operators have been petrol-bombed, causing damage put at thousands of rands.

Violence erupted after a tense meeting in the town's community hall last night, attended by hundreds of residents who are opposed to an increase in taxi fares.

Angry residents toyi-toyied in front of taxi drivers' houses and pelted police with stones.

The meeting followed clashes yesterday between commuters and taxi operators at the Lwandle taxi rank, where two prominent community workers died and a taxi driver was injured.

Strand police spokeswoman Mary-Ann Williams said two arson cases were reported and more were expected.

Two houses in Masakhane Street burned down after being hit by petrol bombs.

Another house in Nonkubela Street was damaged in a fire started by a petrol bomb.

Taxi drivers and their families fled before their houses caught alight.

Inspector Williams said police were baffled by the violence and hoped to call an urgent meeting with all community organisations and taxi groups to defuse tensions.

Lwandle Taxi Association spokesman Vuyo Baleka said the fare increase, from R2 to R2,50, was in force.

"The tension is high here in the town. We hope to hold urgent talks with other community organisations this week."

Sanco demands taxi regulation

~~331~~ (332)

THE SA National Civics Organisation (Sanco) called yesterday for immediate regulation of the taxi industry to end violence and hinted at boycott action.

Government had to protect the poor who were most affected. People used minibus taxis because public transport was inadequate. Lack of regulation led to "mad capitalism" and "extreme" competition.

"We cannot allow our people to be maimed, killed and become victims of a war that has no end," it said.

Sanco called on Transport Minister Mac Maharaj for a single industry association with which all minibus taxis would have to register. It also urged business, which punished workers for lateness and absenteeism, to become involved. — Sapa.

BD 316198

'Govt told police to commit illegal acts'

PRETORIA — The former government ordered security police to commit illegal, including bogus terrorist attacks, to fight the African National Congress (ANC), retired police commissioner Gen Johan van der Merwe told the truth commission yesterday.

"In 1988, the security police was the only line of defence against total anarchy in the country," Van der Merwe testified in the amnesty application by him and nine other policemen for offences arising from the death of Mamelodi activist Stanza Bopape on June 12 1988.

Bopape died under police torture, but police secretly disposed of his body and claimed he had escaped.

Van der Merwe headed the security police at the time.

Five of the applicants were directly involved in subjecting Bopape to electrical shocks. They are Lt-Col Adriaan van Niekerk, Maj Charles Zeelie, W/O Hendrik Mostert, Sgt Johan du Preez and Const Jakobus Engelbrecht. Brig Schalk Visser and Capt Leon van Loggerenberg are seeking pardon for their role in getting rid of Bopape's body.

Van der Merwe and two other former police generals, Gerrit Erasmus and Petrus du Toit, were involved in covering up Bopape's death.

Van der Merwe said the months preceding Bopape's death had been worse than a conventional war.

The ANC/SA Communist Party had embarked on a full-scale people's war, seeking to mobilise the masses against the government. It also used intimidation to compel moderate blacks to join the revolution, he said.

"This was an undeclared war in which the enemy operated outside the Geneva convention." The government ordered the security police to commit acts outside the law. Former law and order minister Adriaan Vlok, for example, instructed police to blow up Cosatu House in Johannesburg.

He said Vlok later told him that former state president PW Botha also wanted the Johannesburg offices of the SA Council of Churches, Khotso House, destroyed as well.

Both operations were planned and carried out by members of the Vlakplaas security police base.

The aim of bogus terrorist attacks, Van der Merwe said, was to create a climate for justifying cross-border raids on ANC bases.

The Bopape family's legal representative, Gys Rautenbach, earlier asked the amnesty committee to subpoena Vlok to testify. "We have to know whether it was only the police or the politicians as well," Rautenbach said.

The committee decided to give a ruling on the matter only after all the evidence had been heard.

Capt Van Loggerenberg testified that he was worried he might be grabbed by crocodiles while disposing of Bopape's body. He said he rolled Bopape's body into the Komati River between SA and Mozambique on the night of his death. "I later visited the place again for braais," Van Loggerenberg said. — Sapa.

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Slating of equity bill 'based on ignorance'

Reneé Grawitzky

FEARS of affirmative action should not result in unnecessary criticism of the Employment Equity Bill, Arthur Andersen's employment law unit head William Berry said yesterday.

Berry said negative criticism was based partly on the fact it had not been read properly.

The bill proposed a great deal of flexibility and encouraged employers to find their own solutions to employment equity, he said. Affirmative action was central to the democratisation of the workplace.

Government had initially adopted a hands-off approach and made some provision for affirmative action in the Labour Relations Act. This did not, however, facilitate sufficient progress in implementing programmes, he said.

The bill currently facing debate in Parliament was an attempt to get employers to implement programmes without too much government interference, and if this did not work government might be forced to implement quotas.

The Employment Equity Bill and the Skills Development Bill have yet to be tabled as they are facing approval by the state law adviser. It is understood public hearings will be held on the bills after the parliamentary recess near the end of July.

Daily ordeal of a taxi ride

Death squads, reckless drivers, novice operators, filthy facilities make every trip a baptism of fire

(332)
Star 6/6/98

By MONGADI MAFATA

Every time 46-year-old Nomakhazi Mdakane returns home after her long 12-hour shift, she thanks the gods for bringing her safely to her three children and granddaughter.

Mdakane is just one of thousands of South Africans who risk their lives each day by boarding violence-plagued taxis to and from work.

What makes her journey even harder is that she lost her husband of 18 years to a bullet fired by a taxi hit squad member four years ago.

Risking rape and robbery, Mdakane makes the 1km walk to the taxi rank under a heavy blanket of darkness in the winter mornings to board her only transport to work at 6am.

"When my husband was killed, I swore I would use the little money I had to buy myself a car, but it all went to cover his funeral costs," she says.

More than half of her wages are spent on transport and the rest goes



NO RESPITE: Commuters queue for hours on end (above) to take overloaded taxis that bring them to their homes at faraway destinations (below) only when the moon has come out

to accommodate the ever-increasing number of commuters and vehicles.

"Every time there is a problem with my taxi, a traffic cop won't hesitate to give me a ticket. I wonder where all the money from the traffic fines is going?

"Why can't they build more toilets at taxi ranks and repair the ones they have already? We spend more than eight hours on the road and have to use toilets at filling stations," says Radebe.

The *Saturday Star* visited several ranks and found them to be in a filthy state, with garbage strewn amid puddles of stagnant water.

The Fraser, Kort and Wanderers Street ranks do not have toilets. Only the Bree, Faraday, Noord and Pritchard street ranks had toilets, which were barely functioning. The Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council is supposed to clean them daily, but commuters avoid them like the plague.

The other issue is security. Commuters claim to have been robbed of

Taxi fare rise sparks riots

(332)

Twelve shacks and four taxis were gutted when mobs went on the rampage in Lwandle, near the Strand, in the Western Cape last night and early this morning.

Police spokeswoman Anine de Beer said two policemen from the public order policing service were hurt and given medical attention.

The violence erupted after conflict between the community and taxi operators over the increase of taxi fares by 50c from R2 last weekend.

Last Monday two men were shot dead and four houses damaged, while four more houses, allegedly belonging to taxi operators, were set alight on Thursday night and early Friday.

Police have so far arrested six people and confiscated an unlicensed 9mm pistol. Captain De Beer said police were maintaining a high profile in the area. – Sapa

ARG 8/6/98

to fees for her daughters, who attend an inner-city school.

"It's a miracle I get to and from work with my mind and body intact. How do you respond to an urchin who got his licence from driving tractors on the farms and goes on to break all the rules of the road to make a quick buck?"

She talks about the time she got to work two hours late after the taxi she was travelling in broke down.

"All the other taxis were full and there was no way they could stop for us. And my boss couldn't believe me when I told him we got stuck because the taxi didn't have a spare wheel.

"But what nauseates me is the way these boys pack us in their unroadworthy taxis as if they work for a sardine factory and still expect us to pay the full fare. They're biting the hands that feed them," she adds.

> *'It's a miracle I get to and from work with my body and mind intact'*

To take their minds off the 30-minute journey to town, commuters in Mdakane's taxi put Bafana Bafana players' abilities under the microscope. Most of the people in the taxi know each other by name, but as a sign of respect, they call Mdakane "mama".

By the time the taxi reaches Zondi, 4km from Zola, the 15-seater taxi is almost full and the taxi gets stuffy, as no one wants to open a window to let in the cold winter air. Outside the sun begins to peep through.

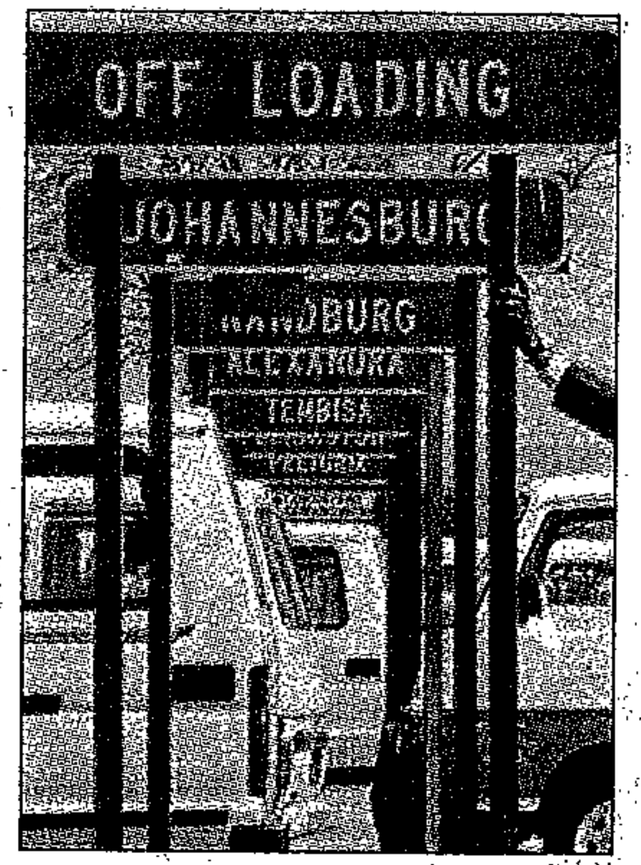
Commuters swear under their breath as the driver cuts another corner at high speed. We sway from side to side.

Five days a week, 11 months a year, Mdakane doesn't dare to enjoy the sun rising nor does she feel like marvelling as the fiery rays lose their glow to make way for the moon.

"It's still dark when I leave for work and by the time I board a taxi after being in the queue for an hour, it's night-time when I reach home. We are stuck for life with taxis because buses can't compete on price and speed," she says.

Norman Radebe, who owns three taxis and has been driving one for nine years, believes government intervention could rid the industry of "misfits".

"It has become evident that we cannot regulate ourselves and that only the Government can stop the rot that's beginning to set in.



"I've come a long way from a car washer, queue marshal and now taxi owner. I've been able to buy a nice house for my wife and send my children to good schools, so I wouldn't like to see the industry die.

"It's only greed which has begun to engulf the business and it's making people turn against us. We need to join hands with the Government to bring back order," he says.

Overloading and speeding are encouraged by owners who set unrealistic returns for their drivers. "Most of the current owners do not know the business because they have never driven a taxi before. Their love for money surpasses the need to give efficient and professional service to commuters," says Radebe.

He believes some of the taxi violence is a result of faction fights imported from rural KwaZulu-Natal.

"These guys bear grudges for ages and they take care of unfinished business at the expense of innocent bystanders while over-stretched police put the blame on taxi feuds. The other problem is the high unemployment rate that has seen people offer their services to hit squads for a few hundred rands," says Radebe.

He also blames local government for neglecting to upgrade taxi ranks with adequate toilets. Commuters are forced to pay 50c to relieve themselves and are robbed of money and valuables by a group of youths who loiter at the toilets.

The council's Statson Maffa admits the council has a problem in maintaining the toilets, but puts the blame on taxi drivers.

"Our cleaners have on countless occasions been intimidated by taxi drivers. But we are in the process of establishing a fund to which the taxi industry must contribute to the upkeep of ranks," he says.

> *'We drivers can't regulate ourselves – only the state can stop the rot'*

Police spokesman Inspector John Shiburi says that as long as taxi owners break peace pacts and don't keep their word, there will always be problems in the industry. "The solution to taxi violence lies in the hands of taxi owners. Also, members of the public prefer to keep quiet about information that could lead to the arrest and conviction of taxi hit squad members."

Star 6/6/96 (332)

Taxi war fatigue takes toll on police

Jonny Steinberg (332)

THE policemen who staff specialised taxi conflict units in Gauteng's trouble spots are leaving in droves.

In Soweto and Pretoria, the two areas of Gauteng where taxi violence is at its most intense, staff levels are 64% of what they were when the units were formed in August 1995. And three of the Pretoria unit's four senior officers are due to leave within two months.

Sources said detectives were demoralised by the odds they were up against. Between January and May the Pretoria unit opened 34 murder dockets, 84 attempted murder dockets and dozens of investigations into the possession of illegal firearms.

A source in the unit estimated that 1% of investigations led to convictions.

High among the reasons for the low conviction rate was the reluctance of witnesses to testify. Five witnesses to taxi-related killings and one taxi unit officer had been assassinated in Soweto and Pretoria in the past two years.

"Witness protection programmes are of limited help," a Pretoria inspector said. "We can protect people before the trial, but afterwards we would have to relocate their entire extended families. Few are willing to testify when that is the price."

Policemen are reluctant to join taxi units, as they fear for their safety.

Despite the insistence of sources at local units that detectives were steadily leaving, the head of Gauteng's taxi units, Robbie Robertse, denied skilled personnel were leaving. "We employed about 50 detectives when the units were established, and we employ about 50 now," he said.

BD 9/6/98

UNIVERSITY OF CAP

First self-regulatory taxi body planned

BD 12/6/98

(332)

Jonny Steinberg

AFTER years of negotiations, the troubled taxi industry looks set to have its first self-regulatory interim national council soon, industry sources say.

The new body, provisionally named the Interim National Taxi Council, will represent all national taxi associations and established provincial bodies.

It will ask government for self-regulatory, statutory powers. Its convenors envisage that it will take over the national taxi task team's functions.

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj confirmed that regulation of the industry would be among the council's tasks.

An industry source said the first business of the interim body would be to prepare for a permanent council based on proportional representation.

Within two years, each taxi owner would vote for an association to represent him or her on the council. In the interim, representation would be based on the composition of provincial and metropolitan structures.

"The fact that all associations have agreed to a free and fair election is a sign that the industry is suffering from serious battle fatigue. Those who use strong-arm tactics have a lot to lose. Tired and angry taxi owners may sideline them at the ballot box. This is undoubtedly the strongest commitment to peace we have seen," the source said.

Among the clauses of the council's consultative constitutional document was a pledge to "find sustainable methods to keep violence out of the taxi industry" and "to improve the safety record of the taxi industry".

However, transport department acting director-general Dipak Patel issued a word of caution. He said that while the department was in principle happy with the direction the taxi industry was taking, it was not yet clear that all associations were on board.

Bilateral talks this weekend between two groups of associations would determine whether there was a realistic prospect of complete unity, he said. If the talks went well, the council would be formed within six weeks.

Asked whether the volatile history of the industry mitigated against free and fair elections, Patel said he was convinced that the unity drive was sufficiently powerful to facilitate peaceful elections. However, it would take between 18 months and two years to put stable elective structures in place.

SUNDAY ANALYSIS

ST 14/6/98 (332)

MESHACK KHOSA chuckles dryly when asked how many senior taxi executives he knows. "A number of guys. Most of them are dead," says the academic who has been studying the industry for 10 years.

And they didn't die peacefully in their sleep.

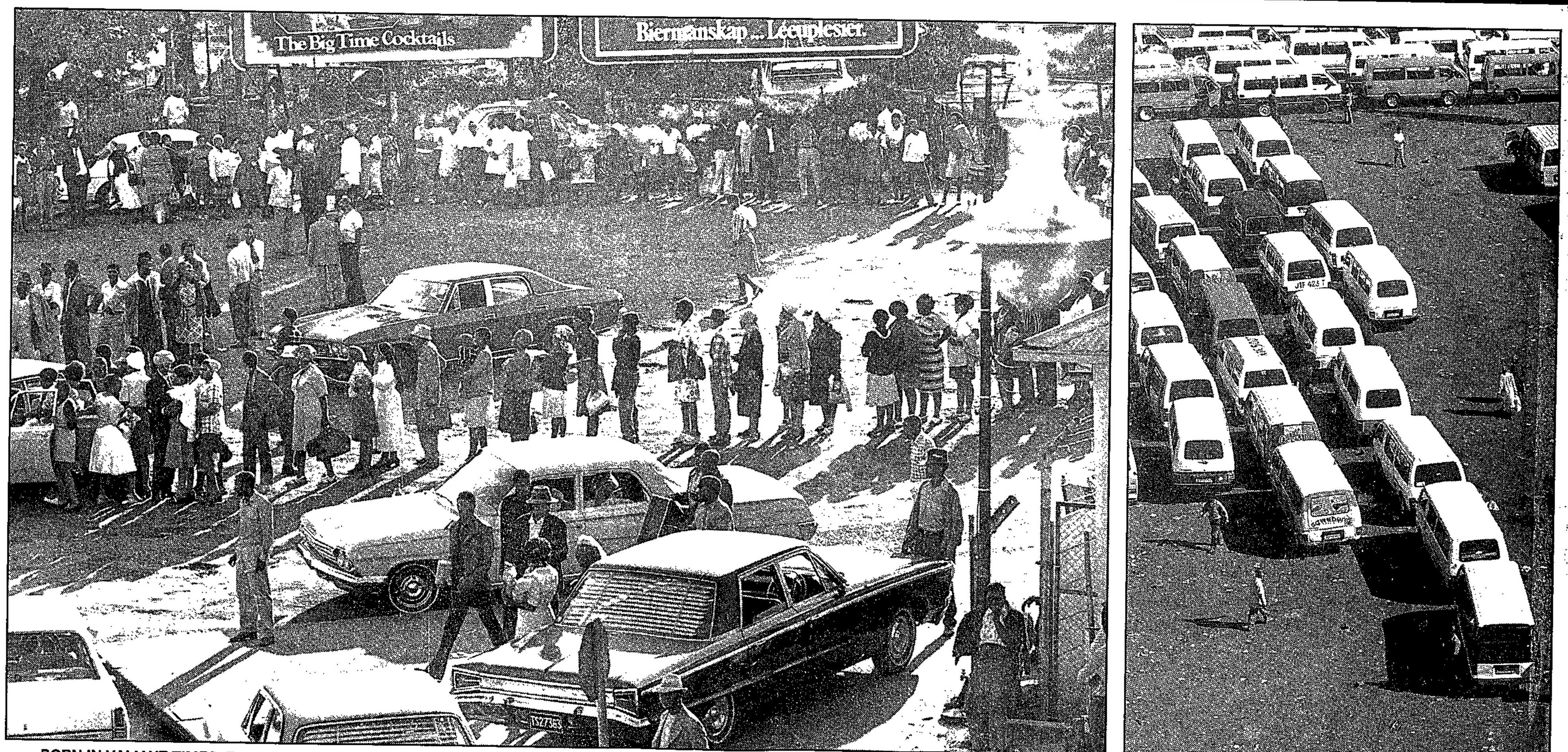
In this industry, "executive" has sinister undertones. It is often a euphemism for a gangster boss.

The top echelons of the taxi industry are a far cry from the gritty reality of the streets where drivers keep guns hidden but handy as they snarl up traffic and curse frustrated road users in their daily competition for passengers and a wage of between R350 and R400 a week.

Here it is all air-conditioning and plush offices in respectable urban centres, where Saville Row jackets and silk ties are *de rigueur*, arrogance and menace are hidden by smooth voices, soft handshakes are given and received, tea and coffee politely proffered on silver trays.

Here is where senior executives control their empires. When violence erupts at some taxi rank in the Northern Province or outside the High Court in Durban, or in the middle of Johannesburg, and bodies lie shredded and writhing on the tarmac, it is more often than not because one of these gilt-edged execs has lifted a phone and murmured instructions into the mouthpiece.

According to Neville Thoms, the leader of a special presidential task team formed last year to tackle the violence that has killed 348 people in the past 18 months, they have enough *chutzpah* and cynicism to justify the tag.



BORN IN VALIANT TIMES: From the heavy sedans of the 60s to the minibuses of the 90s, the taxi industry is turning into a commercial force beyond the control of the government, police and its own fearful proprietors

Taxi bosses are making a killing

In this R6bn-a-year business an executive may well be an executioner who owes millions in unpaid taxes. CHRIS BARRON reports on the men for whom making money is bloody murder

ST 14/6/98 (332)

policies on guys before they kill them," he says. After they've collected, they make sure the widow receives a small "donation" as a gesture of condolence.

Thoms's unit has concluded that most of the violence can be traced back to the executive offices of eight "mother" associations. Via a further 400 or so smaller associations, these eight control every taxi on our roads, estimated to number around 150 000.

The senior executives of these associations decide who can use what route and what taxi rank, and how much the privilege will cost them. A taxi going from Cape Town to Umtata, for example, will pay at least R200 to the associations controlling different sections of the route.

Around 30 percent of a taxi's weekly earnings — which might average R5 000 — go to associations in membership fees, rank fees, route payments and "donations" to pay for hit squads and widows. The driver keeps R350 to R400, the owner the rest. Association executives are also owners — generally of 10 or 12 taxis, although according to Thoms some have "up to 400" — and so they earn twice over.

In the complete absence of any formal financial control — no receipts, no audits, everything cash — a lot of the money flowing into association coffers goes into their pockets. The more senior the executive, the more money he can access.

Which is why top positions in the associations are viciously contested. Taxi killings are not only between rival associations vying for routes, they are often between rival executives in the same association vying for greater access to the spoils.

The only justice in this law of the jungle is that the executives live in as much fear for their lives as do their drivers and their passengers.

One of them admitted in a very much off-the-record interview that he makes sure he gets home before dark every day. The shadows cast by the trees in his garden make him freeze for a split second in dread that some hit man has come for him.

Any publicising of his wealth or status in the industry, he says, will make rivals "jealous", and a jealous rival in this game is a deadly one.

Thoms says that out of 31 prime suspects his unit began with in February last year, "about a third" have been assassinated.

But it is not only the prospect of an assassin's bullet that makes them shy away from publicity. Increasingly, these days, it is also a call from the Receiver of Revenue. "We don't pay any taxes," explained the executive.

The presidential task team put the Receiver onto an executive of a major association who was found to owe R4,5-million in unpaid taxes. In the absence of any paperwork, it was impossible to say how much of this was from his spoils in the taxi industry. Many executives derive income from garages, bottle stores and butcheries as well.

The amount of money the top executives can command is reflected by the fact that this man paid the Receiver R1,7-million in cash. The rest is being recovered from his assets, which include six mansions in some of the poshest residential areas.

According to members of Thoms's unit, most of the big taxi executives own a number of squatter shacks as well. A squatter camp address has its uses, like when trying to present a picture of injured innocence in court, or arranging bail or hoodwinking the taxman.

Not many senior executives wear their wealth as openly as Kwazulu Natal boss "Big Ben" Ntuli. One of Thoms's men, Captain Trevor Masser, remembers how the former shepherd from Tugela Ferry used to "wear jewellery worth more than everything I owned, including my house and car".

Ntuli's life of power and opulence ended ignominiously when he died of malaria after fleeing to Mauritius to escape arrest. He was only in his mid-30s.

An obstacle to the unit's success is the frequency with which bail has been granted to prime suspects.

"We know that once out they will intimidate witnesses and pay them off," says Thoms. "But we can't convince the courts of that."

A notorious taxi boss in the Western Cape was granted bail although it was "vehemently" opposed by the police. Shortly after his release an investigating officer was killed and key witnesses were being intimidated.

"There have been cases where witnesses disappear overnight," Thoms says.

Of five prime suspects arrested by the unit in the Western Cape, two received long terms in jail, but three are out on bail.

Thoms believes their success in getting bail owes a lot to the quality of lawyers they can afford to represent them.

"They pay for the best," he says.

A relatively new feature of taxi violence, says Khosa, is "the hiring of professional assassins" by the taxi bosses. The fact that they're sitting in plush suites orchestrating murder from afar and, often through several intermediaries makes it hard for police to collect the kind of direct evidence needed to have them put away for life. Having identified the key suspects, Thoms's men are trying to build "conspiracy dockets" which they hope will be comprehensive enough to ensure that once arrested they stay arrested. They have set themselves a target of three years.

The professional assassins Dr Khosa is talking about are "people who have received military training in the liberation movement or the police, or come from skilled criminal syndicates". Often they are foreigners from neighbouring countries who evade arrest by slipping back across the border after the hit. Even if they are only from another province, police information systems are so uncoordinated that once they've gone back to their province they might as well have disappeared over the Bermuda Triangle.

Causing most headaches at the moment is police involvement which, says Masser, the unit's investigations have revealed "around every corner".

In addition to owning taxis, says Thoms, police hire out their weapons to be used in hits, if they don't actually perform the hits themselves, and they hire themselves out as bodyguards to senior executives. They further hamper investigative work by stealing dockets or leaking their contents, and warning suspects of impending arrests.

The failure of the police to act effectively against this has embittered provincial transport departments trying to curb taxi violence.

Kwazulu Natal transport spokesman Ranjeni Munusamy says "not enough has been done" and blames police for "a lack of will as well as capacity". Her Gauteng counterpart, Kate Bapela, targets police for "a minimum of commitment" in ending police complicity.

Gauteng police commissioner Sharma Maharaj admits that a directive by national commissioner George Fivaz prohibiting police involvement in the industry has not been enforced effectively, but says police who own taxis have transferred them into the names of family and friends, making it difficult for police to act against them. According to police superintendent Vince Harris, 12 policemen have been charged in connection with taxi violence since 1996. None has been prosecuted and all except one are out on bail.

Taxi violence began in earnest when the former government removed every shred of state regulation from the industry in 1987. The South African Black Taxi Association, which no longer exists, said in 1991 that the industry had become "a battlefield rather than a business venture" since then.

In a thesis on taxi violence, Jackie Dugard has argued that prior to the 1994 elections violence in the industry was cynically promoted and used by elements wishing to destabilise the country for political ends. Few seriously doubt that the only motivating factor now is commercial.

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj has pinned his hopes of ending the violence on legislation to be tabled later this year which will regulate and formalise the industry, set up national and provincial registers and force associations to have proper audits.

Another idea being promoted by Maharaj is that of taxi associations forming co-operatives and sharing the spoils of an industry which in 1995 had an annual turnover of R6-billion.

World Bank warns on unemployment

BD 23/6/98 (332)

SA WAS facing a daunting employment challenge and even a cut in interest rates would do little to stimulate job creation if it is not accompanied by significant structural change, a senior World Bank official said yesterday.

Official unemployment is currently 30% and the economy, choked by punitive interest rates, is barely growing.

"Unemployment is the biggest structural problem that government faces," said Junaid Ahmad, the World Bank's deputy resident representative in SA.

"There is no magic bullet, including an interest cut, to the problem of (SA) unemployment," he said. "It has to be approached on a variety of fronts."

Ahmad said SA's swelling jobless problem was structural in nature, and was firmly rooted in the apartheid past. "Investment in human capital — in most of the population — was ignored. Now the country is paying a very high price for this. There is a great shortage of skilled labour."

Employment was also suffering as the economy, largely shielded from competitive pressures when SA was an international outcast in the apartheid era, had become increasingly open.

He said on another front, the job cycle could be jumpstarted through the delivery system and infrastructure improvements, provided incentives for investment in these areas were created.

"You can have community delivery systems that are very labour-intensive and sustainable in the long run," he said.

Ahmad said infrastructure development was essential to rectify the spatial distortions created by apartheid, which killed the whole culture of entrepreneurship in black townships.

He said access to training, transport and supply networks was very important to the supply side of job creation — these were all very underdeveloped areas because of apartheid's exclusion of most of the black population from the formal economy. — Reuter.

Transport official owned taxis

(332) MG 26/6 - 2/7/98

Mukoni T Ratshitanga

A senior Gauteng transport department official is facing 10 charges of misconduct after an internal probe found he held a taxi permit despite his position as the province's chief negotiator with taxi associations.

In April, the former MEC for transport ordered that Lennox Magwaza be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation, but he is still departmental director for public and urban transport and chairs a joint forum between the government and the taxi industry.

Magwaza's duties include the regulation of the taxi industry and the implementation of Operation Thiba, the government's campaign to end taxi violence.

Gauteng Premier Mathole Motshekga relaunched Operation Thiba last month after it collapsed late last year. But last week Magwaza fired 34 temporary administrative employees. Other senior staffers responsible for registering taxis were also removed — leaving the operation with 16 junior staffers.

Magwaza originally owned two permits, but cancelled one in 1994. "The second permit," reads the report, "was only cancelled on February 9 1998.

"This was only after Deon Swanepoel, a consultant, started to make inquiries. Magwaza felt that the existence of his permit was going to create problems."

A transport department corporate services official, Mgcineni ka Mhlayivana wrote in the report: "During my interview with Eric Wise [chief director of transport management], he informed me that on numerous occasions he raised the issue of [taxi] permits with Magwaza and that he [Magwaza] consistently denied having any active permits or involvement in the taxi industry.

"However ... Magwaza informed me that from the time he was appointed by the department, he never made his ownership of taxi permits a secret and that he has declared this information as this was his democratic right."

But department head Jack van der Merwe last week said he never knew that Magwaza was a taxi owner.

The *Mail & Guardian* has a copy of one of Magwaza's taxi permits issued in August 1991. It details Magwaza's address, vehicle registration number and his allocated route.

In a letter, former MEC for transport Paul Mashatile instructed Van der Merwe to suspend Magwaza on April 23: "Magwaza is now required to attend a disciplinary hearing for charges of misconduct on May 15.

"Please ensure that Magwaza is suspended pending the outcome of the disciplinary hearing. The suspension must be effected by the end of next week, ie, week ending 1 May."

But Magwaza was not suspended, nor was there a hearing. Van der Merwe said it would take place soon.

Staff this week complained about the delay, accusing senior management of covering up. Said one official: "Magwaza is a survivor. I don't think this hearing will take place. However, Van der Merwe must also accompany him to the hearing for ignoring Mashatile's instructions."

Last year, the Gauteng public service commission probed allegations of nepotism against Magwaza. It was claimed he had employed his wife, younger brother and members of his church in the department.

However, investigating officer Jayson Sishuba cleared Magwaza of any wrongdoing. Vincent Mtambo, then provincial director general, queried Sishuba's findings.

Sishuba said: "I know that Mtambo was not particularly happy with my recommendations."

Other charges in Mhlayivana's report include that Magwaza threatened junior staff with dismissal, plotted to assault another transport official and was "grossly discourteous" to staff at a meeting.

It cites "the intimidation of Willem van Lingen by Magwaza when he questioned Mrs Magwaza about her absence from work for two weeks without proper authorisation. Van Lingen was threatened [with] his promotional opportunities being withheld.

"I am left with one conclusion: that [Magwaza's] directorate is mismanaged."

Magwaza could not be reached for comment.

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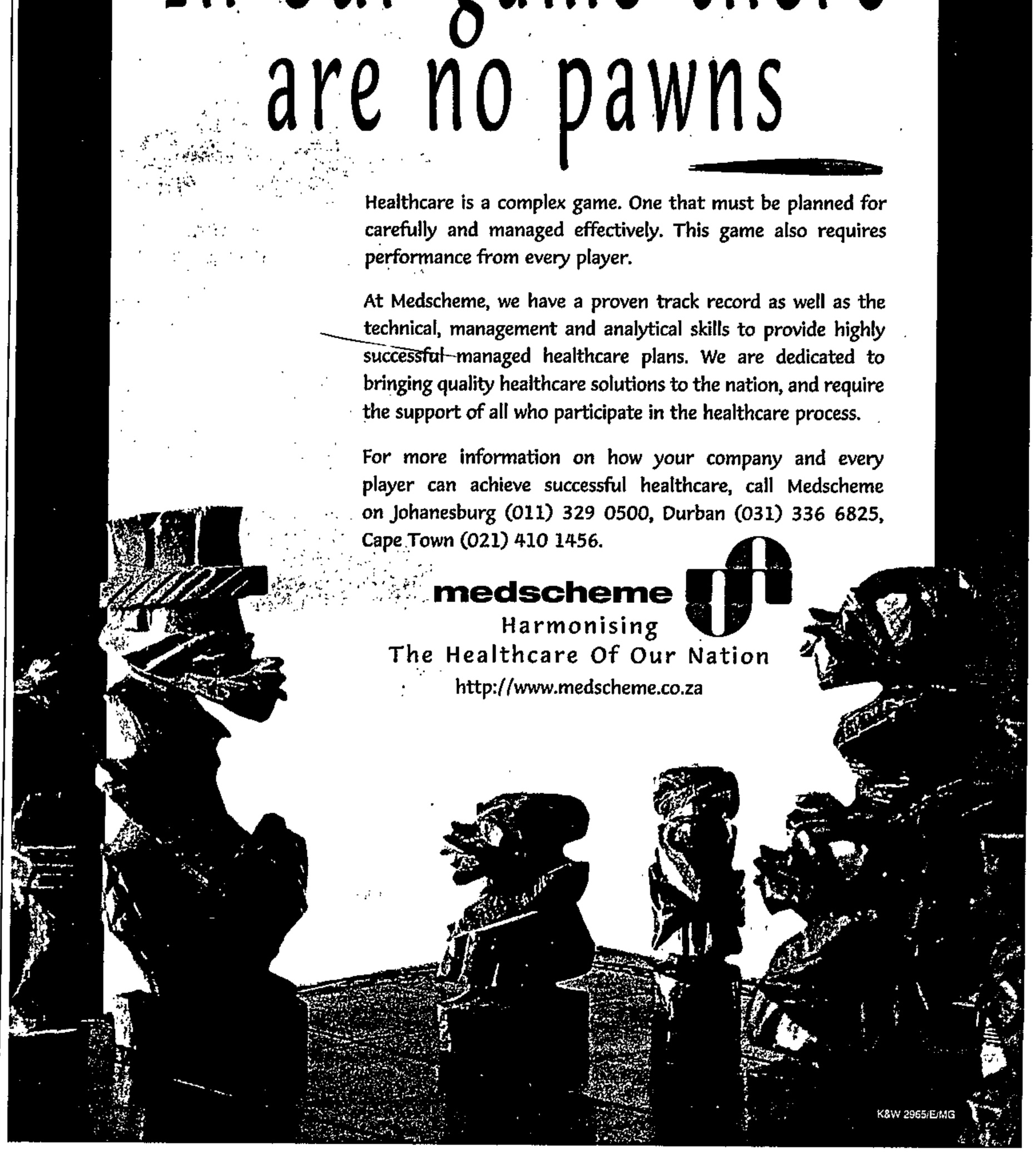
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K&W 2965/E/MG

Taxi regulation operation plagued by misconduct

(332) BD 30/6/98

Jonny Steinberg

OPERATION Thiba, Gauteng and North West's joint project to regulate and stabilise the taxi industry, has been plagued by improper procedures in the employment of temporary staff and the tendering of contracts, a joint investigation by the two provinces' transport departments found.

Officials had reduced temporary staff complements and have been given seven days to renegotiate contracts not in compliance with government policy, the two provincial transport MECs, Star Vilakazi and Joyce Kgoali, told a media conference in Johannesburg yesterday.

Asked for details of the misdemeanours, the MECs said they "refused to conduct a media trial in dealing with our officials".

They said: "Our officials must first be charged officially and then be given a fair hearing. The results will be given to the public after such hearings."

The announcement of the investigations' findings came in the wake of a media report last week that the senior Gauteng official charged with implementing Operation Thiba was facing 10 charges of misconduct after a transport department probe found he held a permit to own a taxi.

The aims of Operation Thiba, which collapsed last December and was relaunched in May this year, were to register every taxi in the two provinces, and to regulate operations on disputed routes. About 8 000 taxis in the provinces have been registered since the start of Operation Thiba.

Taxi industry sources in the troubled Soshanguve area said yesterday that corruption and mismanagement among transport officials would not lead taxi associations to withdraw their support for Operation Thiba.

"The task of regulating this industry is a mammoth one," a source in the Pretoria area said. "There is a broad commitment to see Thiba work. We cannot afford to withdraw our support now."

Probe ordered into taxi task team leaks

Star 30/6/98 (3rd)

MECs in Gauteng and North West are on the hunt for officials said to be misleading the public

By Mike Masipa

The Gauteng and North West provincial governments have ordered a joint investigation to find out who leaked information relating to allegations of mismanagement and corruption allegedly involving senior officials in their transport departments.

The announcement, made by Gauteng Transport MEC Joyce Kgoali and her North West counterpart Frans Vilakazi yesterday, came after recent reports that senior officials in the department were involved in the taxi industry.

Lennox Magwaza, the Gauteng director for public and urban transport, was named as the owner of a taxi permit valid until early this year when he eventually cancelled it. He originally had two permits and had cancelled the first one in 1994.

The government, in an attempt to end the endemic taxi violence, has outlawed ownership of taxis by state officials, including policemen who might find themselves with conflicting interests when dealing with problems in the industry.

Magwaza is highly involved in Operation Thiba, a government project aimed at registering taxis and ending the violence plaguing the industry.

Kgoali said the investigation, ordered by her predecessor Paul Mashatile into alleged irregularities involving Magwaza, was continuing.

Kgoali and Vilakazi claimed officials within the department were "leaking internal information before it is properly verified and are deliberately misleading the public". They promised "to deal harshly" with such officials once they were identified.

The MECs also announced that a top management team would oversee the running of the troubled Operation Thiba 2 taxi registration project at Odi military base at Mabopane, north of Pretoria.

Another internal investigation had vindicated allegations of inefficient management and corruption at the base.

The probe found that management at the base did not follow proper procedure in appointing temporary staff at the base and that there were irregularities in the awarding of catering and security contracts.

Vilakazi and Kgoali again undertook to take "harsh" disciplinary action against officials found to have acted improperly but would not reveal how many officials were being investigated.

Kgoali said that of more than 8 600 minibus taxis in the violence-prone northern Gauteng and eastern North West areas, only 318 had so far been registered under Operation Thiba 2. About 3 000 were registered during Operation Thiba 1, which was primarily aimed at stemming resurgent violence in the areas last year.

The violence has so far claimed 40 lives this year.

Persuading taxi owners that legalwise is better

(332) ARG 30/6/98

The regulation of the minibus taxi business has not been an easy task. Did the National Taxi Task Team manage to achieve its goals?

In the 1980s public transport from the so-called townships was inadequate and, from the informal settlements, non-existent. The minibus-taxi business arose in response to these gaps. The challenge of the the ministry of transport in the 1990s is to formalise that response and attempt to legalise bona fide illegal minibus-taxi operators to bring them in line with proposed regulations.

Dipak Patel, a chief director in Mac Maharaj's Department of Transport, has chaired the National Taxi Task Team (NTTT) for the last 18 months. Patel patiently counted his steps around the country, to the doors of the taxi associations, persuading them that the central recommendation of the NTTT, which is that taxi associations and operators should register, would be good for business

Currently, there are about 150 000 minibus taxis in the country. Perhaps 70 000 people – maybe fewer – own them, and 30 000 others lease them. When Patel began his job, at least half the taxis on the road were illegal.

Accidents involving minibus taxis are said to account for 25 percent of holiday road deaths. However, minibus taxis account for less than 25 percent of the number of vehicles on the road, which makes the number of deaths figure disproportionately high. Some sort of regulation was necessary.

The head of one mother body pulls in R60 000 a month from affiliate fees alone

There are eight national bodies (referred to as the "mother bodies") as well as about three or four in each province. They administer the ranks, control the competition and provide protection for their affiliate associations.

The mother-bodies were the bane of Patel's life. Mother-bodies probably don't need any economic incentives to register. Most of the bosses don't even own taxis. If the individual associations and operators register, it could take away a large part of their function. The head of one mother body reportedly pulls in more than R60000 a month from affiliates' fees alone. In an effort to persuade the associations that the NTTT was not simply looking for ways to control the minibus taxi business, but was actually intent on helping to provide a better public transport system, it proposed that a concrete cover be constructed on top of a busy station to become a long-distance taxi rank.

In the case of the long-distance taxis that use this rank, the mother-body is Salta. The rival mother body is the Lethlabile Taxi Association.

The R25-million development is due to start next month. It will get taxis off the streets around the station and provide more centralised security. Its success depends on all the taxi associations agreeing to it, and registering so that the government can cater for the number of long-distance taxis that converge weekly in Johannesburg.

Malofe Rapudile of the East Gauteng Taxi Association began his business in 1987 when the South African Railways workers went on a prolonged strike and their township compatriots boycotted the trains.

Rapudile is happy that legalisation is part of the registration deal. Any taxi-owner who can prove he's been operating since before October 1994 will get a permit – part of a deal to keep out newcomers.

Germiston, where associations have not only registered but united into a forum. Its chair, Jabulani Mtshali, says: "The most important part of registration is that the individual will be formalised and then the violence will be less"

When the NTTT was finally wound up it claimed to have registered at least 95% of all minibus taxis. Western Cape Minister of Transport Piet Meyer told delegates from Gauteng that the process was complete in the Western Cape and that permanent routes, identification and markings made it easier to enforce regulations.

The NTTT was not without criticism. A report by the auditor general on expenditures by the various ministries found that the department of transport was a major culprit in over-spending. The NTTT project is estimated to have cost more than R16-million so far.

Taximen's plot to take over routes exposed

(338) Star 6/7/98

By Simon Zwane

Gauteng's department of transport has uncovered a plot by a group of Soweto taxi operators to take over long-distance taxi routes operating from Johannesburg.

Sources close to the department said the Soweto operators were aiming to bargain "with a threat of violence" to take a 50% stake in the lucrative long-distance operations, which account for 40% of the R6-billion generated by the taxi business annually.

A source who has been involved in attempts to thwart the plot said both the Gauteng and Free State transport departments were aware of it.

> **"Operators from other areas are aware of it"**

A spokesman for the Gauteng department could not be reached for comment and Free State taxi registrar Teboho Molaba said they had received unconfirmed reports but refused to give details.

Molaba said his department would close down taxi ranks if violence erupted, "failing which we would bring in state of emergency regulations".

If carried out, the plan could lead to increased bloodletting in the volatile industry. The source said the plan was to have been put into place about three months ago, but was delayed because of the taxi conflict in Soweto.

He said the Soweto conflict had also sidetracked the plot because the group had intended to approach the long-distance operators as a coherent force representing about 2 000 operators.

The group had tried to muscle in on the routes between Johannesburg and Ficksburg in the Free State.

Tensions between associations operating in the area apparently provided the Soweto group with an opportunity to move in, but their manoeuvres were foiled when the provincial transport department became aware of their intentions.

Superintendent Louis Muller, head of the taxi violence unit in Soweto, said his unit was not aware of any plots to take over routes from Johannesburg, but that detectives were ready for any threat.

"We cannot rule out the possibility that operators may try something, but as far as we know, things are quiet," Muller said.

Operation agreements have recently been reached between Soweto's two largest taxi organisations – Top Six and the Witwatersrand African Taxi Association.

Some operators in KwaZulu Natal and other areas are believed to be aware of the plan and it is feared that the plot could undo what provincial governments have done to bring peace to the industry.

KwaZulu Natal transport department spokesman Ranjeni Munusamy said legislation passed by the provincial government would be used to deal with the situation if it arose. She said vehicles found on routes not allocated to them would be impounded and R20 000 fines imposed on their owners.

MEC to announce plan for taxi industry peace

BD 13/7/98 (332)

Jonny Steinberg

RECENTLY appointed Gauteng transport MEC Joyce Kgoali will put her reputation on the line this week when she announces a programme to bring peace and development to the province's taxi industry within six months.

"You cannot use sweet and tactful words when tackling this industry," Kgoali said. "I am talking about demobilising armed combatants and turning them into agents of sustainable development."

Asked whether her project would simply add to a growing pile of failed peace initiatives in the industry, Kgoali said: "If no one puts her neck on the line, there will be no movement. I must show the industry that I am serious."

Kgoali's three months in office have seen an increasing number of transport department initiatives to end taxi conflicts.

A violent and protracted conflict between two associations over the use of Soshanguve taxi ranks in Pretoria, during which dozens of taxi owners fled the ranks and took refuge at a police station for several months, has been resolved for now by an agreement that Kgoali mediated.

"At the first mediation meeting we were sceptical that a middle-aged black woman could wield authority over hardened taxi bosses," a taxi industry source said. "She opened the meeting by saying: 'I am in charge here. You must either come on board or f*** off.' There were some shocked men in that room," the source said.

"People took her seriously."

Since coming to office, Kgoali has announced the appointment of an internal inquiry into corruption in Operation Thiba, a joint project between Gauteng and North West transport departments to register taxis and regulate taxi routes. The inquiry's findings are to be announced later this month.

Despite the flurry of activity that has followed Kgoali's appointment, one source close to the taxi industry expressed scepticism about the chances of her six-month programme.

"However charismatic Kgoali is, she cannot change the fact that government is still not in a position to effectively police any agreements reached. It is still the case in this industry that firepower brings wealth, and civilised conduct does not. When government changes this, they will have ended the taxi conflict, but not before then."

Soweto taxi associations to form one body

(332)

Jonny Steinberg

SOWETO Taxi associations would form a single united body for the first time in more than a decade, Gauteng transport MEC Joyce Kgoali said yesterday.

However, sources close to the industry cautioned that Soweto associations had not yet resolved the disputes which divided them, and that the viability of Kgoali's initiative hung in the balance.

The new body, The Soweto Taxi Council, would compromise two representatives from each of Soweto's 10 taxi associations. Its functions would include developing a business plan for the industry, driver training, passenger safety and financial co-ordination.

Kgoali said she envisaged the Soweto unity process would be replicated by all taxi associations in Gauteng within six months.

Sources close to the industry were divided over whether the formation of the new body marked genuine progress in Soweto's fractured taxi industry.

"The question of who can use which route, and more importantly, whether rival associations will share routes, has not really been resolved," said one source.

"The associations are not entering this process on an equal footing. If the weaker party gets a bad deal now, they will tear the unity body apart as soon they are strong enough," the source said.

"Nor has government capacity to regulate and police the industry been tested in Soweto. So far, government has only stepped into this arena in Pretoria. The crunch will come when they start enforcing the question of route agreements in Soweto."

Others were less sceptical. "Remember that in the old days all Soweto taxi operators were in a single association," said a veteran Soweto taxi operator. "There is a long history and a single culture to draw upon here. Essentially, this new body is an attempt to resolve conflicts using the old mechanisms which evolved through the 1970s and early 1980s.

Soweto taxi groups agree to form united association

Star 17/7/98 (332)

BY FIKILE-NTSIKELELO MOYA

A promise of taxi peace was pledged again yesterday when all 10 associations operating in Soweto announced they had formed an umbrella body to look at the possibility of forming a unified group.

Formerly warring association members gathered at the Kliprivier recreation centre in Kibler Park, southern Johannesburg, to launch the Soweto Taxi Council.

The new formation sees the Top Six and the Meadowlands-Dube-Noord associations joined by the Witwatersrand African Taxi Owners Association (Wata).

The entry of Wata into the fold is a boost to the peace initiative because it had been considered a "bully" association bent on controlling all routes in Soweto.

"We hope this will be a first step towards having a single association where all taxis can operate anywhere in Soweto and take passengers anywhere they need to go," said Wata spokesman Dumisani Motha.

The new body was formed after the associations and Gauteng Transport MEC Joyce Kgoali and mayors of substructures within Soweto met in Cape Town for a workshop last weekend.

The taxi owners agreed that the chairpersons of each of the 10 associations would form the executive committee of the council with 10 other owners joining the controlling body of the new organisation.

Kgoali said the launch was part of Gauteng government efforts to curb taxi violence in the province.

She said a six-month programme to curb taxi violence was already in place.

Taxi regulatory body to open for business within a month

Jonny Steinberg BD 20/7/98 (332)

A SELF-regulating statutory body representing all major players in the taxi industry would begin its work in the next four weeks, a plenary session of the National Taxi Task Team decided in Midrand at the weekend.

At the plenary session, Transport Minister Mac Maharaj hailed the decision to form the body as the most decisive move yet in the taxi industry.

The new SA Taxi Council's first task would be to form a management committee consisting of three representatives from each provincial taxi council, and two members of each of SA's 11 national taxi associations.

The council would be based at the national transport department in Pretoria.

□ Six people were killed on Soshanguve taxi routes in drive-by shootings on Saturday morning. A further four were killed in similar incidents last Saturday. By yesterday afternoon, no arrests had been made.

Soshanguve's taxi industry said yesterday it had pleaded with police more than a month before last weekend's spate of attacks to increase patrols in the township to deter drive-by attacks by criminals in the industry.

Gauteng police commissioner Sharma Maharaj could not be contacted for comment yesterday.



Killings continue ... one of four people killed in a drive-by shooting on Saturday in Soshanguve lies slumped over a seat. The attacks occurred while arrangements were being made for a mass funeral for six people who died last weekend.

Police and army deployed after nine slain in taxi violence

(332) Star 20/7/98

PRETORIA CORRESPONDENT

A large contingent of army, police and taxi task unit members has been moved into Soshanguve, near Pretoria, after nine people were killed in ongoing taxi violence at the weekend.

The area was still tense last night.

The nine people were killed in drive-by shootings, and 19 others were critically injured, in Soshanguve and Winterveldt on Saturday.

It is not known if the dead were affiliated to any particular taxi association.

Wesley Mpawu, regional president of the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta), yesterday denied his organisation was involved in the killings.

"We want an inquiry to be instituted. But it is a known fact that the same police who will be appointed to investigate are part of the criminal elements involved in the shootings," Mpawu alleged.

He said he had held talks with police and pointed out the perpetrators, but the police had done nothing since then.

Mpawu said police should do their jobs so that Salldta and rival taxi group, the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta), could negotiate a peaceful agreement.

Repeated attempts to get comment from Felldta at the weekend were fruitless.

Lucas Phangiso, from the Soshanguve crime prevention forum, blamed government officials for the failure to curb the violence.

"They always want to be seen (on television) reacting to the killings after they have happened," Phangiso said.

MP Moss Chikane claimed a third force was involved in the taxi killings.

Chikane, a Mamelodi resident, was speaking at a poorly attended report-back meeting in Soshanguve yesterday.

Commuters, however, are up in arms over the escalating taxi violence, which has claimed at least 13 lives over the past week.

Most people interviewed said it was time that commuters called a taxi boycott.

Nine die, 19 injured as bloody taxi war rages on

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT (332)

Pretoria – Nine people were killed in the ongoing taxi violence here at the weekend, and a strong contingent of army, police and and members of the taxi task units have moved into the area to monitor the situation.

By last night the area was still tense.

Early on Saturday nine people were killed in drive-by shootings and 19 were critically injured in Soshanguve and Winterveldt.

Spent AK47, R5 and 9mm cartridges were found at the scene where seven separate taxi violence incidents occurred.

It was not known if the dead were affiliated to a particular taxi association, Captain Van Wyk said.

Although police and officials from government departments have been asked to institute an immediate inquiry into the ongoing taxi violence, there was scepticism as to whether this would solve the matter.

Wesley Mpau, regional president of the The South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salltda) yesterday distanced his organisation from being involved in the spate of killings.

"We want an inquiry," he said.

ARG 20/7/98

'End is near for violent forces in taxi industry'

BD 21/7/98 (332)

Jonny Steinberg

VIOLENT forces in the taxi had seen the writing on the wall and were preparing themselves for a non-violent future, transport department director-general Dipak Patel said last week.

He was speaking days before a National Taxi Task Team plenary session finally gave its blessings to the formation of an all-inclusive, self-regulating taxi council after three years of deliberation.

However, a shadow hung over the plenary as six people were killed in taxi-related violence in Soshanguve just hours before the proceedings were due to begin.

Word on the plenary floor was that the killings were perpetrated by those who want to derail the launch of the national body, said several delegates who did not want to be named.

It has also emerged that Soshanguve's taxi industry pleaded with police for an increased visible presence in the township as early as the middle of last month. It did not receive an adequate response until a spate of killings in the township.

A source in the taxi industry said a single roadblock was set up outside Soshanguve the Thursday before the killings. "But we all know that roadblocks do little work. We desperately needed a visible police presence in the taxi ranks themselves, but the police never delivered."

Despite the recent killings, Patel insisted last week that those in the industry who wielded power through the barrel of a gun were on the defensive.

"Taxi operators in violence-torn areas are increasingly unwilling to keep paying for the violence in the form of weekly dues," Patel said. "That source of cash is drying up, which is a clear signal that the way things are done is changing."

Taxi associations meet to discuss routes in effort to stem rampant violence

Star 22/7/98 (332)

STAFF REPORTER

Thirteen taxi associations operating north of Johannesburg were scheduled to meet today to finalise agreements on routes, which have been the source of violence in the area over the past three years.

Northern Taxi Operators Association vice-chairman Sunday Masupa said yesterday that various associations operating on more than 60 routes in Randburg, Midrand, Sandton, Thembisa, Alexandra, Thembisa's Ivory Park and Mabopane (North West) would attend today's meeting.

He said their area had been ravaged by violence for more than three years and there were fears that the conflict currently besetting operators north of Pretoria could spread.

"Our problem at the moment is to get the taxi registrar to recognise the routes we have agreed on as a combined association and not register routes submitted by individual organisations," Masupa said.

Individually registered routes would "obviously lead to problems and more taxi wars. So we need the Government to guide us and to tell us whether what we are doing is right."

Masupa said the taxi organisations had agreed on the allocation of all but three routes and would discuss these at today's scheduled meeting and thereafter present them to Gauteng's taxi registrar.

Some of the areas served by the Northern Taxi Operators Association have been separately identified as next in line in a government initiative to curb violence.

Under the initiative, known as "Taxi Industry, From Taxi Violence to Taxi Industry", the Government organises workshops for various regions of Gauteng. The operators then meet in Cape Town to discuss ways to end conflict.

Soweto was first to benefit with the launch last week of the Soweto Taxi Council by various rival federations.

The long-term aim is to establish a single taxi association in the area.

The West and East Rand will have their workshops next month, and the dates for Pretoria must still be determined.

Other areas on the shortlist are Greater Johannesburg, Vaal Triangle and Khayalami.

Taxi body wants routes agreement

Star 23/4/98 (332)

By Mike Masipa

In a bid to avert potential conflict, 13 taxi organisations operating north-west of Johannesburg yesterday appealed to the Government to ratify their routes agreements ahead of state-planned taxi workshops.

The 13 associations, operating on 60 routes in Randburg, Midrand, Sandton, Thembisa, Ivory Park, Alexandra and Mabopane in North West Province, met in Randburg yesterday to discuss ways of maintaining peace in their areas.

The Randburg area, which is the central point for all 13 associations, used to be a taxi-violence flashpoint for more than five years. It has experienced relative calm since 1996.

Randburg, Sandton Midrand Taxi Operators (RSMTO) – as yesterday's forum named itself – said the Government seemed prepared to address problems in the industry only when there was fighting.

Delegates said they had not been fully briefed on a current government anti-taxi-violence initiative known as "From Taxi Violence to Taxi Industry".

The plan seeks to get warring taxi associations together in workshops to discuss ways of ending violence and maintaining peace. The first area to be addressed was Soweto, which

Government urged to act to bring consensus to the industry

last week saw the launch of the Soweto Taxi Council, with the ultimate aim of uniting taxi organisations under one umbrella body – thereby minimising the potential for conflict.

"I can tell you we were not invited nor fully briefed about the workshops. Maybe we will only be invited once we start fighting. We have tried to contact the Government on many occasions so that they could help and guide us in what we are doing. But time and again we have been made promises that they will attend but nothing happens," said forum chairperson Mike Yende.

He said the registration of routes operated by various associations in the area was cause for concern, since some associations had registered routes they were not entitled to with the Gauteng taxi registrar.

"This could lead to conflict among associations later on as others would rightfully try to wrest their routes back once they discover, upon registration, that their competitors had taken their routes," said Yende.

Gauteng transport deputy director George Steeneveldt commended the initiatives taken by the taxi operators. He said that although the operators had no jurisdiction to allocate routes, the department would accommodate the route agreements where possible. He said the department would meet the body on Wednesday.

Taxi owners beaten up in 'attack by 70 rival drivers'

(33a)

SHARKEY ISAACS
STAFF REPORTER

ARG 28/7/98

Two taxi owners have been assaulted, allegedly by members of a rival taxi association, at the Wallacedene taxi rank in Kraaifontein.

Donald Deniso and Desiré Diedericks, of the Scottsdene, Northpine and Kraaifontein Taxi Association, claim they were attacked about noon on Sunday after being surrounded by about 70 members of the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association.

Scottsdene association taxis have worked the route between Wallacedene and Khayelitsha for several years by agreement with the Cape Organisation for a Democratic Taxi Association.

Scottsdene association chairman Hennie Rickett said his members' taxis were also stopped by Cape Amalgamated members, who "unloaded passengers" into their vehicles.

Mr Deniso was admitted to the Durbanville Private Hospital with severe head injuries.

Ms Diedericks, who was punched and kicked, was treated and discharged.

33

Taxi leaders plan blockades

(232)

Jonny Steinberg

BD 7/8/98

TAXI industry leaders are planning "rolling blockades" to protest against government's unwillingness to help the industry out of its undercapitalisation crisis, taxi industry sources said yesterday.

The action would protest against government's refusal to lift an embargo on the importation of a batch of second-hand vehicles from Lesotho.

In an open letter to Transport Minister Mac Maharaj, to be released next week, taxi representatives apologised to motorists for disrupting their day.

"The average age of our fleet is eight years old, which threatens passenger safety and escalates costs," the letter said. "We have found a solution, the importation of Japanese vehicles at a third of local prices. We have come back with answers, suggesting, among other things, that only a limited batch be imported. But government remains intransigent."

Commenting on the impending protest action, Transport Department director-general Dipak Patel said the importation of used vehicles was not a long-term solution.

Sources said it was envisaged that the nationwide blockades would occur some time in August.

Taxi drivers block traffic in protest at police 'inaction'

Rivals accused of assaults

CHANTEL ERFORT
STAFF REPORTER

Traffic was held up for more than two hours when taxis blocked the intersection of Old Paarl and Okavango roads in Brackenfell.

Yesterday's blockade, by the Scottsdene, Northpine and Kraaifontein Taxi Association, was in protest against "lack of co-operation" from the police.

Association drivers and taxi owners claim they are constantly harassed and assaulted by members of a rival taxi association, and that the police doing nothing about it.

One driver said he was assaulted on Sunday and another claimed he was beaten up so badly he was in hospital for three days.

Chairman Hennie Rickert said the association had sent numerous letters to the police and had a court order restraining their rivals from intimidating them or their passengers, and operating on their routes.

Mr Rickert said their complaints to the police had come to nothing.

The protesters, who claimed they were "disillusioned" with the police, shouted: "Don't send Swanepoel.

"If he comes here, we're going to attack him!"

Marius Swanepoel is a superintendent commanding Kraaifontein police station. and the taxi drivers claim he has done nothing to solve their problems since they began in 1994.

They also claim that the rival association picks up passengers along their routes, robbing them of business.

The association plans to establish a taxi route between Kraaifontein and Khayelitsha and this, claim members, is one of the main reasons for competition between the rival associations.

Police from Brackenfell and Kraaifontein failed to move the drivers.

The demonstration was peaceful, but association members refused to disperse until they handed a memorandum to the police commissioner for the Western Cape, Leon Wessels.

They said that if there was no action on their memorandum within seven days, they would stage another blockade.

Two hours after the first taxi parked across the busy intersection, the memorandum was handed to Vivian Sciocatti at Brackenfell police station.

Superintendent Sciocatti said: "We will go through the memorandum and see what the problems are. I will then bring them to the attention of the area commissioner, and we will try our best to attend to the problems."

Taxi chaos looms as petrol supplies dry up

Cosatu calls for solidarity with 47 000 strikers

By Hopewell Radebe, Simon Zwane and Anso Thom

Fears that taxi services could come to a standstill in Gauteng surfaced yesterday.

And the Congress of South African Trade Unions has called on members to embark on solidarity action in support of the 47 000 striking chemical and petroleum workers.

Cosatu's call came as high courts throughout the country ordered the striking workers to stop their crippling blockades at refineries, depots and chemical manufacturing plants.

Police in KwaZulu Natal had to be called in to escort 14 tankers from the Engen plant in Isipingo to service stations.

Cosatu's Nowetu Mpati said its members should "refuse to handle any goods to and from the petroleum, glass, plastics, rubber, pharmaceuticals and industrial chemicals industries as well as fast-moving consumer goods".

This came as long-distance taxi drivers in Gauteng expressed concern that they would be "terribly affected" if the strike were not resolved by the weekend as this was normally their busiest time.

"We are able to feed our families because of the migrant labourers who travel to visit their families then," said Johannes Hlophe.

"I hate to imagine what will become of these people if taxis come to standstill because of lack of petrol," he added.

Another taxi driver, Sipho Hlongwane, who travels between Soweto and Johannesburg, said he had found the Giant Garage in Nancefield empty and had to drive to Mondeor to fill up.

Filling station owners also felt frustrated by the inability of petroleum companies to maintain supplies.

The Star found Harvey Sithole, owner of Africoil's Zhut City Garage in Orlando West, fuming, and claiming that his suppliers had not informed him about the possibility of an irregular supply.

"Just because we are township businessmen, they did not worry about us – we are affected now because trucks will not deliver in our areas. People have not changed," he said.

Hanif Bhabha, owner of the Shell Garage in Melville, had to drive to the depot to demand his delivery. He said he had tried to contact his supplier but did not get any assurances that petrol would be delivered yesterday.

An Orlando Service Station manager, who wanted to remain anonymous, said he placed more orders yesterday but his supplier, Total, asked him to be patient.

"I ordered petrol on Tuesday, when I realised my stock was dwindling and would not survive Wednesday, but up until now I have not received anything," he said.

Pharmacies contacted by The Star said although delivery had been delayed, later in the day they managed to get all the medication they had ordered.

Optimism as national taxi body launched

(332)

By Anna Cox

Rdm 25/8/98

A new national taxi body – the first ever in the country – was launched by Transport Minister Mac Maharaj in Pretoria yesterday.

The new association would be used as a strong, unified body to deal with the violence which had plagued the industry, said South African Black Taxi Association president Joe Mabaso.

He said there was a strong need for a unified body to represent the taxi industry.

The South African Taxi Association Council, which has representatives from all the major taxi organisations and from every province, was the result of 12 months of intensive consultation, said Dipak Patel, outgoing chairperson of the National Taxi Task Team.

The team, which was set up in 1995, identified three major areas of action: the industry needed to be regulated and controlled, it needed to be formalised, and it required structured economic assistance.

"Today is a watershed in the history of the taxi industry in our country. From now on the Government has a national organisation to interface with, and the industry has a clear and credible voice to interact with the Government. This is a critical development that we ... have been searching for," said Maharaj.

Within the next two months, the council plans to go on a roadshow to all the provinces, and within 18 months it plans to establish provincial offices.

Milestone as new taxi council hits the road

ARG 25/8/98 (332)

SHARKEY ISAACS
TRANSPORT REPORTER

The South African Taxi Council has been launched to formalise the minibus taxi industry, South Africa's largest carrier of passengers.

The national council and provincial councils came into being yesterday.

Western Cape representatives on the national council are Basil Nagel, Reggie Malimba and Les Sumbulu. Mr Nagel is also chairman of the Western Cape Taxi Council.

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj welcomed the establishment of the council as a "watershed in the history of the taxi industry" which now had a clear and credible voice with which to communicate with the Government.

Guidelines mooted for the council's relationship with the Government include:

■ Seeking statutory recognition from the Government after a period of satisfactory performance.

■ Following statutory recognition, the Government playing a monitoring role to ensure that the council serves the needs of its constituencies.

■ The council's constitution ensuring optimal accountability and transparency.



One of the many groups of traditional dancers that entertained hundreds of people at the "thanksgiving" party celebrating four years of peace between the Groblersdal and Boseka Bo Eja taxi associations. The party was held at the Mosterlus Stadium on Wednesday.
PIC: MBUZENI ZULU

Taxi groups cheer peace

(BP) Sowetan 21/8/98

By McKeed Kotlolo

THE Mpumalanga taxi industry, which for years has been plagued by taxi violence, celebrated four years of peace this week between Groblersdal and Boseka Bo Eja taxi associations.

The mammoth and colourful function, which coincided with the 10th anniversary of the Groblersdal Taxi Association, was held at the Mosterlus Stadium on Wednesday.

Representatives of all the taxi associations in the province as well as traditional leaders and commuters attended the event.

Commuters from various villages were transported for free to and from the stadium.

Speakers at the "thanksgiving" party, including presidents of taxi associations and traditional leaders, spoke of the importance of peace and unity in the lucrative taxi industry.

Ingwenyama Maisha II said the Groblersdal and the Boseka Bo Eja taxi associations signed a peace agreement in 1994 after a series of feuds which claimed numerous lives in the industry.

There has been no violence between the two groups since then, he said.

The good relationship between the two associations should serve as an example to the whole taxi industry in South Africa, he added.

Maisha urged all associations to improve their relationship with the communities in which they operated by holding workshops for their drivers on commuter care and management.

He also urged the associations to keep constant contact with traditional leaders "since you are transporting our people on a daily basis".

Other speakers pledged support to the Government's project to register and control the taxi industry.

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Taxi industry must lose mafia to thrive

BD 2/9/98 (332)

An inclusive, national structure has been formed for the violence-ridden minibus taxi industry. Will this finally succeed in bringing it into line, asks Jonny Steinberg



Confrontation between police and taxi drivers is not uncommon in the industry.

Despite the breathtaking complexity of its politics and the endless labyrinths of its structures and associations, the crisis in the taxi industry can be reduced to two simple problems.

The first is that of route regulation. The industry was created by wily, inventive men who filled the gap between apartheid planning and the unplanned avalanche of migration into SA's metropolitan areas in the 1980s. While government-subsidised buses kept treading their blind and mindless path between formally designated black areas and white business districts, the pioneers of the taxi industry saw dollar bills in SA's impending transport crisis, and linked SA's unrecognised informal settlements to city centres.

Yet precisely because they filled an unregulated and anarchic space, taxi routes are governed by the grim laws of nature. Turfs are shaped by a balance of power which is mapped out through the barrel of a gun.

The industry's second problem is intimately connected to the first; it is radically, perhaps terminally, undercapitalised. The lack of medium-term planning which has characterised its history is extraordinary. It is the largest consumer of fuel and user of vehicles in Africa, but it buys its petrol, its minibuses and its parts at retail prices. It receives cash from millions of commuters every day, but its capital funds are dry and its fleet is ageing.

Yet a handful of individuals are deftly squeezing a small fortune from the beleaguered industry. Operators who cannot afford to replace their ageing vehicles pay thousands a year for "protection" — often they need protection against the people they pay.

The industry's two problems have a common denominator: the mafia. Recapitalising requires diverting the flow of cash from mafia coffers into the industry's future. Regulating its routes requires prising the control of turf from the clutches of private empires.

That sections of the industry are run by mafias is endemic to the subterranean and lawless space it filled under apartheid. Yet if it is to survive in the post-apartheid era it will have to come out into the daylight and submit itself to the rule of law. Travelling this path, however, requires undoing the intricate tapestry of the industry's power. Doing this without destroying the whole fabric is the risk it faces.

Although they have been little publicised, serious moves are afoot on both the recapitalisation and the regulation fronts. Five co-operatives involving more than a thousand taxi operators have been set up around the country. With the help of government grants, each of these owns petrol outlets and reinvests these profits in members' businesses. By clubbing together, operators hope to negotiate deals on parts, insurance, and, most crucial of all, loans for new vehicles.

Visionaries in the industry see the demise of apartheid and the opportunity to submit to the law as an opportunity to transform the taxi industry into an economic power house.

"If we one day build sufficient capital funds to establish an institution which offers every taxi operator life and vehicle insurance and a pension, we will become the largest insurer on the continent," says a veteran taxi man.

"Why shouldn't we build a capital base to establish banks and investment houses?

"Cyril Ramaphosa stands cap in hand as white corporations unbundle. But we are sitting on a black gold mine. If we pull ourselves together, we are positioned to become the first bastion of serious black economic clout in this country."

A noble dream indeed and one worth hanging on to.

Things are afoot on the regulation front too. After three years of painstaking negotiations, the transport department has dissolved the lifelong contracts granted to bus companies under apartheid. In the long term, it plans to put every metropolitan transport route in SA out to tender. Taxi operators who win tenders stand to share in the government subsidies that are now the preserve of the bus companies.

But to reach that point, government must tame the industry and submit it to regulatory and legal framework which is now still in its untested infancy.

Is the taxi industry in any condition to rise to the occasion?

Those in the industry who want to see it change its ways appear to have scored a significant victory. After years of bickering and bargaining, the industry established an all-inclusive, nationwide representative structure last month. In a world where shady empires use the cover of obscurity to accumulate treasure chests, the new body threatens to bring the mafiosi into the daylight of public scrutiny.

In its current, interim composition, the SA Taxi Council is composed of two representatives from each of SA's 11 national taxi associations and two from each of the industry's nine provincial bodies. However, it has pledged that within 18 months it will reconstitute itself on the outcome of a nationwide ballot among SA's taxi operators. Voting for responsible leadership will send the mafiosi a strong message that they can no longer control the industry.

Is this too rosy a scenario to be true? Why would the industry have agreed to a system that will change its power structure?

There is a smart if chancy calculation behind the formation of the new body, one based on a perception that the political texture of the industry is subtly changing.

Some say the mafiosi were something of an inevitability prior to the transition to democracy. In the absence of route allocations, transport plans and ombudsmen, the threat of violence emerged as a surrogate form of law-keeping. In the absence of formal rules, the capacity to harm underwrote the network of tacit agreements which regulated routes and turf. The mafiosi were essentially occupying the space a police force and a transport department would have filled in a sane society.

Today there is a government which is beginning to show the industry it is serious about playing the law-keeping role government should have played from the start. Sources in the industry say the effects of this on the ground are profound. During the last year, there have been widespread reports from across Gauteng of a quiet but growing resistance to paying protection fees. The industry's collective consciousness appears to be registering that an entirely different future beckons.

"The fact is that if operators on the ground call their bluff, the mafia are in trouble," says a source on the new taxi council.

"I am waiting for the day two associations move into an area, start taking people out, demand protection fees and are told to pack their bags.

"The killing will not continue long if there are no dividends at the end of the day. It is really up to local people to say no.

"If the protection racket starts turning bad while business is looking good, we can simply invite the ailing mafia bosses to take their place in the sun," the source says. "Push them out and they will fight back. Keep them in, and they will back the smart money."

An optimistic view? Certainly. But is it realistic? In truth, it is too early to tell. We will have to watch the industry carefully to see if it can clean up its act.

Govt brokers peace between taxi bodies (332)

By Gershwin Chuenyane

THE Government has brokered a peace agreement between two rival taxi groups operating from the Denneboom taxi rank in Mamelodi, Pretoria.

The violent feud between the Mamelodi Amalgamated Taxi Association (Mata) and Mamelodi Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Malldta) has claimed many lives and left many others maimed.

According to the agreement Malldta is expected to return unconditionally to the taxi rank tomorrow, five months after quitting it.

The agreement, according to Gauteng director of public and urban transport Mr Lennox Magwaza, was the third in a series of successes achieved by MEC Ms Joyce Kgoadi's "from Taxi Violence to Taxi Industry Development" strategy.

Magwaza said the first success was in Soweto and the second in the Vaal Triangle.

Magwaza said Mata and Malldta were taken through a process the aim of which was to eradicate all outstanding taxi conflicts before the Government could implement the development project.

"Malldta's return to the taxi rank and its operating on its old routes is part of the agreement," Magwaza said

He said the Government would set up a monitoring team to ensure the smooth implementation of the agreement. This would include members from Malldta and Mata, public transport inspectors as well as community structures.

The normalisation process will include the quickening of registrations to enable the taxi industry to be on par with others in the transport industry and also help the Government to implement its process of subsidising the industry through service contracts.

CRIME UPDATE
A Nation Building Project

Saweton 21/9/98

Taxi association fires its entire executive

(332)

Sowetan 4/9/98

By Dan Fuphe

THE Greater Brakpan Taxi Association announced yesterday that it had dissolved its executive committee and had appointed an interim committee to work out new policies that will take the association "into the new millennium".

Speaking to *Sowetan*, association spokesman Mr Jabula Motha said the "old guard" had been dissolved because it "was being overtaken by the events which affect the taxi industry in general".

"Following the revamp, we now have an open-door policy with all neighbouring fellow associations, community organisations, neighbouring towns, businesses and our own commuters," he added.

Members of the new interim committee are; Mr PO Ngwenya (chairman), Mr BJ Mahlangu (secretary), Mr DC Masango (treasurer), Mr TJ Magagula (assistant treasure) and Mr G Sibanyoni (transport and administration manager).

Motha has appealed to members of the public who might have outstanding business with the previous committee to contact him on (011) 740-0237 (office hours).

Minibus's role set to decline, govt believes

Jonny Steinberg (332)

THE taxi industry's success in capturing market share is the result of a failed regulatory structure, government's long-term transport strategy, released on Monday, claims.

The report envisaged that taxis would serve primarily as feeders to buses and trains within 20 years.

Dipak Patel, transport acting director-general, said yesterday that while the role of minibus taxis in public transport would decline significantly over the next 20 years, avenues would open for taxi operators to diversify into buses and rail.

"We see a reduced role for minibus taxis, but not for current taxi operators," Patel said. "If the taxi industry formalises itself quickly, it stands in the short-term to acquire a fleet of 22-28 seater vehicles. In the medium term we see current taxi concerns running bus companies and negotiating concessions in rail operations."

Patel said that government was already negotiating with the taxi industry over the sale of government shares in existing bus companies.

The Moving SA report argued that taxis were less efficient than buses and trains and would play a subsidiary role in a cost-effective urban transport system. BD 9/9/98

Urban transport corridors carrying a daily passenger load of 10 000 or more would be run by buses and trains.

Taxis would serve primarily as feeders to other modes of transport and would be responsible for low density transport corridors.

Transport consultant James Chapman contested Moving SA's finding that minibus taxis were less efficient than buses.

"It appears that the report left speed and manoeuvrability out of the equation when it compared buses with taxis," Chapman said.

"If we are talking about scaling down the use of taxis, the question must first be asked why so many people who have a choice between modes step into taxis and not buses."

Chapman warned that if bus and taxi operators competed directly for government subsidies, stability in the transport sector would be threatened.

"The emphasis should be on the formation of joint utility companies," Chapman said.

Taxi industry takes vital step forward

By Mzwakhe Hlangani
Labour Reporter

EFFORTS to develop a sophisticated labour relations system and to regulate the taxi industry gained momentum at a weekend conference of taxi industry stakeholders.

The conference, organised by the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), resolved, among other things, to improve its working relationship with South African National Civic Organisation and other community organisations to eradicate violence along taxi routes.

The aim of the conference was to finalise the dissolution of the South African Taxi Drivers Union and its integration into the TGWU.

Union national coordinator Maurice Bokaba emphasised the need to campaign for proper regulation of the industry, organising taxi drivers and educating them in the peaceful resolution of conflict.

It was also resolved that employers should pay drivers a minimum wage of R2 500 a month based on agreed contracts of employment.

The concept of collective bargaining should become a reality, the congress noted.

It also noted that the department of labour had a role to play through enforcing protective legislation and setting minimum standards, while the department of transport's responsibilities were to formalise and restructure the industry into cooperatives.

Another key decision was that the union's executive committee should make recommendations on the conditions of employment of taxi drivers.

Sowetan 22/9/98

4 HURT AT BELLVILLE TAXI RANK

Drivers trade shots

ET 23/9/98 (392)

RIVAL TAXI ASSOCIATIONS have blamed each other for an outbreak of shooting in Bellville yesterday during which a police officer was injured, reports **MOTSHIDISI MOKWENA**.

FOUR people, including a police officer, are believed to have been injured and admitted to hospital after taxi drivers opened fire on one another at the Bellville station taxi rank yesterday.

According to one taxi driver, who did not want to be named, two men known only as "De Vos and Abie" — believed to be members of the Congress of Democratic Taxi Associations (Codeta) — approached members of the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) and opened fire.

"When we (Cata members) tried to protect ourselves, police confiscated our guns. But the same treatment was not given to members of Codeta," the driver said.

Cata also claims that police injured Cata members.

"We had to take the injured to the hospital ourselves," the driver said. "Police did nothing to help us. Instead they searched us and took our weapons."

Police spokesperson Sergeant Vivienne Phillips dismissed the Cata members' claims.

She said police were in the area when they heard shots being fired: "When police officers went to investigate, taxi drivers were shooting at one another.

"One officer was caught in the crossfire and sustained injuries to the neck. He was taken to N1 Hospital for treatment."

Cata chairperson Steven Williams said problems at the Bellville taxi rank began when the Kraaifontein Taxi Association merged with Codeta.

He said passengers were now scared of boarding Cata taxis. "When they use Cata taxis, Codeta targets our drivers and they get shot at. Codeta has hired 'skollies' who want to pick up passengers anywhere. This is unacceptable."

Williams said a meeting had been scheduled between the two associations but that Codeta did not turn up.

He added that Cata was "disheartened" by the fact that police did not search Codeta members, who were obviously armed.

Codeta spokesperson David Jezile dismissed Williams' claims and said Cata members had started the attacks first.

"We are not fighting for passengers or taxi routes . The problem here is that Cata does not support Kraaifontein joining us."

He argued that his organisation "did not have a problem" when Somerset Taxi Association joined Cata.

Jezile pointed out that before this merger there had never been any conflict between Codeta and Cata.

A meeting will be called by the two associations in a bid to resolve the issue.

● In a separate taxi-related incident, police were investigating a shooting in Nyanga Junction when shots were fired at them. Two men were shot at by police and one was injured in the arm. No one was arrested but a docket of attempted murder has been opened.



WEAPONS HUNT: Police officers search taxi drivers for firearms after shooting erupted between two rival taxi associations at the Bellville station taxi rank yesterday. *PICTURE: ALAN TAYLOR*

100 taxis in protest

ARLT 23/9/98 (322)

SHARKEY ISAACS
TRANSPORT REPORTER

More than 100 drivers double-parked their taxis in Sir Lowry Road outside the Good Hope Centre today in protest against the setting up of the Western Cape Taxi Council.

Traffic police kept one outgoing lane open during the demonstration.

The taxi drivers, members of seven taxi organisations, targeted the Good Hope Centre as it is the venue for an international conference on urban transport being attended by 400 delegates from around the world.

Taxi spokesman Igsháan Lucas claimed the local taxi council was not representative of the industry and therefore the council's two representatives at the conference were not truly representative of the taxi operators.

Mr Lucas said a memorandum listing the drivers' grievances, including their concern about security at taxi ranks, would be handed to Cape Metropolitan Council member Welcome Zenzile, chairman of the transport and traffic committee of the CMC.

Representatives of the Peninsula, Retreat, N1 City, Kensington, Mitchell's Plain, Hanover Park and the Cape Amalgamated Taxi associations took part in the protest.



drivers on the Bellville taxi rank

LEON MULLER

Troops, police move in as taxi war erupts

Cop injured in Bellville shootout

ARG 23/9/98 (32a)

ASHLEY SMITH
STAFF REPORTER

Soldiers and police will patrol the taxi route between Kraaifontein and Bellville today after a policeman was wounded in an outbreak of what police are calling a full-scale war between rival taxi associations.

A member of the police's train commuter unit was wounded at the Bellville taxi rank yesterday when gunfire erupted between taxi drivers from the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) and the Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta).

Police said there was "a full-scale war" between the organisations over lucrative routes and prominent ranks in Kraaifontein, Scottsdene, Wallacedene and Bloekombos.

A strong police presence would be maintained in all the affected areas and safety measures would be introduced, such as guarding commuters and vehicles picking up and dropping people.

The latest violence follows several skirmishes between the organisations in Kraaifontein and Belhar.

Yesterday, commuters and shop owners in Bellville ducked when the first shots were fired just before 1.20pm.

Several taxis were damaged by bullets.

Codeta drivers abandoned their taxis and assembled opposite the Middestad Mall, where they drew their guns and fired on Cata drivers near the railway station.

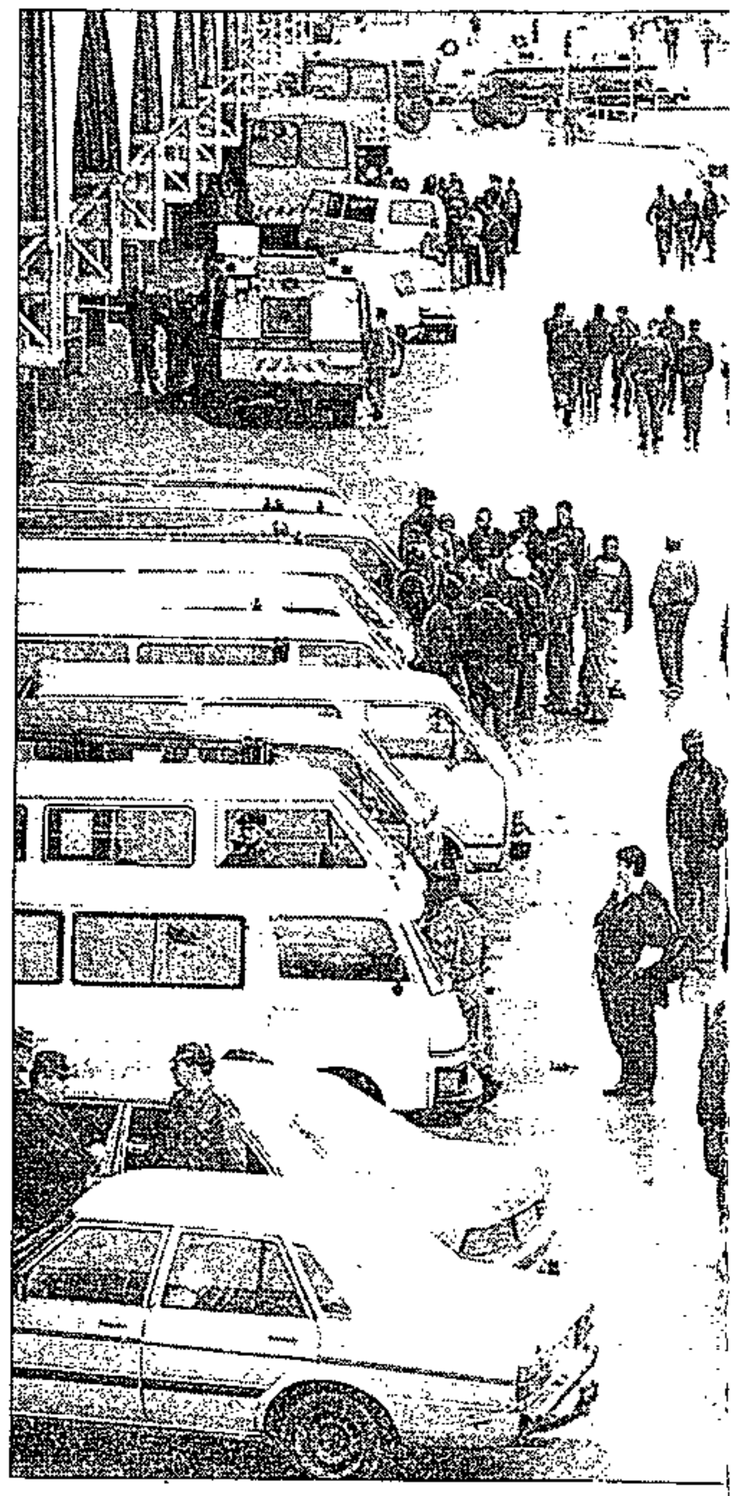
Police said the violence had spilled over from Kraaifontein where the rival taxi associations were involved in several skirmishes last week.

Meanwhile a member of a third taxi organisation, the Peninsula Taxi Association woke up early today to the sound of breaking glass as a petrol bomb was thrown through a window of his home.

Andrew Joseph said he did not understand why he was being targeted, but suspected it was because of a proposed march today by members of 15 taxi associations opposed to the Western Cape Taxi Council.

The associations planned to march to the Good Hope Centre where an international conference on urban transport is being held.

"We are going to protest against the leaders of the council because they are attempting to hijack the functions of the Department of Transport in issuing taxi permits," said Debbi Miller, a taxi violence mediator.



Armed presence: police and taxi drivers at the Bell

Commuters do the nightmare ride in city's new taxi war

Rivals claim rank injustice

(372)
ARG 24/9/98

Mention the words "taxi violence" anywhere on the Bellville taxi rank and commuters frown, saying they are fearful and confused.

Michael Sabeko, who travels daily from Khayelitsha to Bellville, said he and "hundreds of other people" were perplexed at the taxi war in Bellville and Kraaifontein.

Taxi ranks in the two towns were guarded yesterday by heavily armed police and army personnel.

"Taxi organisations are blaming each other and we don't know what's actually going on," said Mr Sabeko.

His sentiments were echoed by a frightened Bellville domestic worker, who said she had been trapped in a taxi on Tuesday when it was hijacked by gunmen.

The woman, who asked not to be named, said she and other commuters had been ordered to get out and board another taxi. The driver, a member of the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata), was shot and wounded in the chest by a gunman.

"Another bullet ripped through a commuter's handbag. She collapsed in shock," said the domestic worker.

Informal traders at the Bellville rank, who declined to be named, said people felt unsafe and that the violence had affected their businesses.

Police spokeswoman Vivienne Phillips said a large police contingent and army personnel were deployed at Bellville and Kraaifontein taxi ranks to patrol the areas.

"We are doing our utmost to defuse the situation and safeguard commuters," she said.

SPECIAL REPORT



NORMAN JOSEPH

One man died and five people, including a police sergeant, have been injured in the week-long taxi war between members of Cata and the Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta).

Cata secretary Duma Jaxa claimed a bus passenger, Mondi Musi of Khayelitsha, who was shot dead on Tuesday on the R300 freeway in Kuils River, was one of his members.

He said two other Cata members, known as Andile and Mongezeleli, had been shot and wounded on Tuesday.

Mr Jaxa complained that police confiscated his members' guns and sided with Codeta.

But Sergeant Phillips denied police were biased towards any group and said 14 licensed and two unlicensed guns had been seized during investigations.

Cata claimed yesterday that members of the Reformed United Taxi Association (Ruta), who joined Codeta, forcefully took over several ranks in Kraaifontein and surrounding areas.

Mr Jaxa said the conflict had spread to Khayelitsha and Belhar.

He claimed prominent gangsters in Belhar, appearing to support Codeta, also opposed Cata.

The gangsters were allegedly seen with Codeta members on Tuesday.

But Belhar/Delft Taxi Association secretary Joshua Isaacs said his organisation's members had numerous complaints against Cata.

He claimed Cata members had infiltrated Belhar ranks and intimidated taxi drivers.

In the past week, 10 minibuses had been damaged by Cata members and "all our efforts failed to persuade authorities to take action".

Yesterday, Mr Isaacs and dozens of his members joined Codeta at their Cape Town office.

But Mr Jaxa said there would be no peace, because Codeta was not interested in holding talks with Cata.

Codeta secretary Charlie Doda alleged that Cata was trying to take over routes in all Kraaifontein areas.

Many Cata vehicles allegedly did not have permits.

Mr Doda said: "To prevent intimidation and violence, Kraaifontein's taxi drivers recently formed Ruta and decided to link up with us.

"The idea was that if Cata mingled in Ruta's affairs, they could say that we were their official mouthpiece."

Mr Doda claimed many taxi drivers were joining Codeta because of Cata's "greed".

Kraaifontein and Belhar drivers saw Cata's moves and linked up with Codeta, he said.

Mr Doda said that when taxi drivers in Somerset West had joined Cata, "we did not interfere".



ROY WIGLEY

Demands: transport department representative Michael Spence phones his superior, Roy Petersen, on behalf of irate taxi operators during yesterday's protest

Operators protesting over taxi council poll

SHARKEY ISAACS AND BLACKMAN NGORO
STAFF REPORTERS

Dissatisfaction among taxi operators over the validity of recent elections for the Western Cape Taxi Council has led to the temporary suspension of the council by the provincial transport department.

Last night, transport department head Roy Petersen said allegations about the validity of the elections would be investigated because it was important that taxi operators felt they were represented.

"I hope to set up a meeting soon, depending of the availability of the the parties, possibly as early as tomorrow."

Yesterday, local taxi associations asked the department to suspend its recognition of the council until the matter of representation had been resolved.

This followed a protest by 100 taxi operators from 15 taxi associations outside the international urban transport conference being held at the Good Hope Centre.

A memorandum handed to Mr Petersen by taxi operators highlighted various grievances and emphasised that operators and drivers did not know the present 40-member council and its six-member executive committee.

It also claimed operators and drivers did not understand how they had been elected.

High on the list of grievances was an allegation that taxi operators were being bullied by the council, its forums and rank committees.

The memorandum also claimed the homes and vehicles of taxi operators were being bombed.

At the centre of the conflict are claims by disgruntled operators that council members had taken it upon themselves to represent the industry at the Local Transportation Board, which issues coveted taxi permits.

The simmering dispute started with the election on May 15 of the provincial taxi council – the third WCTA since 1996.

Nizaam Parker of the Peninsula Taxi Association claimed the council's executive was composed of members of rival taxi organisations: "Why is the other half of the equation not represented?"

"We didn't put these guys there.

"They take sides, aligning themselves with rival associations.

"They try to muzzle the opposition," said Mr Parker.

CAPE ARGUS, **WEDNESDAY**, SEPTEMBER 30, 1998

Taxilords 'squeezing out small operators'

Corruption claims fuel tension

ARG 30/9/98 (3rd)

BLACKMAN NGORO
STAFF REPORTER

Simmering tension at the taxi rank on the station deck has been blamed on wealthy taxi owners buying up taxi permits and squeezing out small operators.

The same influential taxi owners are also said to dominate the Western Cape Taxi Council, the umbrella body in the province's taxi industry.

Over the last two weeks, members of the taxi industry have been demonstrating to demand that the Department of Transport stop dealing with the taxi council which they accuse of working in the interests of the wealthy owners at the expense of small operators.

Members of the taxi industry have also accused the council executive of collaborating with members of the Local Road Transportation Board in a taxi permit scam.

This week the traffic department blitzed the station deck to check on the legality of permits but traffic officers had to retreat when taxi drivers threatened them.

Traffic chief Mark Sangster said: "We checked for road transportation permits, but it was basically a warning exercise and 50 taxi drivers were warned. This means that when we do business in earnest later this week or next week, they will be charged."

The Cape Argus witnessed some allegedly fraudulent permits being confiscated by a traffic officer on Monday.

Allegations of corruption have been made by Peninsula Taxi Association (PTA) interim executive committee secretary Igsaan Lucas who says that small operators are being squeezed out.

He alleges that permits are being issued to applicants for long-distance routes and then being used on the more lucrative 35km-radius routes.

Mr Lucas said small-time operators were being muscled out.

"At the centre of the problem is the fact that guys with financial clout came in from outside the industry in 1994 and started buying up permits. That meant the guy sweating it out was off the route he had been working on for six years or more because he could no longer get a permit.

"Now the same big guys are stopping the Local Road Transportation Board from issuing permits to those who used to use them to earn their daily bread and feed their families.

"They reason that is given is that having one more vehicle on the route would be one vehicle too much, yet one guy has more than 10 vehicles on the road."

"It is now a battle for survival for some members of the old PTA executive (which is part of the Western Cape Taxi Council) as well as members of the Local Road Transportation Board.

"If the members of the Western Cape Taxi Council go down they are bound to take the Local Road Transportation Board with them," he said.

"There is a long history of corruption coming out of those files. There are two names that consistently come up."

Mr Lucas said corruption did not take place in the office. He had been taken to the house of one of the women allegedly involved in the scam for a permit deal.

"The corrupt acts don't take place at the office. They are done at the houses of board officials," he alleged.

Chairman of the old PTA executive Basil Nagle told the Cape Argus: "There are numerous problems. There has been a process of special legalisation from 1994 where those outside the permit system were given an opportunity to prove they qualify."

Asked to comment on allegations of corruption, Mr Nagle said: "If I think another permit will create strain on my route I will oppose it because it is my right. It is your right to apply but it is my right to oppose it. Finally it is the Local Road Transportation Board which can approve your application."

Mr Nagle said in the past four years 138 taxi associations had registered, representing 4 500 owners and 7 500 drivers and vehicles.

Secretary of the Local Road Transportation Board, Cathy Buzby said there was nothing stopping people from buying taxi permits if they could afford them. There was, however, a limit to the number of permits issued on a specific route.

She declined to comment on any allegations of corruption.

Taxi body calls for speedy conclusion to labour probe

(332) BD 9/10/98

Pearl Sebolao

THE Transport and General Workers' Union's newly formed national taxi sector council is to put pressure on the labour department to finish its investigation into labour issues and employment conditions in the taxi industry.

The council, which replaced the now dissolved SA Taxi Drivers' Union, would co-ordinate the industry's campaigns and negotiations nationally.

It would also engage the SA Taxi Council, an employer body, about workers' rights.

Union secretary-general Randall Howard said the union would present a report with recommendations to the labour minister early next year.

Speaking at a media briefing in Johannesburg yesterday, Howard said the report would identify minimum conditions for hours of work, overtime, leave, dismissals and wages.

The council would recommend a minimum wage of R2 500 a month for all taxi drivers in the country, as well as a 10-hour day, 21 days annual leave, and education and training.

"Conditions of work at the moment are really no conditions ... drivers are forced to work long hours, wages are determined by a quota system and it is up to employers to determine how and when a driver should work," Howard said.

Howard called on the SA Taxi Council to support the council and warned that if it did not co-operate the council would go ahead "and ultimately engage them on the basis of proposals we put forward".



Transport and General Workers' Union general secretary Randall Howard, centre, yesterday announced the union's plans to organise workers. On the left is the union's taxi co-ordinator, Maurice Bokaba, and on the right Congress of SA Trade Unions' second vice-president, Peter Malepe. Picture: ROBERT BOTHA

Howard said there was likely to be a degree of resistance from employers to the council.

However, employers and employees had the same goal, which was to establish an industry that was peaceful, regulated, efficient and reliable.

The council also aimed to set up co-operatives to bring together taxi associations in one locality and to commit them to professional business practices and the recognition of taxi drivers' rights.

Taxi drivers were recognised as employees in terms of the Labour Relations Act and therefore entitled to all the existing rights.

Buthelezi advocates general amnesty

BD 14/10/98

Farouk Chothia

DURBAN — Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi said yesterday the idea of a general amnesty for perpetrators of the low-intensity civil war in KwaZulu-Natal needed to be taken seriously.

Making the call at the launch of an antipoverty project on the KwaZulu-Natal south coast, Buthelezi said peace and reconciliation between the IFP and African National Congress (ANC) was "immediately" attainable.

He said the truth commission might have shed some light on conflict between whites and blacks, but it was "ineffective in comprehending the dimension and tragedy of the black-on-black conflict".

For peace to take root and for wounds to heal in KwaZulu-Natal, a general amnesty should be considered.

The ANC mooted the idea of a special amnesty about two years ago, but the initiative faltered because the IFP feared it was an attempt to bring it into the truth commission — which it opposed — through the back door.

With the commission coming to an end, Buthelezi now seems willing to negotiate an amnesty deal. ANC KwaZulu-Natal spokesman Dumisani Makhaye said the party was not surprised by Buthelezi's stance as he had never attacked the ANC's proposals. He declined to comment further.

Buthelezi and President Nelson Mandela visited IFP-dominated Izingolweni and ANC-dominated Shobashobane yesterday to launch an R8m antipoverty project in the areas.

Addressing the Izingolweni crowd, Mandela said: "You are showing that you have understood the lesson of our times — that peace is the most powerful weapon that any community has to bring stability and development."

More than 1 000 IFP supporters launched an attack from Izingolweni on Shobashobane on Christmas Day 1995 in one of most gruesome massacres in the province. Eighteen ANC supporters were killed. Thirteen IFP members were convicted, and two of its local leaders were given life sentences.

Peace monitor Danny Chetty described Buthelezi's visit to Shobashobane as a "very historic and symbolic" gesture of reconciliation.

A small crowd gathered to welcome the two leaders, who were presented with a portrait of graves.

The ANC leader in Shobashobane, Anderson Nyawose, welcomed the visit. A relative of Nyawose was killed in the massacre. "I am very happy that they are walking together. It will change the minds of people," he said.

Arrest of taxi leader may herald new era

(333) BD 14/10/98

Jonny Steinberg

THE arrest last week of a high-profile taxi leader on a murder charge could prove a turning point in the industry's troubled history, sources in the taxi industry said yesterday.

William Sindane, the public face of the Federated Local and Long-Distance Taxi Association, was arrested in a swoop on the association's Waterkloof offices last Thursday.

Three other taxi men were arrested in Soweto earlier the same day, Gauteng Taxi Conflict Union head Robbie Robertse said yesterday.

The association has been involved in a protracted and violent dispute with a rival association over the control of the taxi rank in the Pretoria township of Soshanguve. The two associations pledged publicly last month to end the feud and share the rank.

"Sindane has one of the highest profiles of taxi men in the Pretoria area," a source said yesterday. "With the establishment of a national representative structure in the industry last month, there are serious moves afoot to put the industry on a developmental and peaceful footing. The trick is to get those who wield power through the barrel of a gun onto the peace train.

"There are two ways of doing this. First, show them that there is money in a regulated and above-ground future. Second, show them that if they carry on running things in the old way, they will get nailed. Last week's arrest of a very big figure is the first open and public sign that the writing may indeed be on the wall."

The recently formed SA Taxi Council has greeted the news of Sindane's arrest with caution and a spokesman said the council would wait to see precisely what the charges were about.

Government has come under heavy pressure from the taxi industry in recent months over its failure to act against the industry's hitmen.

A taxi association leader said yesterday: "The moment it is clear that killing means going to jail, the tables will have turned."

Sindane's association could not be contacted for comment.

Key Market Movements — 13/10 to 13/10

Five taxi owners held for murder

By Noxolo Nxusani

FIVE taxi owners, including a top official of a Pretoria taxi organisation, have been arrested in connection with 10 counts of murder and 20 of attempted murder.

The official, Mr William Sindane, who is a member of the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Feldta), was arrested at the association's offices in Brooklyn last Thursday.

Four other suspects, Mr Zita Mokgabude, Mr John Sibanyoni, Mr Angel Khumalo and Mr Vusi Dladla – all members of the Witwatersrand African Taxi Association – were arrested at their homes in Soweto the same day.

Investigating officer Inspector Leon Havenga of the Soweto taxi violence unit said yesterday that three stolen cars – a BMW, Jetta and Mazda – were also confiscated from Feldta's offices.

Havenga said all five suspects would appear in the Protea Magistrate's Court in Soweto for a bail hearing tomorrow.

He said the crimes were committed between April and May this year during the ongoing taxi violence in Soweto. More suspects are expected to be arrested soon.

Havenga appealed to members of the public and other taxi drivers who were present during the killings and attempted murders to come forward with any information that could help the police in their investigations.

They can contact him at (011) 986-9515.

It is alleged that Feldta was involved in violent dispute with other associations over the control of the taxi rank in Soshanguve, Pretoria.

New card system may help curb taxi violence

BD 21/10/98 (3328)

PRETORIA — A taxi credit card system which would enable commuters to avoid carrying cash for their tickets would help curb violence in the taxi industry, transport authorities said yesterday.

"Today we can be proud," Gauteng transport MEC Joyce Kgoali said yesterday. "The taxi industry has begun to play a supportive role in stopping violence." Kgoali was speaking at the opening of the greater Pretoria metropolitan council's new taxi office in the centre of the city.

Two innovations, the Taximate regulatory system and the Taxilink system, were launched at the office to control the sector.

The office's chairman, Leonard Kutumela, said with the Taxilink system no money would in future be exchanged between drivers and commuters.

Passengers would purchase a taxi card which would be credited with a certain amount.

"The commuters can use these cards in any Taxilink taxi, which will be marked with a Taxilink sticker," he said.

Passengers could swipe their cards at machines to be installed in each participating taxi.

Kutumela said the taxi cards could be bought from dispensers available at post offices, service stations and supermarkets in Pretoria.

He said the Taximate regulatory system would mark every geographical area with a certain colour on the Pretoria map. Each taxi would be marked with a colour sticker corresponding to the colour of its route on the map.

"Conflict will be avoided because drivers won't cross one another's routes," he said.

"Passengers travelling in the same colour zone as a taxi simply have to flash the appropriate colour card in order to be ferried to their destinations," Kutumela said.

Taxis would also be linked to the office via satellite with a tracking device fitted to the vehicle.

"The satellite is going to make sure nobody breaks the rules. We will be able to see if any driver crosses the borders he has been assigned to," Kutumela said.

Kgoali said it was a pity the innovations would not control the speed at which taxis travelled. A 24-hour hotline should be established in the new taxi offices, where anybody with a complaint would be able to contact taxi associations, he said. — Sapa.

Taxi credit card system launched

(330)

Sowetan 22/10/98

A TAXI credit card system that will enable commuters to avoid carrying cash for their tickets will also help curb violence in the taxi industry, transport authorities said this week.

"Today we can be proud," said Gauteng MEC for transport Ms Joyce Kgoali. "The taxi industry has begun to play a supportive role in stopping violence."

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Appropriate colour

"Conflict will be avoided because drivers won't cross each others routes," Kutumela said. "Passengers travelling in the same colour zone as a taxi have to flash the appropriate colour card in order to be ferried to their destination."

The taxi office, the first of its kind in South Africa, was established by 35 taxi associations, Taximate, the Greater Pretoria Metropolitan Council, taxi forums and 11 conventional taxi companies. – *Sapa.*

Two hurt as guns blaze at station

Police have stepped up patrols in and around minibus taxi ranks after commuters were raked with gunfire at the Cape Town station deck today.

The shootings came after the attack on a Belhar taxi operator late yesterday when his home and minibus were fired on.

A police spokesman said it was a miracle only two people were wounded in the attack at the entrance to the station deck taxi rank about 10.15 this morning.

The spokesman said about nine men got out of three minibus taxis which had pulled up at the long-distance rank on the Oswald Pirow side of the station deck.

"They produced shotguns and pistols and opened fire indiscriminately on commuters waiting for taxis," said the spokesman.

Details about the victims were sketchy because they were removed by private transport and an ambulance before police could reach the scene.

SPECIAL REPORT



JOHAN SCHRONEN

One of the victims was shot in the head and the other in the back, according to witnesses. Police believe the attack was part of a taxi war over route permits.

Several other people, who had to take cover behind vehicles on the rank, had to be treated for shock.

At least four minibuses were damaged by bullets.

Police collected spent cartridges on the scene for ballistic testing.

Trains were delayed and road traffic was diverted soon after the attack until police declared the area safe.

Police kept a watch on main routes out of the city after an all-points alert was broadcast on the police radio.

A description of the three minibuses and its occupants were relayed to patrols near other ranks.

News of the shooting spread quickly through other taxi ranks. The atmosphere was tense at ranks in Claremont, Wynberg and Bellville but no further incidents were reported.

The spokesman said police were following up "strong leads" after the shooting and believed the incident was part of strong-arm tactics by rivals in the taxi war.

(332) ARG 23/10/98

Taxi war flares between rivals Cata, Codeta – 1 dead, 11 hurt

Police battle to contain violence over routes in the Tygerberg area

BONTLE HEADBUSH AND PIETER MALAN

Shocked passengers watched in horror as their taxi driver was shot dead in one of at least 15 incidents of taxi violence in the Tygerberg area. Eleven people were injured, many of them innocent passengers and bystanders, as an apparent all-out war erupted between rival taxi organisations Cata and Codeta shortly before 7am yesterday.

Witnesses described one of the most callous incidents: the attackers of 27-year-old Wayne Swartz returned to the scene of the attack seconds after firing the first volley to make sure their victim was dead. When they saw him still moving they fired eight more shots at him.

Shocked passengers said the incident happened at noon yesterday when the taxi Mr Swartz was driving stopped at the University of the Western Cape to drop off a passenger.

"I'm never going to sleep again," said a devastated Lawrence Jordaan, who was on his way home to Belhar in the ill-fated taxi.

"After we stopped another taxi sped past us and waited until we drove off again before it reversed. As this taxi came opposite us; a man inside started firing at our driver."

After firing about 10 shots, the taxi drove off but returned after apparently noticing that the victim was still alive.

They then fired eight more shots at Mr Swartz before finally driving off. Mr Jordaan said: "During all of this, the passengers in the taxi were screaming and scrambling all over the place, desperately trying to get out of the taxi."



TAXI DEATH: the body of taxi driver Wayne Swartz, 27, lies next to his bullet-riddled taxi Picture: HANNES THIART

Police, who appeared at the scene shortly after the incident, said that while they were still trying to restore calm among the panicking crowd a taxi which drove by was stopped by a group of people.

A group of men approached the taxi and the driver jumped out and fled, said police officer Freddie Booysen.

"Before we could do anything they set this taxi alight and fled. It all happened so quickly that it was impossible for us to act. Before we could apprehend the suspects, they were gone," Captain Booysen said.

Only the charred shell of the vehicle remained.

Police spokeswoman Anine de Beer attributed the incidents to old divisions between two traditional foes – the taxi associations Cata and Codeta – opening up again.

Captain De Beer said before hostilities erupted yesterday, police had been involved in efforts to get the groups to talk to each other and would continue doing this.

She said they had great difficulty in containing yesterday's outburst as shootings happened "all over".

"We would be on our way to one area, when reports of another incident came in." She praised the help received from the army and traffic authorities in trying to contain an all-out war.

Cata spokesman Phillip Mbozwa blamed Codeta for first firing on Cata drivers. "They don't want us to use our routes so they're shooting at us. We are trying our best to operate normally under these circumstances," he said.

A man answering the phone at the Codeta office, who did not want to give his name, said he was unaware of the exact nature of the incidents.

He added that he was on his way to Bellville to try to find out exactly what had happened.

Captain De Beer said police would step up patrols on the major taxi routes in an effort to contain further outbursts. She said it would seem as though the Friday afternoon rush hour had done a lot to quieten things down as taxi drivers returned to the important business of making money.

She appealed to anyone with information regarding any of the incidents to phone the toll free crime stop number 0800 11 1213.

A day of mayhem and murder

The taxi violence that erupted yesterday was restricted mainly to the Tygerberg area with the majority of incidents happening in the Bellville and Belhar areas.

■ The first of 15 incidents happened at 6.50am when shots were fired at a taxi on the corner of Da Gama Road and Old Paarl Road. The driver of the taxi ran away and a pedestrian, Londi Madoda, was wounded in the back in the ensuing gun battle.

■ Twenty minutes later, at 7.10am, an unidentified taxi driver was wounded in the chest and back in a shooting incident at Kraaifontein railway station.

■ At 7.50am police wounded a suspect in the upper leg after hostilities flared again at the Kraaifontein railway station. The man is in hospital under police guard.

■ At 8.30am taxi driver Deon McKenzie was wounded in the buttock and a passenger, Brian Petersen, in the right side, in a shooting incident involving two taxis in Belhar.

■ A few minutes later, at 8.50 am, the drivers and passengers in two taxis started shooting at each other in Symphony Way, Bellville South. Nobody was injured.

■ About an hour later, a taxi was vandalised in Delft. Minutes later opposing taxi groups stoned each other at the bus terminus in Bellville. One taxi was damaged.

■ At 10am shots were fired at a taxi in Roosendaal, Delft. Nobody was injured.

■ Another shooting occurred at 10.20am on the corner of Modderdam and Symphony roads when a driver was shot at. He fled and nobody was injured.

■ Police arrested five suspects in Old Paarl Road in Northpine at 11.30am when people started shooting at a taxi. Two passengers were wounded in the incident. Police also confiscated four firearms – two of which were unlicensed – and 71 rounds of ammunition.

■ At noon taxi driver Wayne Swartz was shot dead in Modderdam Road opposite the University of the Western Cape in a drive-by shooting. Soon afterwards a Cata taxi was set alight at the same scene.

■ Fifteen minutes later two people were wounded in a shooting incident between two taxis on the corner of Modderdam and Symphony Road. At the same time a passenger was wounded in the thigh in a shooting incident in Erika Drive, Belhar.

Police arrested five people and confiscated two firearms.

■ The last incident occurred at 2.30pm when a person was wounded in the head in Main Road, Delft.

The situation remains tense.

TRANSPORT.- PRIVATE - GENERAL

1998

NOV. — DEC.

Taxis meet midnight registration deadline

(332)
AAG 1/3/97

ANDREA BOTHA
STAFF REPORTER

The regulation of the taxi industry in the Western Cape is firmly on track with ninety percent of all known taxi associations having registered with the Department of Transport by the deadline at midnight last night.

Leonard Ramatlakane, Provincial Minister of Transport, also announced the newly elected Taxi Representative Council, which will replace the controversial Western Cape Taxi Task Team.

The new council consists of nine new members each representing a city substructure and several rural regions, as well as five members from the previous taxi task force team.

"This body will be on the forefront of the taxi industry. It must lead the taxi industry," Minister Ramatlakane said.

At a press conference last night, the Department of Transport said official figures showed that out of an estimated 180 taxi organisations in the Western Cape, 165 associations had registered. The other ten percent are believed either to have merged with other organisations or to have changed their names.

The province has 5 600 minibus taxis and 4 500 registered drivers, but 1 500 drivers are believed to be unregistered.

Upsurge in taxi violence last year

(332) CP 2/3/97

By CHIARA CARTER

TAXI violence increased by almost 20 percent last year, but the number of intelligence officers available to investigate was "totally inadequate", Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi said this weekend.

Responding to a question in Parliament, Mufamadi said intelligence personnel had to serve a large number of units and only a small number were allocated to help detectives working on taxi violence.

"These numbers are totally inadequate," Mufamadi said.

Fewer than half the perpetrators of taxi violence were arrested.

Last year, 698 incidents were recorded as opposed to 562 flare-ups recorded during the previous year.

While taxi violence in Gauteng decreased from 264 incidents in 1995 to 120 last year, several provinces were less lucky.

Worst hit was the Western Cape, where 220 clashes were recorded last year, as opposed to just 14 the previous year.

Mufamadi said the upsurge in taxi violence could be a result of the government's plans to regulate the industry.

Not all role players wanted to take part in this initiative – and some were trying to broaden their operations before the registration deadline.

Taxi violence linked to initiatives

(332) sowetan 3/3/97

By Rafiq Rohan
Political Correspondent

THE escalation of taxi violence could be linked to the Government's initiative to regulate the taxi industry, according to Safety and Security Minister Mr Sydney Mufamadi.

"The incidence of taxi violence has increased as a result of the refusal by those in the industry to toe the Government line on regulatory initiatives," Mufamadi told Parliament last week.

"Not all the role players in the taxi industry are willing to participate in the Government initiatives. Others are broadening their interests in an already saturated market, causing conflict between all the stakeholders."

Mufamadi said there was a 19,5 percent escalation in incidents of taxi violence between 1995 and 1996. The figure rose from 562 in 1995 to 698 in 1996.

The biggest rise was in the Western Cape. In 1995 there were only 14 incidents, but 220 in 1996.

The Western Cape is followed by the Eastern Cape with the taxi violence toll accounting for 114 violent incidents in 1995. This rose to 119 the following year.

Gauteng has seen a dramatic decline in violent incidents over the same period. In 1995 there were 264 incidents, but this was reduced to 120 incidents last year.

KwaZulu-Natal's incidents rose from 41 to 61.

Mufamadi said the Government's Sword and Shield programme, aimed at reducing crime, would be supplemented by the project known as "Hi Ace".

"This project deals with the taxi problems. Three investigation units situated in Heidelberg, Soweto and Pretoria are part of this project," he said.

Mufamadi complained that there were not enough police intelligence personnel to deal with taxi violence.

"The available personnel have to serve a large number of investigation units. Only an inadequately small number of members is allocated to assist in the taxi investigations," he said.

SAPS claims success in tackling taxi violence

(332) Star 3/3/97

By Jovial Rantao
Political Correspondent

Cape Town – Although there has been an escalation in taxi violence, the police have had a 47% success rate in the arrest of perpetrators, according to Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi.

In reply to a question from ANC MP Titus Mafolo, Mufamadi said taxi violence was being addressed under the SAPS's Sword and Shield programme.

"A project was registered in Gauteng under the name 'Hi Ace'. This project deals with the taxi problems and is also part of the Sword and Shield programme. Three investigation units situated in Heidelberg, Soweto and Pretoria are part of this project," Mufamadi said.

He said the escalation of incidences of taxi violence could be attributed to the Government's initiative to regulate the taxi industry.

"Not all the role-players in the taxi industry are willing to participate in the government initiative. Others again are broadening their interest in an already saturated market before the registration deadline, causing conflict among role-players," Mufamadi said.

He said there had been a 19,5% increase in taxi-violence incidents between 1995 and 1996. A total of 562 incidents occurred in 1995 and 698 last year.

According to statistics from the minister, Gauteng, which has the highest rate of taxi violence, experienced a decrease last two. The incidents went down from 264 in 1995 to 120 in 1996.

Mufamadi said the SAPS did not have an adequate number of intelligence personnel to deal with the problem. "The available intelligence personnel have to serve a large number of investigation units. Only a small number are allocated to assist taxi investigations."

Taxi owners get chance to turn legal

(332) Star 4/3/97

STAFF REPORTER

Taxi-owners who have been using illegal permits can now apply for legal permits before the end of this month and will not face police action, according to Department of Transport and Public Works spokesman Sibusiso Buthelezi.

Buthelezi said at least 60 000 minibus-taxis are operating illegally in Gauteng and of the 21 240 minibus–taxis that belong to associations only 7 491 were operating with legal permits.

The issuing of legal permits is the second stage of the Government's plan to regulate and bring stability to the violence-torn taxi industry.

For city's taxi industry, it's toe the line or else

ARG 5/3/97 (332)

Cape Town taxi drivers, owners and association officials risk losing their operating licences if in future they do not adhere to strict legal requirements and prescribed procedures, says Transport and Public Works MEC Leonard Ramatlakane.

In terms of the Standard Constitution, Code of Conduct and Grievance Procedure for taxi associations published in the provincial gazette, the industry is required to behave in a civil manner and maintain high ethical and safety standards.

"Contravention of the Code could lead to being struck from the taxi register and the forfeiture of the right to operate," Mr Ramatlakane said in Cape Town.

"The Standard Constitution is required in terms of the recently-amended Road Transportation Act and will ensure that taxi associations are run on democratic principles."

Taxis operating from ranks at Bellville, Khayelitsha, Langa, Nyanga, Cape Town station, Wynberg, Mowbray and Claremont already had to display temporary route markers in terms of a regulation published late last year. – Sapa

Killers in taxi industry 'regard peace as threat'

ST 7/3/97 (332)

DAN SIMON

INDIVIDUALS who make a living out of killing are operating in the Peninsula's minibus taxi industry — and they view all attempts to bring pace and stability to the industry as direct threats to their livelihoods.

This is how Transport Minister Mr Mac Maharaj summed up the situation in the industry in a documentary screened recently on SABC TV.

Maharaj said the existence of hit squads in the industry went far beyond the rivalries between the Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta) and the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata).

The presence of killers who operated with impunity was part of a bigger problem which had manifested itself since the mid-80s, with the connivance of elements in the old security police, the SADF and military intelligence, who had sought to intensify hostilities between the then Lagunya and Webta taxi associations.

He said: "It is impossible to believe that with all the evidence we have of the involvement of the security police, the SADF and military intelligence in so many areas of violence in the country, that they would have resisted the temptation to involve themselves in the taxi industry."

Urban Monitoring Awareness Committee (Umac) taxi conflict specialist Mr Stef Snel said the background of the individuals in the hit squads varied.

"Some are former SDU (self-defence unit) members, some are askaris and some are kids with no alternative ... the amount of money makes it attractive and it is also seen as a scary, exciting and courageous thing.

"Many of these people have become violence junkies and all they do is look for areas to carry on their trade."

Snel said the violence in the taxi arena was part of a bigger political struggle.

There was evidence that political parties were biased. Webta had been supported by the state and Lagunya by the "comrades". "The industry was born at the height of the struggle. It was ripped apart by the struggle."

About the latest violence, which flared up last Thursday, Snel said: "We knew it was coming. No one was surprised.

"It concerns an agreement pending in the High Court. They (Codeta and Cata) cannot sort out their differences and so they resort to the barrel of a gun."

But Snel said there was hope.

"It (the taxi violence) will be over by the end of the year. Regulation of the industry is developing very fast. Communication between the groups will be enhanced with Taxi Talk radio programme, which will be broadcast twice a week on Bush Radio."

He said there was a plan between the government and the security forces for an abatement programme to stop the violence.

Top detective to bring taxi criminals to book

(332) BD 7/3/97

Nomavenda Mathiane

TOP SA detective Dir Neville Thoms would head the newly established national taxi task team that was to investigate taxi violence and ensure that perpetrators were brought to book, Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi said in Pretoria yesterday.

The team, which consists of 13 detectives, is to report to national police commissioner George Fivaz who will in turn keep the safety and security, justice and transport ministries informed.

Addressing a news briefing with Transport Minister Mac Maharaj, Mufamadi said that although statistics showed that crime was on the decline in most of the parts of the country, in some areas taxi-related crime was on the increase.

He said 580 taxi-related crimes were reported in 1995 against 876 last year. He said 273 people died in 1995 as a result of taxi violence compared to the 339 people who were killed in taxi-related crimes last year.

Although there has previously been a national taxi task team set up to investigate the taxi industry, the new team's objective was to ensure that the perpetrators of violence in the taxi industry were prosecuted.

To facilitate progress, particularly in securing arrests, the justice department is to implement a special witness protection programme and second prosecutors to work with the investigators to build cases for prosecution.

Concurring with Mufamadi, Maharaj said the team would leave no stone unturned in its task.

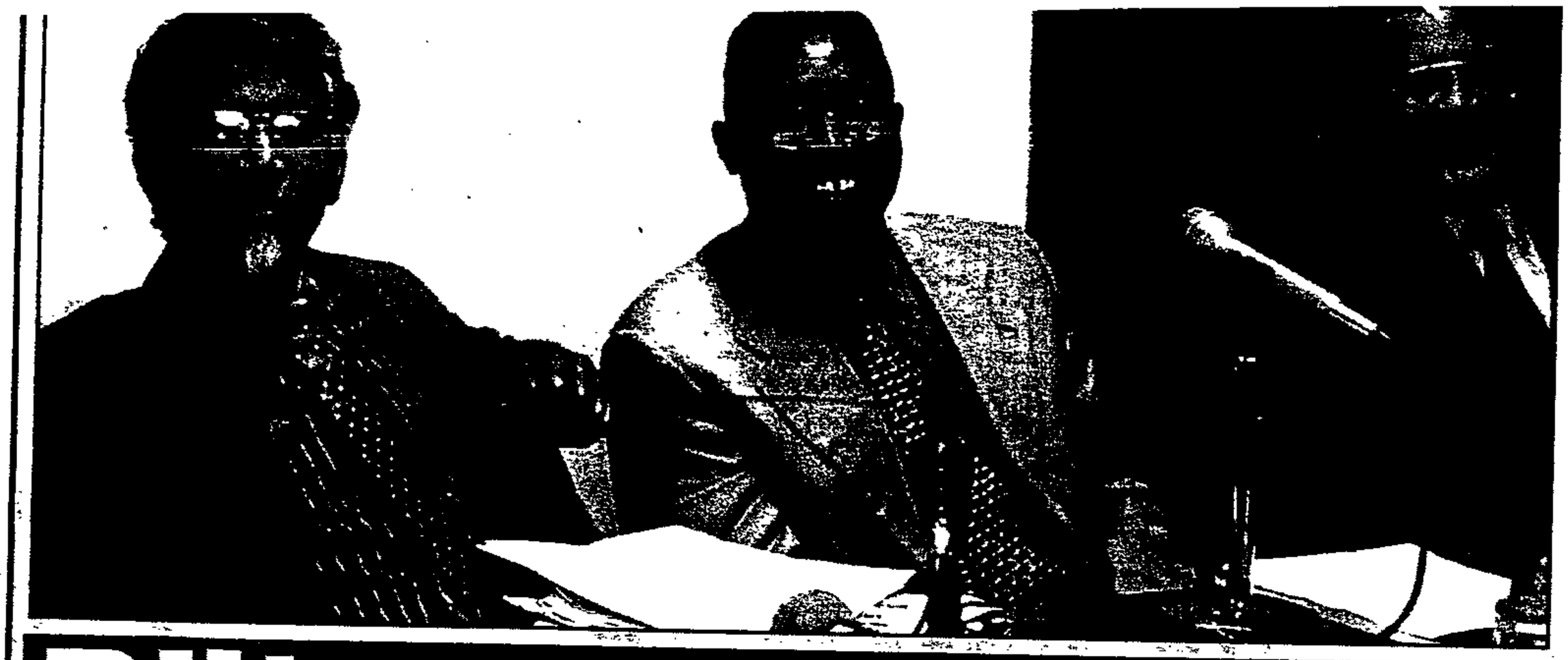
He said the team would ensure that the alleged disappearance of witnesses and dockets would not continue. The team would focus strongly on taxi assassins, who were hired to kill taxi owners and taxi operators, and put them behind bars.

Maharaj said it was vital for taxi owners not only to register their taxis in accordance with the existing regulations, but also that they comply with these regulations.

He conceded that the registration process was on track and that the registration deadline had been extended for another two weeks.

He also called for all stakeholders to join hands to fight the scourge of taxi violence.

As the problems relating to routes and taxi ranks called for an integrated interdepartmental approach, the three ministries would work together to eradicate the problem.



Minister Mac Maharaj, Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi and top investigator Director Neville Thoms at a media briefing in Pretoria yesterday where a new Government initiative to crack down on taxi violence was announced.
PIC: LEN KUMALO

Blitz on taxi violence

Government unveils special task force to tackle scourge

Sowetan 7/3/97 (332)

By Joslas Charle

IN a move aimed at ending ongoing taxi violence that has claimed hundreds of lives, the Government yesterday announced a new plan to bring those responsible to book.

The Government has identified individuals and hit squads involved in taxi wars that killed 339 people last year alone.

A special task force, comprising 13 crack detectives selected from around the country, has been set up to investigate these individuals and groups.

Three departments – Safety and Security, Transport and Justice – have joined forces in a national campaign that will see to the protection of witnesses to incidents of taxi violence under a special scheme, among other things.

Special prosecutors will be seconded to work with the investigators on taxi-related violence cases.

This method recently yielded results in violence-torn KwaZulu-Natal. In Gauteng, attorney general Dr Jan D'Oliveira is working with a special task force to investigate allegations of police hit squads.

Part of programme

The arrest and conviction of former Vlakplaas commander Eugene de Kock was part of the programme. De Kock was jailed for 212 years and two life sentences.

Safety and Security Minister Mr Sydney Mufamadi and Transport Minister Mr Mac Maharaj announced the new tough approach at a Press conference in Pretoria yesterday.

The two departments, together with the Justice Department, will work together to stamp out taxi-related violence.

Last year, there were 876 taxi-related incidents.

In 1995 at least 273 people died in 580 incidents.

The following steps will be taken under the new plan:

- The setting up of the special task force under the leadership of experienced investigator Director Neville Thoms;
- The implementation of a special witness protection programme;
- The secondment of prosecutors to work with investigators on taxi violence-related cases; and
- The processing of intelligence reports into evidence that can be presented in court.

Thoms will report directly to National Police Commissioner George Fivaz, who in turn will brief the three Ministers on progress made.

Thoms told journalists yesterday that groups and individuals behind the taxi wars had been identified.

Bring to book

"We are going to use all available manpower to bring them to book," he said. He promised that his task team will be "ruthless in our investigations to root out this problem".

Mufamadi has warned members of the police force who are also taxi owners. "There is a directive from the national commissioner that no member of the force should own a taxi. If that happens they must be arrested and charged," he said.

He said the Ministers were not obliged to consult various taxi bodies on the new laws. "We don't have to ask their permission to carry out our investigations."

Maharaj said: "I have cautioned the industry many times that violence will not be tolerated and that criminal elements will be dealt with.

"We cannot continue to have a situation where witnesses disappear, dockets go missing and cases have to be dropped due to lack of evidence while people continue to die."

Mufamadi said the plan will come into effect immediately and will continue for as long as was

Private airlines soaring as SAA labours under official hands

ST (BT) 9/3/97 (332)

The national airline needs to be liberated from government, writes ROGER MAKINGS

THE largely private domestic aviation industry is making its operation shipshape. Airlines are forming strong foreign alliances that should see an end to the fly-by-night flops that have characterised local air services in recent years.

Privately held airlines have made alliances with major carriers such as British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, KLM and Sabena, all of whom are feeding foreign passengers into the domestic networks. The future of local airlines seems secured well into the next century.

Sadly, the same cannot be said for parastatal SA Airways, which is bedevilled by government indecision. Its market share has been cut by privately owned foreign competitors.

An example is the lucrative Johannesburg-London route with 37 frequencies a week. This number could increase to 41 soon, but SAA flies just 13. The balance goes to British Airways and Virgin Atlantic.

The national carrier has lost in the region of R200-million in the year to March, owing largely to the fuel price hike, the collapse of the rand, tactical blunders and government interference in SAA's management.

Also, its prospects for meeting the privatisation deadline by year-end seem bleak following trade-union resistance and a reluctance on the part of foreign buyers to take a 25% stake in a loss-making operation under government control.

David James, Virgin Atlantic's general manager in South Africa, says the government won't be in any position to privatise SAA for at least 18 months.

He says Virgin does not want to buy into SAA, and that the national airline has to get back into shape. "There is no point in trying to sell what appears to be a lame duck because this will affect the price buyers will pay."

John Hanlon, British Airways' general manager for Africa, says the sooner the government gets out of SAA, the better for both it and the airline.

"Since BA was privatised 10 years ago we have made $4-billion in profit. Our pre-tax profit to the third quarter of this year stands at £583-million (R4,3-billion). SAA is sitting on a significant and growing market but it is not pulling its weight because of a lack of equipment. It must be allowed to make decisions without government intervention. The lack of equipment to do the job is a good example of the interference that is costing SAA money."

'There is no point trying to sell what appears to be a lame duck because this will affect the price'

Hanlon won't be drawn on whether BA will bid for a stake in the national carrier, although market talk is that BA, Singapore Airlines and Malaysia Airlines are interested. "Our policy is not to say anything until we have a signed deal. No one knows what is on offer, but BA would have to have some managerial control over profit and loss, routes and equipment before taking equity in SAA. Much depends on the problems that come with the airline, such as the Transnet pension fund deficit and government policy on route licences."

But it's not all doom and gloom for SAA. This week the airline said it would introduce two flights a week to Copenhagen in a reorganisation of its international network.

In May and October next year it will receive two Boeing 747-400s which will enable it to increase flights to London, New York, Miami, Perth and Sydney.

Both Hanlon and James believe there is room for expansion on the London route.

"The flights are full and many people are getting there on indirect routings via Europe," says Hanlon, who wants BA to fly 21 flights a week, from 17.

Meanwhile, the largely privately owned domestic airlines are upbeat about the future, provided tourism is not crippled by undeterred crime.

Although competition will hot up, most airlines discount the possibility of a price war.

"Margins are already too thin," says Rodger Forster of SA Airlink, which recently strengthened its alliance with SAA and SA Express.

"Surveys show our fares are 30% to 35% below the world norm and cannot be sustained indefinitely as most operating costs are dollar-linked. There is a need for a correction to make airlines profitable."

Johan Borstlap, MD of Sun Air, says: "We have been in a price war since September last year when Comair announced its link-up with BA. SAA dropped its fares and Comair followed. This war is ongoing and SAA is running up increasing losses, which I suppose the taxpayer will have to fund. Private airlines cannot operate this way. Shareholders would fire management."

Forster says domestic airlines are seeking foreign alliances to ensure survival.

SAA's 70% market share is being eroded by innovative competitors such as Sun Air, which is allied to Virgin and KLM, Nationwide (allied to Sabena and others), and Comair, which now flies as British Airways.

Another interesting development on domestic routes is the introduction of the 30- to 50-seater twin turbo-prop aircraft of SA Express and SA-Airlink which are competing on some of the trunk routes with the high-capacity jets of Sun Air, BA-Comair and Nationwide.

SA-Airlink and SA Express say that by adding more frequencies to thinner routes, they are extending their reach at a lower cost and meeting consumer needs in a growing market.

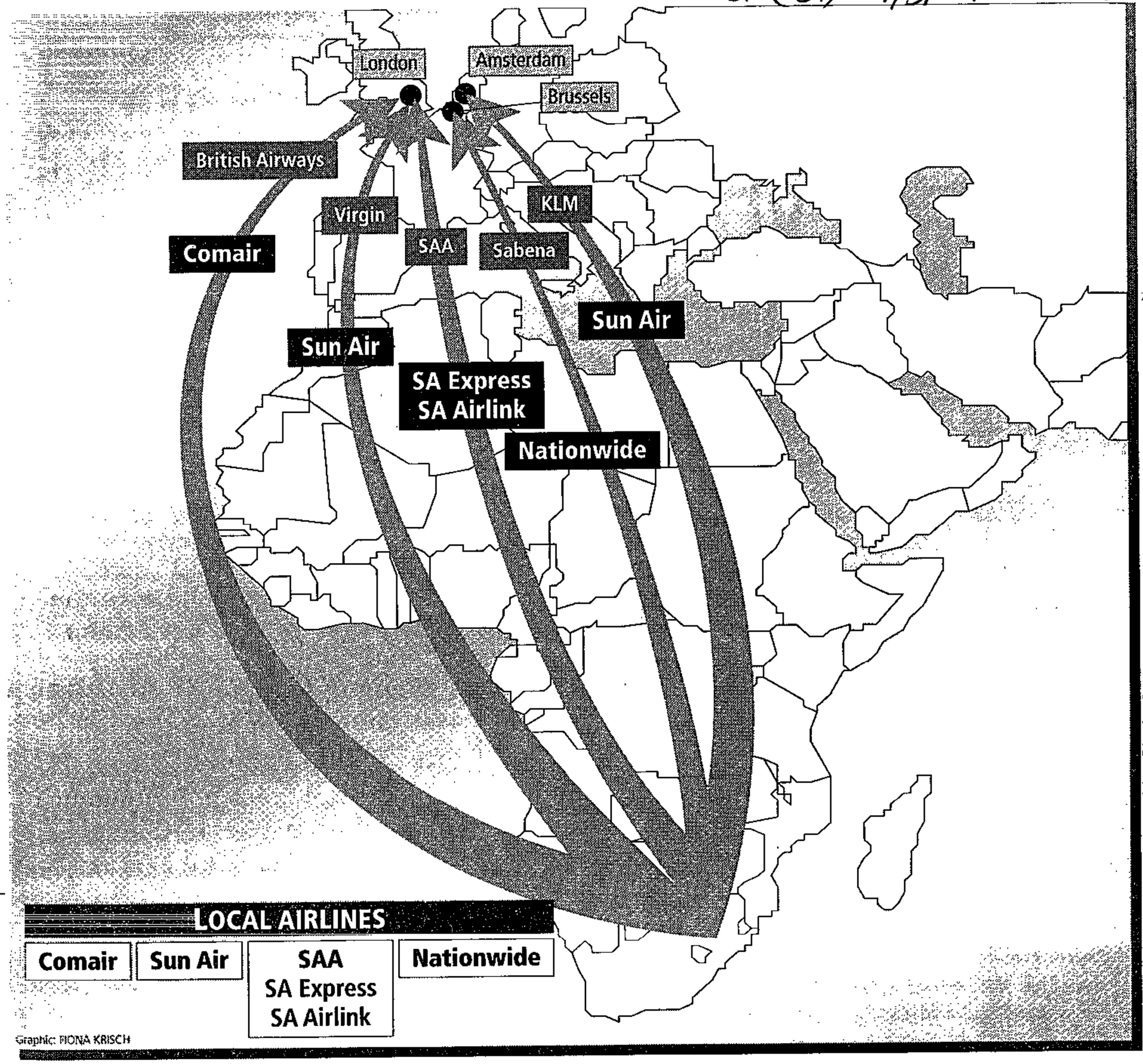
"We need far fewer passengers to make a flight to, say, George viable than does a twin-engined jet, which means we can give passengers daily round-trip options at convenient times."

But critics say passenger preference for jet travel will triumph. Johan Borstlap of Sun Air says turbo-props can't even compete with jets on short hops like Johanesburg-Bloemfontein or Cape Town-George.

Forster retorts that his 30-seater Jetstreams are perfectly suited to SA-Airlink's network, which has given it 6% of the market and could see a 7,5% market share in five years.

Nationwide's general manag-

ST (BT) 9/3/97 (332)



LOCAL AIRLINES

Comair	Sun Air	SAA SA Express SA Airlink	Nationwide

Graphic: FIONA KRISCH

er, Hugo Smit, does not discount the possibility of SAA leasing or selling some its jets to SA Express and SA-Airlink to back up their turbo-prop operations on longer routes to George and Port Elizabeth. He says SAA has long been rumoured to be seeking a way out of domestic travel.

SA Express, which would not disclose its market share, is 51% owned by Thebe Investments and the balance by SAA. NSA Investments has a 30% stake in Comair, while the balance is held by its executive board. Sun Air is government owned with a market share of 12,7% and SA-Airlink is owned by directors Rodger Forster and Barry Webb as well as Osprey Aviation. Nationwide, with 4% to 6% market share, is owned by chief executive officer Vernon Bricknell.

Final comment comes from BA's Hanlon. He says the domestic market is fully traded. To survive, carriers need a foreign sales reach, must offer a respected brand, a frequent flyer programme and seamless overseas travel. They must also reward passenger loyalty. Domestic carriers already have many of these attributes through their foreign alliances.

The Star ... Tuesday March 11 1997

Unregistered taxis will be banned from ranks

(332)

Star 11/3/97

At least 19 000 Gauteng operators have registered about 30 000 taxis, including 10 000 previously illegal vehicles

By Patrick Phosa

Taxi operators who failed to meet the February 28 deadline to register their vehicles would be denied access to taxi ranks and routes with effect from next month, when the taxi industry becomes regulated and formalised, Gauteng Roads and Public Transport MEC Paul Mashatile's office said yesterday.

Mashatile's personal assistant Sibusiso Buthelezi told The Star the Gauteng government would begin clamping down on unregistered taxis as it started implementing the formalisation of the industry.

Buthelezi said at least 19 000 operators had registered about 30 000 taxis – including 10 000 previously illegal ones – in the province.

This represented 99% of the taxis in the province.

"Allocations of ranks and routes will be done in terms of the number of taxis in the province. We will use the information at our disposal to ensure that the ranks and the routes are not saturated," he said.

> **"Move will help to free the industry of gangsters"**

Buthelezi said law enforcement agencies would come down heavily on those who transgressed. He said the Gauteng Transport Department was liaising with local authorities to ensure that the law was enforced and that taxis that did not have permits were thrown out of the industry.

He said the registration would help to stem the tide of rampant violence and also help to stabilise the industry. It would make the industry more organised and professional now that the government had sufficient information on it.

"The registration will help free the industry of gangsters. The troublemakers who were benefiting from the current anarchy in the industry will be isolated," Buthelezi said.

It remains to be seen whether the registration of taxis will bring stability in the industry, which has been plagued by violence, and whether the transgressors will be brought to book.

New plan to reduce taxi violence

(332)

Sowetan 12/3/97

By Russel Molefe

The Letlhabile Taxi Organisation yesterday undertook to cooperate fully with authorities to expose perpetrators of violence that is ravaging the multi-million rand industry.

The undertaking came hard on the heels of the unveiling by the Ministries of Transport and Safety and Security of a new plan to bring perpetrators of violence to book.

The plan will work on the same lines as the special task force which investigated police hit squad activity and successfully prosecuted former Vlakplaas commander Colonel Eugene de Kock.

Last year alone, more than 330 people were killed in taxi-related murders.

The two ministries have already identified individuals and hit squads to be investigated by a team of 13 crack detectives and special prosecutors.

The LTO undertaking was also motivated by the recent killing of three members of the Federated Long Distance Taxi Association at Tweefontein in Northern Province.

LTO spokesman Mr Jacob Ledwaba said different associations should organise themselves to end the killings and "let us not be easily provoked".

"We will cooperate with the relevant ministries to bring these evil deeds into the open," said Ledwaba.

Taxi war: enough is enough

Nyanga killings spark New York-style task group

JOSEPH ARANES
STAFF REPORTER

After yet another outbreak of Cape Flats taxi violence – in which two men were killed – the Western Cape taxi task team is to embark on a New York-style strategy in a bid to end the killings.

The team, which includes police, the Defence Force, traffic authorities and provincial political leaders, is to embark on a so-called "broken window" approach to root out violence and crime in the minibus taxi industry.

The highly successful anti-crime strategy, pioneered in New York recently, entails following up even the smallest violation (for example, breaking a window), which, it is believed, eventually leads to the elimination of bigger crimes.

This follows a shootout between members of the Defence Force and taxi drivers in Nyanga yesterday in which two men were killed and a woman was seriously injured.

The conflict started after the soldiers arrested a taxi driver, during a routine anti-crime operation, for allegedly being in possession of an illegal firearm.

The shooting was condemned by Western Cape premier Hernus Kriel, provincial Police Minister Gerald Morkel, Transport Minister Leonard Ramatlakane and the mayors of the Cape Town and Tygerberg councils, Theresa Solomon and Lukas Olivier.

In a joint statement, they said taxi violence necessitated firm action and announced the formation of a special task group comprising police, soldiers and traffic officers to help the provincial task team on taxi violence, which was established last year.

"We as political office bearers ... are serious about efforts to stamp out lawlessness and to bring about an effectively regulated taxi industry.

"Flagrant violations of the law must come to an end and will not be tolerated," the statement said.

Police Ministry spokesman David Frost said the new anti-crime campaign plan required all those involved to take part in a multi-agency approach, which would be used to address the situation and enforce the law.

Mr Frost said the implementation of the plan in Cape Town would need the support of the authorities and specifically that of taxi commuters.

Police are investigating the Nyanga shootings.

It is not clear who fired the fatal shots, but ballistic results are expected later today.

ARG 18/3/97 (332)

Taxi war claims yet another life

(332)

JOSEPH ARANES
STAFF REPORTER

ARG 19/3/97

The taxi war has claimed yet another life, a day after provincial Premier Hernus Kriel announced new policing strategies to curb the violence.

Police spokesman Mark Romburgh said a Public Order Unit patrol found a green minibus smashed against a pole at the corner of Eisleben and Sagologa roads late yesterday. It was affiliated to the Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association, one of the warring taxi groups.

"On closer inspection, the policemen discovered the body of a man slumped over one of the seats. He had a bullet wound in the head," Captain Romburgh said.

He said the unit also found a seriously injured man at the corner of Eisleben and Landsdowne roads. He had been shot in the face and was rushed to hospital where his condition was described as stable.

Captain Romburgh said the police were finding it difficult to identify the victims as no witnesses had come forward to report the incidents.

Campaign to legalise Gauteng taxi operators gets under way

Star 21/3/97 (332)

BY PATRICK PHOSA

The Gauteng government would not issue minibus taxi permits until September in order to pave the way for the special legalisation of existing taxi associations and operators, Transport MEC Paul Mashatile said yesterday.

He was addressing taxi operators at the Johannesburg City Hall during the start of the special legalisation campaign for taxi associations. The campaign will run until the end of this month.

The legalisation is the second leg of a government campaign to formalise, regulate and control the taxi industry with a view to making it more effective and efficient so that it can compete against the rail and bus industries.

The first stage, which involved the registration of taxi associations and operators, ended on February 28. Over 200 taxi associations are now registered with the Transport Department.

Mashatile encouraged illegal operators who have been operating before October 1994 to apply for the special legalisation.

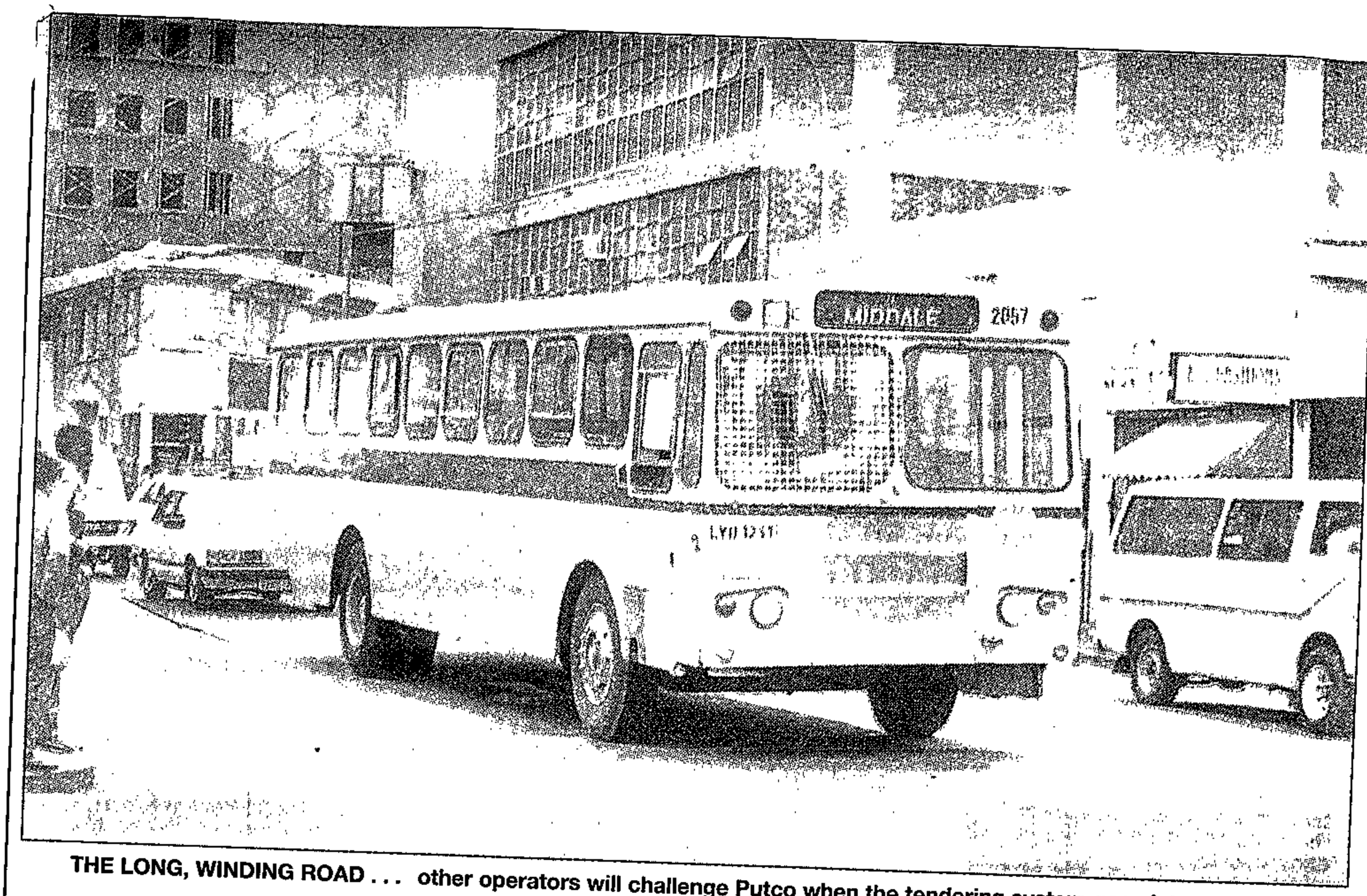
The process of registration and legalisation is geared towards stemming the violence which has become synonymous with the taxi industry.

A panel of assessors from the taxi industry, various communities, local authorities and the legal profession will work with the registrar to scrutinise applications and decide whether to legalise them.

Mashatile said 50% of public transport was provided by the taxi industry. "This is an industry that we cannot allow to die, but it must operate in an organised and regulated manner."

He said permits would be issued within the framework of the legalisation process until September.

The Southern African Long Distance Taxi Association walked out of the conference, accusing the Transport Department of being "irresponsible in recognising pirate taxi associations" and "ignoring established channels of negotiation and guidelines set by the National Taxi Task Team by unilaterally identifying role-players and prescribing legislative and participative procedures".



THE LONG, WINDING ROAD . . . other operators will challenge Putco when the tendering system goes into operation

ST(BT)23/3/97 (332)

Putco gears up for tough competition

TRANSPORT

By THABO KOBOKOANE

BUS operator Putco is steeling itself for stiff competition from smaller companies when the new bus tendering system comes into effect.

This follows the signing of interim bus contracts between the transport ministry and bus operators. The contracts do not alter fares, routes and the subsidy level, but they will eventually give way to a tendering system based on routes developed by the transport authority.

Historically, the bus industry has enjoyed the benefit of subsidised multi-journey route tickets. Executive director Vic Coetzee says Putco has launched a number of initiatives to position itself for the new tender system. These include joint ventures, undertakings to tender jointly for contracts with black operators and plans to sub-contract 20% of successful contracts to small business.

Coetzee believes the new competitive environment will not threaten the bus operator's bottom line and that own efficiencies will see it through.

While there was no certainty in the past on subsidies, the new transport policy would usher in "greater certainty and stability as far as passenger subsidies are concerned".

"We may lose some routes as a result of the new system, but we will also gain some."

For this reason he is confident that before the tendering system kicks in Putco's subsidy-based revenue, which accounts for 55% of total turnover, will remain at these levels.

Subsidies, which help cushion consumers from high transport costs, are an integral part of South Africa's bus and rail commuter services.

This is clear from Putco's interim results, which show that the operator increased fares twice last year, to cushion the "effects of the non-increase in subsidy".

As a result, turnover rose 9.4% to R308-million from R281-million for the comparable period, but attributable earnings were 24% lower at R3.7-million. Passenger levels were down 4.8% to 41.2-million from 43.3-million.

Coetzee attributed the decline in earnings to a reduction in interest received because of capital investments in bus fleets.

The effect was that earnings a share and dividends dropped to 13.9c (18.2c) and 7c (8.5c) respectively.

Coetzee says Putco's high cost structure — wages and fuel account for 60% of expenses — remains its biggest problem.

He says the rail tender system, which government is moving towards, provides opportunities for Putco to offer its management expertise. However, he is concerned about the lack of subsidies for scholars.

AVIATION *Local airline develops links with foreign carriers*

Sky's the limit for Sun Air

CT(BR)25/3/97 (332)

AUDREY D'ANGELO

Cape Town — Sun Air will eventually become an international airline, Johan Borstlap, its managing director, said yesterday.

The foreign airlines interested in buying a stake in Sun would only be allowed to fly an international route from South Africa to their own countries.

Although they might initially develop Sun as a feeder service for their own operations in southern Africa, he did not believe the airline would be limited to this role in the long term. It would compete on direct routes where competition was lacking.

Borstlap said it would be years before South Africa had open skies, allowing airlines to fly anywhere from the country. Until then, traffic rights would continue to be limited by agreements between governments.



THE RIGHT STUFF
Johan Borstlap of Sun Air
PHOTO: ANDREW BROWN

But, he said, Sun would not enter the international market as soon as it was privatised. It would first develop from a domestic airline into a regional one.

Borstlap said other airlines in addition to KLM and Virgin Atlantic — both of which had already linked their frequent flyer programmes to Sun's new Airewards programme — had shown interest in tendering for a stake in Sun.

Virgin had announced it wanted to develop Sun as an African airline, while a KLM executive had said KLM intended to use it as a feeder service in southern Africa.

David James, the general manager of Virgin in southern Africa, said last year it might introduce a direct service to the US from South Africa in conjunction with a South African airline.

Sun Air set to be privatised by August (332)

BD 25/3/97

Robyn Chalmers

THE privatisation of Sun Air should be completed by August in the wake of government's call yesterday for prequalification bids for the state-owned airline by April 10.

A government spokesman said yesterday: "A lot of interest has been expressed in Sun Air by a number of local and foreign organisations, but we will have to see the number and quality of prequalification bids first. It is an important step for the restructuring process."

Greater economic participation by previously disadvantaged groups was a key focus of the sale, along with the long-term business success of Sun Air, enhanced competition in SA's aviation sector, and transfer of skills and technology.

Of SA-based groups expressing interest in Sun Air, it was learnt earlier this year that black empowerment companies African Renaissance and Women in Capital Growth could link up with Virgin Atlantic in its bid for a stake in Sun Air.

Interested bidders told to submit pre-qualification proposals by early next month

Sun Air sale process lifts off

CT(BR)26/3/97 (332)

DUMA GQUBULE

Johannesburg — BoE/NatWest and Moseneke & Partners, the advisers to soon-to-be-privatised Sun Air, are expected to announce the successful bidder for the company's entire share capital by the end of June, a source close to the deal said yesterday.

The privatisation process for Sun Air, which could net government up to R150 million, kicked off in earnest yesterday after the airline's advisers published a notice asking interested bidders to submit pre-qualification proposals by April 10.

After that, the advisers will issue tender documents to successful applicants who will be expected to make a "non-binding" offer a month later. A shortlist will then be compiled from which a successful bidder will be selected.

Sources said the advisers had developed a set of criteria which would be used to evaluate potential candidates.

These included the financial capacity to grow the company, black economic empowerment and soft criteria such as commitments to affirmative action and training.

"Certain weights will be attached to each criterion. Government wants cash so price will be an important consideration. But government has also said this sale will not be an auction.

"It is possible the swing factor could be the quality of the black partner in any consortium. Government will want a black partner to bring more than its blackness to the table. The partner must have a commitment to the industry and the ability to add value to Sun Air's operations by growing the airline locally and into the region," the source said.

Virgin Air, KLM, Swiss Air and Singapore Airlines have been mentioned as potential strategic equity partners to take a stake of up to 49 percent in Sun Air. A source close to the government said the selection of a final bidder would be based on "fundamental issues rather than hype. Government will not be swayed by publicity stunts of potential international equity partners."

Meanwhile, Masimo Investments, an empowerment vehicle set up by the National Black Business Caucus, has put its weight behind a bid by entrepreneur Moss Ngwenya's Rethabile Leisure and Tourism group.

Rethabile is a group formed to spearhead the entry of black business into the tourism and leisure industries.

The Rethabile group consists of trade unions, Pulanala Tourism, Hotels and Leisure, a consortium of black tour operators and travel agents and Matla Leisure Holdings. Rethabile has been joined by Jongilanga, a Durban-based consortium led by businessman Diliza Mji which includes two women's groups, Akhona Trade and Investments and Ikhwezi Edurec Investments.

Another black consortium, Bophirima Investments, is believed to be in the running. The group recently won the bid for government's stake in Yabeng Investments, which, like Sun Air, was owned by the former Bophuthatswana government.

Taxi shake-up near as govt finalises plan

Star 27/3/97 (332)

In a bid to end the feuding which has cost many lives, Gauteng authorities are to clamp down on the pirate drivers and allocate routes to permit holders only

By Bongiwe Mlangeni

God, please bless my passengers, reads a message written on the back of a Soweto minibus taxi.

To the driver these words may just be a decoration; for commuters, every taxi ride needs a blessing because of the risk of being a victim of a shootout between rival taxi associations.

Next month the Gauteng government will finalise its moves towards regulating the industry.

No taxis will be allowed to use routes without permits and the government will allocate and regulate the use of routes.

Taxi owners will be encouraged to form companies and tender for government contracts.

A decision to regulate the taxi industry was taken in 1994 by the National Taxi Task Team (NTTT) which included members of the transport ministry and taxi associations.

The team proposed that all minibus taxis be registered with provincial departments of transport and new permits be issued to avoid pirate taxis.

The increasing numbers of pirate taxis and fights over routes and taxi ranks have turned the industry into a scene of bullets and blood.

Gauteng has registered 154 associations operating about 30 000 taxis. Of these, 10 000 had been operating illegally, said Gauteng MEC for transport and public works Paul Mashatile.

There are about 150 000 minibus taxis in the country and about 60 000 drive through Gauteng every day. More than 50% of the country's population use minibus taxis.

About 100 taxi violence-related incidents were reported in Gauteng last year. Most of these were being investigated by the serious crimes police unit because they led to an injury or death of either taxi drivers or commuters.

Police are investigating 838 taxi violence cases nationwide.

There are no reliable statistics on how many people died in taxi feuds in the province, but it is estimated thousands lost their lives since the taxi war escalated from 1987.

Lennox Magwaza, director of urban and public transport, said the industry went out of control when the previous government decided to deregulate it in 1984.

"They deregulated it without ever regulating it. Then they made it ungovernable by issuing permits left and right, knowing it would cause chaos," he said.

The industry became chaotic as some people managed to obtain multiple permits, allowing them to own and operate more than one taxi. They also rented out their permits to other drivers.

The problem worsened in the 1980s during the country's recession which forced many companies to retrench employees. Facing unemployment, many individuals turned to the taxi trade. By 1987 the supply of taxis exceeded the need and some routes were swamped. Taxi ranks were also insufficient.

"Intimidation started and there were signs of greed," says Magwaza.

Despite people dying as a result of taxi wars, no investigation was initiated, allowing the conflict to intensify.

Although the government has managed to contain political violence, the taxi war continues. Recently a task team was formed to investigate the cause of violence in the industry.

South African Long Distance Transport Association (Saldta) secretary-general Boetie Letsoela said the changes would give the industry direction.

"Soon we will know who is official in the industry, who is pirating and which routes we belong to."

He said training of owners and drivers was needed. More than 3 000 people have been trained in Gauteng and the department hopes to have 5 000 people trained by the end of March. The training includes negotiating skills, first aid, car maintenance, driver skills and conflict management.

In the near future taxi owners will have to adhere to labour relations laws, contribute to pension funds, medical aid, employment insurance and accident fund, according to the NTTT's proposals. They may also have to recognise trade unions.

"No one should be left out. We are tired of fighting, we want peace," said Letsoela.

Sted 24/3/97

JODI BIEBER



Tragic loss ... Sylvia Hlophe, girlfriend of Elliot Msibi, weeps. Msibi was one of many South Africans killed in taxi violence.

Hold your breath, prepare for the 'real ride'

By Bongiwe Mlangeni

It takes about 25 minutes for a minibus taxi from Soweto to reach Johannesburg city centre. This short journey sets the days of thousands. Some call it their ride to hell.

But Gerard Mazibuko, who uses minibus taxis almost daily, says it is not so bad. At 5.30am Mazibuko is at the rank to make it to work by 6am. "I usually find a taxi waiting. At that time most drivers are in a good mood and play good music."

But not all commuters are as fortunate. Nomsa Nkosi is one of many commuters who has lost faith in minibus taxis. She is only using the service because the "buses are too slow" and the railway line is far from her Orlando home.

Nkosi has to be at the taxi rank by 6.45am, although she starts work at 8am. "I usually wait for a good 40 minutes ... when the ancestors are on my side I wait for only 15 minutes."

By the time the taxi arrives, Nkosi says she is already feeling stressed. But the long wait is just the beginning.

"As soon as I'm on board I have to adhere to the 'four-four' rule." This means four passengers use a seat made for three.

"We squash ourselves against the window or squeeze ourselves in between, depending on where one is sitting."

As the overloaded taxi sets off, Nkosi prays for safety and peace, something not guaranteed in this industry.

"At times they drive so fast it gets to my nerves. I only feel free once I have reached my destination."

A similar experience awaits her in the evenings when she has to go back home. This is a time when Mazibuko also cannot escape the "real ride".

However, both commuters say taxi drivers have improved in the past two years.

"They are becoming friendlier to customers and their vehicles are cleaner," they say.

Many passengers also know they can now report their gripes to taxi associations.

'Taxi claims are misleading'

Permit board refutes corruption allegations

BLACKMAN NGORO
STAFF REPORTER

Members of the taxi industry have been accused of spreading misleading information about the Local Road Transportation Board.

The taxi industry members alleged irregularities in the issuing of taxi permits.

The Local Road Transportation Board was set up under the Road Transportation Act to control passenger transport, and issues permits for metered taxis, buses and minibus taxis.

Board chairman Bernard Miskey said members of the taxi industry were "guilty of complicity" in permit scams. He said some taxi industry members knew the permits they operated on were either forged or duplicated.

"When they start fighting, the one faction wants to make the other look dirty. They think by unearthing dirt on the other faction they will be in a more powerful position . Those who have been left high and dry and are sour always adopt this position."

For almost a year now allegations of corruption against members of the board have been bandied about.

Although a mediator called in to resolve taxi conflict, Debbie Miller, got the assurance of the attorney-general that "whistle-blowers" would be given protection from prosecution, no taxi driver or operator has submitted an affidavit implicating board officials or members in specific acts of corruption.

Referring to specific instances about which taxi industry members were angry, Mr Miskey said: "There were 18 permits which were issued with the wrong route specifications in 1990. Eleven of these were transferred while, of the remaining seven, five were cancelled."

Some of the permit routes were specified as between Cape Town and Nyanga, Langa, Guguletu, New Crossroads and Khayelitsha. The problem came when such a permit was changed by the board to allow the operator to ferry "taxi passengers and personal effects within a 35km radius of central Cape Town."

"They have come up with allegations of corruption against the board when they were instrumental in misleading the board about the status of permits. When things are okay between them, they don't come up with anything. Only after there is a split in their associations, then all hell breaks loose."

Taxi permits have been a major source of taxi violence where those without permits continue to blame different roleplayers, including so-called taxi lords who are accused of buying up permits and pushing out smaller operators.

Mr Miskey has refuted the most recent allegations, saying his board was taking action against certain taxi permits issued in 1990.

On the allegation that taxi permits had been issued against fraudulent minibus registration certificates, Mr Miskey said many people tried to "cheat".

"However if the 16-seater registration is on an authentic certificate then we take it on face value."

The traffic department has also not escaped blame with allegations that they revive "dormant" permits, something which is illegal if the permit has not been used for more than two consecutive years.

"We take action if we find out the permit hasn't been operational for nine consecutive months. But this is a problem for policing. We are trying to train the traffic police to know what they are looking for in cases where a permit is duplicated or faked.

"But it is time the taxi industry stop complaining about the Local Road Transportation Board and take their complaints of corruption to the police who will investigate," Mr Miskey said.

Peninsula Taxi Association interim committee secretary Igsaan Lucas called on the board to be consistent. He said the Department of Transport and the board did not want to deal with contradictions in the taxi industry. Instead the upshot was that taxi owners were killing each other.

"They must deal with division within the taxi industry caused by taxi permit scams," he said.

Hitman:

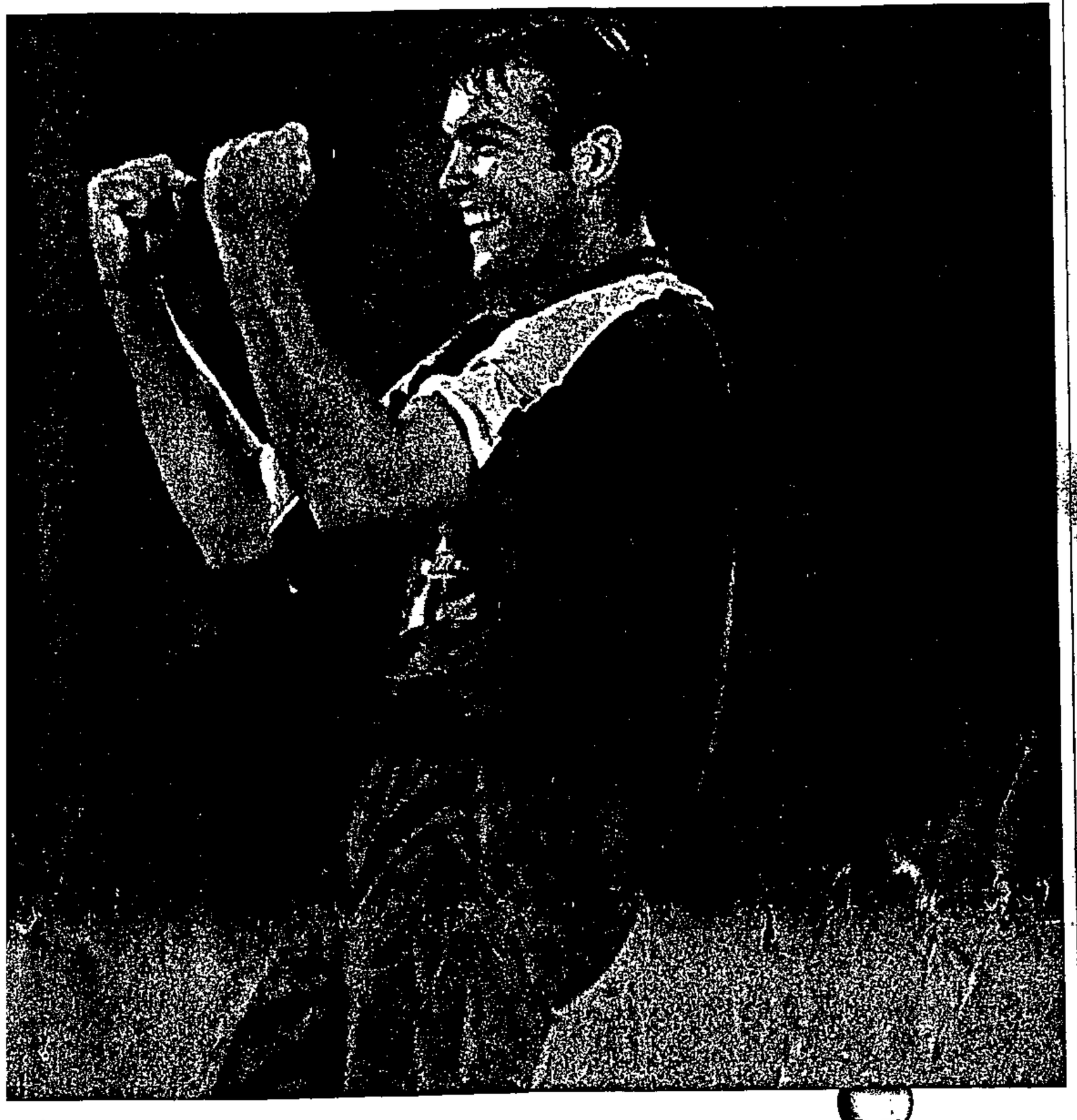
itman: I killed for taxi bosses

(332) Star 2/11/98

Self-confessed assassin claims operators pay up to R20 000 for hits on leaders in the violence-torn industry

YES, YES, YES, YES

SAURABH DAS / AP



By Phalane Motale
Crime Reporter

A self-confessed hitman for the taxi industry, who has killed several people in drive-by shootings, believes he is a "walking dead man" himself, with a contract on his head and gunmen hot on his heels.

The Soshanguve, Pretoria, man, Trott Sibeko (not his real name), is the first person to speak openly about the deaths in the taxi industry, and to admit that hit squads form part of their operations.

"The hit squads operate in military style, with a commander heading each unit. If an operative refuses to take part in a hit, he will be killed.

"The hit squads operate all over, but most of them are being accommodated in flats in the Hillbrow area, Sibeko said.

"The amount paid for a hit depends on the position the person holds in the taxi association. For an ordinary member of an association, they get paid anything between R5 000 and R8 000.

"For a hit on a chairman of an association, a hitman can be paid anything up to R20 000.

"They are also well paid for killing police investigating officers. This amount can be between R20 000 and R50 000, depending on how many cases are being investigated by the person," Sibeko said.

Having operated as a hitman between 1996 and early this year, Sibeko said he has spent sleepless nights since double-crossing two rival taxi associations.

He claimed he first became a getaway driver and then a hitman for an executive member of the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta), before joining its rival association, the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta).

"I'm sitting on top of my coffin. Gunmen might strike at any time," said the 28-year-old father of two.

"It is a living hell. I got involved after I smashed one taxi owner's minibus beyond repair. When I could not afford to repay him, he offered me a job as a getaway-car driver."

Sibeko said he was "promoted" to be the bodyguard of a prominent fleet owner and executive member of Salldta. But when he was later required to do certain "hits" without payment, he decided to leave.

Sibeko eventually sought protection from rivals Felldta, who allegedly used him in drive-past shootings. But his spell with Felldta was shortlived after someone in the organisation recognised him as his attacker.

"I'm now on the run from both taxi associations which want to kill me, and possibly my family. Maybe the only answer will be to take them out before they get me, because at the moment I'm a walking dead man."

Sibeko said most people on his hitlist had been operators who were a threat to routes – especially those who joined rival associations or who opposed the leadership at meetings.

"The advantage was that it was easier to deal with the widows of the dead owners thereafter. And in most cases, these women panicked after the death of their husbands and quickly sold the minibuses at a bargain to get out of the industry."

▶ ... To Page 3

P.T.O.

3 drivers killed execution style

Police have launched an investigation into the execution-style murders of three taxi drivers, whose bodies were found near Roodepoort at the weekend.

West Rand police spokesperson Inspector Herman Esterhuizen said yesterday that the bodies were found near the Durban Deep gold mine. The men appeared to have been shot at close range.

He said all three of their taxis had been stolen. Police suspected theft was the motive for the attack, but had not ruled out other possibilities and were investigating all angles.

The victims' names were not released because their next of kin had not yet been notified. – Staff Reporter.

Taxi hitman confesses

From Page 1

He added that his greatest worry was that, if the police did not step up security measures in Soshanguve and other areas at this time of the year, people's lives could be at stake.

"The routes are very lucrative from November, and this is the time when I was personally overloaded with targets."

Sibeko said violence had become a way of life for several executive members of both associations, and supplied The Star with some names.

A former member of the Pretoria taxi violence unit, who was presented with the names of the executive members, confirmed that the names were known to him and the unit.

He added that the Government would never stop the taxi wars because corrupt policemen were shielded by their colleagues: "They are directly involved in the shootings," he said.

"The biggest problem is that if you dare talk about their involvement, you are dead meat."

Sibeko added that former members of the armed forces were sought after as hitmen because of their training and their contacts within the police service.

He alleged that one police inspector (whose name is known to The Star) in Soshanguve was informing taxi hit-squad members about police investigations into taxi violence.

A senior police officer within the specialist units said that, since 1996, the serious violent crimes unit, aided by National Intelligence Agency members, had uncovered several secret training camps for hit squads – apparently deployed in the taxi wars countrywide.

But the police are apparently hesitating to pounce on the suspects because prominent individuals are allegedly directly involved in the conflict.

In the past three years, few people have been convicted in connection with drive-by shootings.

Police made significant breakthroughs earlier this year with the arrest of 14 alleged hitmen, including a police sergeant and a Zion Christian Church priest in Pretoria.

Captain Mercia Fryer of the Pretoria taxi violence unit said it was difficult for her to comment, but advised Sibeko to contact her office. She said she would see to it that his identify was protected.

Death and grenades as taxi war brews

KEN VERNON

CAPE TOWN is on the verge of a new taxi war between groups competing for lucrative new routes in the rapidly growing Delft region.

In the past two weeks three people have been killed — including the treasurer of the Paarl Taxi Association (Pata) — and at least 16 passengers or pedestrians have been wounded.

In a chilling new development, grenades have twice been thrown at taxis.

At the heart of the conflict are the burgeoning housing estates of Delft, say police. Traditionally coloured and black taxi associations have begun to boost their operations there as residents are evenly divided between both racial groups.

However, there has so far been no official allocation of routes, creating a "free for all" as taxis scramble for the new business.

Taxis from Guguletu and Nyanga — mainly belonging to the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) — have begun encroaching on traditionally "coloured" routes such as Delft-Belhar and Cape Town-Wynberg.

In response, coloured taxi associations have joined a Cata's rival, the Consolidated Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta), and hitmen from both sides have begun targeting rival taxis.

In addition Cata and Codeta are preparing for a violent contest for domination of the highly lucrative long-distance route from Cape Town to the Eastern Cape for the festive season, according to industry insiders.

The Delft conflict is also threatening to spill over into "stable" areas such as Belhar, Mitchells Plain and even Paarl, say police sources.

Local taxi associations are generally linked to local gangs which they pay for "protection".

"This lethal mixture is a recipe for disaster," said police spokesman Wicus Holtzhausen yesterday.

He said police were investigating a number of cases of intimidation and shooting in the Delft, Bellville, Kraaifontein and Bellville South areas believed to be connected to the conflict.

Widespread violence broke out on October 30 when police recorded 11 shooting incidents involving taxis, starting in Kraaifontein and spreading to Guguletu and Bellville South, directed primarily against Cata taxis.

A passenger was killed when shots were fired at a Codeta taxi in Bellville, and later that evening an M26 grenade was thrown at the Cata offices in Bellville, injuring five people.

Holtzhausen said 12 arrests had so far been made.

He confirmed police were investigating the possibility that Cata hitmen were behind the assassination of David Qumfa, treasurer of Pata. Qumfa was shot at his home last Sunday.

Holtzhausen said a shoot-out with police followed and five suspects were arrested and one R4 rifle and two 9mm pistols confiscated.

Pata has been in conflict with Cata over access to taxi routes and ranks in Paarl. Underlying the violence is the heated and still unresolved question of taxi registration. It is believed that only 8 000 registration permits will be issued to the more than 10 000 taxis plying Cape Town streets.

Community Safety MEC Mark Wiley said he deplored the use of the strong-arm tactics.

He said he would call for the return of the previously successful Ministerial Task Team on Taxi Violence to investigate the conflict.

ST (cm) 8/11/98 (332)

Taxi violence in Eastern Cape hits crisis levels

CP 8/11/98

BISHO – Road signs proclaiming "Take them home safely. We love them" seen everywhere in the Eastern Cape were cold comfort for terrified commuters in the taxi war-riven province this week.

Even more perverse were various "peace agreements" and other deals struck by battle-hardened taxi organisations in the province.

This emerged after 100 taxi leaders were called to Bisho by the Eastern Cape government this week to explain why decisions taken at a significent taxi industry meeting in Port Elizabeth last year were being flaunted.

The media was barred from the meeting.

A committee was formed which would travel to flashpoints to try to stop the killings.

Taxi killings in the province have risen steadily since January with at least 12 dead in the first seven months of the year.

One of the victims was four-year old Duduzile Ngedle who was shot dead near Umtata earlier this year when two gunmen opened fire on a minibus.

Last week a taxi driver, two women and a school boy were ambushed and killed near Idutywa.

Since July in Idutywa alone, nine people have been killed.

In one clear violation of a peace agreement, commuters died in an attack near Queenstown after signatures were barely three weeks old.

In that attack the lives of taxi operater Nyakatshisoso Booi, of the Border Allied Taxi Association (Bata), plus passengers Nompendulo Lwabi and Nowethu Mjelu and 18-year old scholar Ndzuzo Sithetho were snuffed out in a single hit.

Three gunmen had pulled alongside in a white bantam bakkie. They raked the taxi with fire as it drove towards Idutywa.

Just last weekend three more lives were claimed in another spate of violent attacks.

Last Friday in Lusikisiki, an Uncedo Taxi Association taxi owner was approached by two men in the main street of the town. They put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger. He dropped dead. The killers never said a word.

As if in concert a few minutes later, another taxi driver was gunned down near Dubhana outside Lusikisiki.

Although the majority of attacks have been in the former Transkei, taxi violence is spreading and now includes East London's Mdantsane.

A taxi owner was shot and killed on the Qumza Highway in Mdantsane on the very same weekend.

On Tuesday the Eastern Cape government called the meeting of taxi bosses in Bisho to try and sort out the mess.

About 100 taxi industry leaders were present and national and regional structures were represented there.

Both rival taxi associations, Bata and Uncedo had 50 leaders each at the meeting.

Deputy Provincial Police Commissioner Manyano Noqayi played a leading role in the closed meeting. During a break he told ECN that the failure of the taxi associations to follow through on their resolutions taken at a meeting in Port Elizabeth in November last year had been a major cause of the recent violence.

Resolutions taken at last year's meeting included the establishment of one common taxi association in each province; a regulated taxi industry, as well as the holding of workshops to train taxi owners about the management of their businesses.

Noqayi said the violence now was "almost as bad" as it was before the Port Elizabeth meeting.

He said: "People are killing each other daily. I'm getting intelligence reports about people killing one another everyday over taxi-related issues."

He said the taxi killings were taking place at Maclear, Mqandula, Cofimvaba, Idutywa, Butterworth, Umtata and Lusikisiki.

After the Bisho meeting, Provincial Taxi Council media spokesman Vuyani Mshiywa, told ECN a resolution was taken by the taxi industry to call a ceasefire between the rival taxi associations, Bata and Uncedo.

Mshiywa said it emerged that the associations were fighting over routes.

When asked why the resolutions at the Port Elizabeth meeting last year had not been taken seriously by the taxi associations, Mshiywa said those resolutions were still at a "negotiation stage".

An implementation committee consisting of Premier's Office special advisor Ntobeko Maqhubela, Safety and Security Department Director of Facilitation Singata Mafanya, Eastern Cape Taxi Council officials and Eastern Cape Peace Forum officials, was formed to visit flashpoints with an immediate focus on towns in the former Transkei.

He said the committee would start work immediately and added that both Bata and Uncedo were committed to a ceasefire. – **ECN Weekend News**

Taxi industry targets billions in 'unbanked' cash

(332) BD 9/11/98

Jonny Steinberg

A DEBIT card scheme that plans to tap billions of rands in the "unbanked" community is in the pipeline.

The trading arm of the newly formed SA Taxi Council, Sataco Ltd, will announce a scheme later this month to wean SA's 10-million taxi commuters onto a smart card system to pay for their taxi fares. "If SA's taxi commuters use the scheme en masse the monthly float will be somewhere in the region of R10bn to R19bn," Sataco MD Joe Boweni said last week. "This is a bold and visionary venture to establish the largest black empowerment financial institution in history."

Sataco's primary returns from the float would take the form of a 4c in the rand surcharge on the smart-card's use and a small percentage of monthly interest. But the scheme aims to tap far more than taxi fares.

"When plastic money took off among the middle class, the allure was not having a piece of plastic, but what you could buy with it," a taxi industry source said.

"For the middle class, restaurants and movies were the drawcard. For the SA working class, transport is the drawcard. It is a regular daily expense amounting to up to 30% of monthly income. If you want to get the unbanked onto plastic, transport is the place to begin."

Once the scheme is established, Sataco, on which every taxi owner in SA is represented, plans to branch out as widely as possible. "We are negotiating with partners from the retail sector, with private hospitals and others," Boweni said. "Soon we will be talking to government about public service salaries being paid on cards."

Sataco's first task will be to develop a viable business plan for the embattled taxi industry. Massively undercapitalised and unable to secure finance on parts and vehicles, some have argued that the industry is on its knees. "If this scheme works Sataco would do well to underwrite taxi owners' debt on vehicles and parts," a source said.

"If they can do that the local motor vehicle industry will open its arms to the taxi industry and recapitalisation will be under way."

Boweni is more ambitious: "We are thinking of a new tyre and vehicle manufacturing company," he said. "The taxi industry desperately needs to deal with manufacturers tailored to our needs."

CAPE TIMES
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1998

HITSQUAD IN SOWETO ALLEGED

Police involved in taxi violence — operator

CT 9/11/98

(332)

JOHANNESBURG: A top member of the taxi industry here is lying low, claiming that corrupt policement and hitsquad members are on his trail, reports **PHALANE MOTALE.**

A TAXI association executive, on the run after being accused of 10 murders, has revealed the names of police detectives who are "on the take" as well as taxi industry members who are operating a "hitsquad executive" in Soweto.

Vusi Shezi of the Witwatersrand African Taxi Association (Wata) and Johannesburg Taxi Association (JTA) has been underground for a month and fears for his life. He believes the corrupt policemen and hitsquad members are on his trail.

He pleaded with the *Star*, sister newspaper of the *Cape Times*, to arrange a meeting with Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi where he would reveal police involvement in taxi violence in Soweto and other areas, including Pietersburg and Northern Province.

Shezi alleged that Wata/JTA — the associations have merged — paid two Soweto Taxi Violence Unit detectives, whose names are known to The Star, bribes of over R500 000 in the past year for the disappearance of evidence and dockets.

He provided a list of 19 names, allegedly of people who were involved in drive-by shooting incidents in Soweto in April and May.

Most of the hitmen were recruited from the Dube and Meadowlands hostels by a leading figure in the association. The name of the alleged hitsquad "commander-in-chief" was revealed to the *Star*.

Shezi said the hitsquad executive consists of five office-bearers of the association. He said not all Wata/JTA members were in favour of the association's involvement in violence, but those who made their objections heard were victimised.

"Every time the 'Nkabis' (hitmen) were arrested, the Wata/JTA gave the two policemen money to secure unsuccessful prosecutions."

Shezi said the association collects R20 a day from each of their more than 25 000 taxis to pay hitsquad members and corrupt police. "The hitsquad is responsible for more than 10 murders and 20 attempted murder incidents which happened earlier this year.

"Obviously the police are not coming with the truth because they are involved. I want to expose those responsible for the murders of innocent people," he said.

Shezi said he had approached the Gauteng Safety and Security Department with the allegations in July. "We even made sworn statements to the Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) months before the police hunted me. They want me behind bars or dead because they know that I'm going to reveal everything."

Shezi said his problems with the police and some members of his association started in May after a resurgence of violence in Soweto.

He said when he told members of the executive committee to stop collecting money from operators to pay hitsquads and corrupt police, he was warned that if they stopped paying, they would all be arrested by the two police investigators.

Shezi confirmed that most taxi associations were involved in the taxi violence.

He submitted a copy of the financial statement of Wata/JTA which showed that from February 18 to April 1 this year, R251 981, 45 was collected from members and R30 000 was paid for "Pol Sales House" and R50 950 for "Sales House". This was a code, he said.

"Sales House is payment for hitmen and Pol Sales House for the detectives who investigate taxi related violence," he explained.

The *Star* was provided with copies of two affidavits which were dated July 28 and signed by ICD assistant director Matthews Sesoko of the Gauteng regional office.

The ICD's head of investigations, Julian Snitcher, referred the matter yesterday to the directorate's regional director, Shadrack Mahlangu, for comment, but he was unavailable.

Meanwhile, Soweto police spokesperson John Shiburi confirmed that a senior police officer had been appointed to investigate an incident in which Shezi's in-laws almost choked when police who were looking for their son-in-law fired teargas inside their Mofolo South home last week.

His mother-in-law suffered a broken arm when she fell while trying to crawl out of the house in the dark. Neighbours who responded to their screams doused the burning house with water.

Last week a Soshanguve, Pretoria, man who was hired as a hitman, exposed the involvement of executive members of taxi associations in the ongoing violence.

Mufamadi's spokesperson André Martin was unavailable for comment.

Gauteng taxi project could reduce violence

(332) Star 10/11/98

A project begun at the weekend to register more than 40 000 taxis in Gauteng was expected to reduce taxi violence, Transport Department spokesperson Kate Bapela said yesterday.

Operation Vuka was launched on Sunday by MEC Joyce Kgoali and will oversee the registration of all taxis in the province by March.

"Fast-tracking of the registration process is one of the cornerstones of shaping the involvement of the taxi industry in providing public transport that is accessible and safe," Bapela said.

In terms of the Mini-Taxi-Type Service Act No.11 of 1997, which authorised Operation Vuka, a taxi registrar has been appointed to allocate routes.

Bapela said taxi associations would no longer have the right to choose their own routes, which would prevent squabbling and violence in the industry.

Operation Vuka would provide commuters subjected to rampant violence with a safer public transport system.

The department had estimated there were at least 221 taxi bodies and 34 894 taxis in Gauteng.

Taxi associations can register in four centres in Gauteng: Randfontein, Pretoria, Germiston and Johannesburg. – Sapa

Stop fighting or taxi grouping will be axed, operators warned

(332) ARG 11/11/98

BLACKMAN NGORO
STAFF REPORTER

The Western Cape director of transport, Conrad Osman, has threatened to deregister the Peninsula Taxi Association if its two warring factions do not stop squabbling.

"We will deregister them if they can't take responsibility for their actions," he said.

One faction is led by Andrews Joseph, while the other is led by Whaleed Baker.

Last week a meeting was held in Premier Gerard Morkel's office to try to reach consensus among the factions.

Although the meeting was called to discuss issues around violence, it got bogged down over who was who in the taxi industry.

Mr Morkel's spokesman, Chris Koole, said the meeting was about ironing out differences.

The squabbles between the two taxi factions has caused insecurity and tension among commuters.

The threat to deregister the associations follows increasing friction between big and small operators on the Cape Town station deck.

The main cause of the split in the association is 18 permits issued in 1990 to operators from the "townships".

These operators had applied to the Local Road Transportation Board for central permits, but because of the race-based system, they were given permits for ferrying "black taxi passengers and their personal effects within the boundaries of Nyanga, Langa, Guguletu, New Crossroads and Khayelitsha".

After objections, the operators were issued with permits which allowed them to ferry "taxi passengers and their personal effects within an area with a radius of 35km of central Cape Town".

Late last month, Shaheem Sambo, spokesman for the Peninsula Taxi Association, received a letter from the board informing him that it intended to amend his permit.

The permit would read "routes related to the former townships", effectively cancelling the "35km radius of central Cape Town" concession granted previously.

"If this happens there is going to be war on those routes," said one of the affected taxi owners. Those also affected by the move to amend the permits were Nadir du Toit, Mohamad Leeman, Zogar Shabodien, Cassiem Mistry, and Whaleed Baker, who leads the faction to which the others belong.

The local Transportation Board described the change to the permits as a "typing error", but this explanation has not been accepted by the taxi operators.

The taxi association's Mr Sambo said the current owners of the 18 permits also objected to the racial categorisation of the original permits.



'Permit scam' raises fear of new taxi war

CP 15/11/98 2375 (312)

'People are going to kill each other because of this'

By CHRIS HLONGWA

According to a spokesperson for Transport MEC S'bu Ndebele (left), any taxi permits issued illegally will be cancelled. According to the deputy director of policy and planning in the department, John Kapueja, a 'full-scale investigation has been launched'.

GRAVE fears of yet another taxi war have been expressed in the wake of a taxi permits scandal, allegedly involving officials in the KwaZulu-Natal Transport Department in Pietermaritzburg.

It is alleged hundreds of fraudulent taxi permits were issued to operators, particularly in Pinetown, near Durban and Ladysmith in the Midlands.

"People are going to kill each other because of this," a source in the industry told City Press this week.

Much of the taxi violence is linked to quarrels over who has the right to use a particular route.

Operators who have permits can demand access to a route and tell current users to leave.

It is understood certain officials have pocketed bribes in exchange for the illegal permits.

A source claimed about 200 illegal permits were issued in Ladysmith, while in Pinetown 60 were reportedly in the hands of illegal operators.

City Press has established that the KwaZulu-Natal Transport Department has been formally informed by at least one taxi association of the scam.

The spokesperson for Transport MEC S'bu Ndebele on Friday said the department was not aware of any probe, though she pointed out that any illegal permits would be cancelled.

However, the deputy director of policy and planning in the department, John Kapueja, in a statement to City Press said a "full-scale investigation has been launched by the Department".

He was responding to an allegation that he had received a report by investigators into the scam but "was sitting on it".

Kapueja denied this and said he has received only "information, not a report.

"An investigating committee consisting of departmental officials has been tasked with investigating, collecting evidence and reporting to the head of the deparment on these allegations."

He said the investigating committee was gathering evidence and "would like to appeal to those with evidence to contact the department.

"I want to stress that once the investigation is complete, steps to ensure the protection of those involved, whether they are from the department or the taxi industry, will be taken by this department."

Taxi permits obtained fraudulently would be cancelled.

According to him, the department "has just been made aware of these fraudulent permits and once its invesigation is complete, it will provide a report and take the necessary steps".

The alleged scam flies in the face of major attempts to stabilise the volale taxi industry.

Temptation of bribes 'immense'

(332)

Former taxi violence detective tells why job is meaningless, writes **Jonny Steinberg**

MOST senior detectives working in the Gauteng taxi violence unit were likely to be offered bribes in exchange for tampering with dockets, and the temptation to accept was immense, a former Gauteng taxi violence unit detective said at the weekend.

The detective was speaking in the wake of allegations last week that two Soweto detectives were paid more than R500 000 in the past year to get rid of evidence and dockets.

Meanwhile, sources in the taxi industry said at the weekend that the taxi violence unit was mired in corruption and that it should be disbanded.

The former taxi violence detective said: "The conditions under which we work make it extremely tempting to accept big offers.

"About 1% of the dockets we open end in convictions, so there is no job satisfaction. You come to work every day knowing that your job is bullshit, that the odds of making a case stick are stacked against you. You cannot ask a policeman to stay clean when his work becomes meaningless.

"The most harrowing part of the job is dealing with witnesses," the detective said. "In four cases I worked on, the key witness was assassinated before he appeared in court. So, you look a man in the eye and tell him you can look after him, and you know in your heart you are speaking rubbish.

"There comes a time when you cannot live with yourself.

"Either you get out, or you play the game: get a decent pension and at the same time, make your job a little easier."

However, a source in the taxi industry, who asked not to be named, said the detective's explanation of police corruption was "a shameless apology for the unacceptable".

The source said: "If they were professionals they would get convictions. Why do you think taxi people are prepared to pay a small fortune for their dishonesty? If they were really up against impossible odds, no one would bother to buy them off. This is a classic case of lazy, greedy, poorly paid people blackmailing wealthy businessmen."

Asked for comment, a taxi violence unit representative referred questions to detective service spokesman Reg Crewe. Crewe said: "Threats and bribes are part of a policeman's lot. When someone succumbs and a crime is brought to our attention, we act."

Anti-corruption unit spokesman Stephan Grobler said no Gauteng taxi violence unit member had ever been convicted for corruption. He said he could not comment on whether any investigations were under way.

Transport consultant James Chapman said yesterday that government's plan to set the taxi industry on a clean footing was doomed to failure while police corruption was endemic.

"There is no doubt that the taxi violence units must be disbanded. The question is what will replace them," Chapman said. "Three alternatives are being voiced in the industry. The first is to take the police right out the picture and put the army in, but I am doubtful. The army does not have investigators. At best they are just peacekeepers.

"Others are suggesting that US and UK detectives take over. However, it will take them a long time to get to grips with intricate local knowledge. In the interim, the situation will descend into anarchy.

"A third option is for the taxi industry to elect from its own ranks a group of people to join the police units to act as watchdogs, but they inevitably will be subjected to threats and bribes," Chapman said.

]Perhaps the answer is to find an impeccable and incorruptible judge to hand pick his own task team. He should mix local detectives with foreign investigators. He should trust everyone in his team intimately.

"Maybe this is the answer, but the taxi violence unit was also hand-picked. We thought they too were incorruptible. And look at what happened," Chapman said.

BD 17/11/98

Taxi business arm to start

332

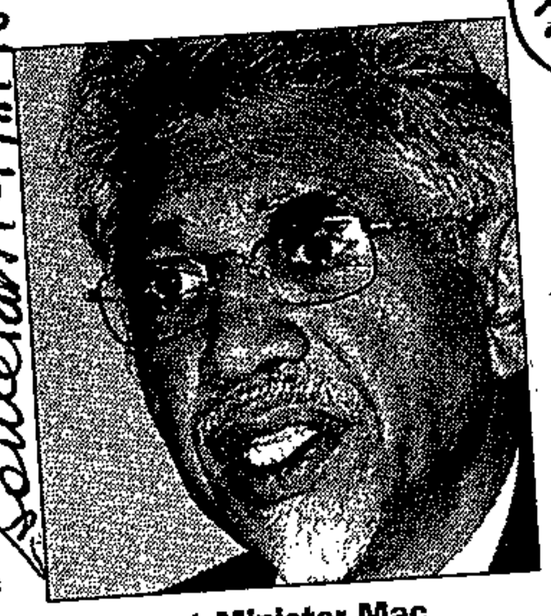
Sowetan 9 July 98

Business Reporter

THE North West taxi industry will launch its business arm, Nowta Holdings Taxi Cooperative Limited, at its two-day annual conference to be held at Rustenburg Civic Centre today.

The initiative is expected to see the South African taxi industry taking its rightful position in the mainstream of the country's economy.

The launch follows the recently formed South African Taxi Council's trading arm, Sataco Limited, a joint venture between the Government and the private sector valued at R19 billion. The formation of Sataco, to be announced later this month, will monitor developments in the industry.



Transport Minister Mac Maharaj

Nowta board chairman Joe Boweni said the launch of the scheme would see the turning point in the fortunes of the taxi industry and would signify the return of stability and growth.

"It is now accepted that this industry is at the threshold of rebirth and that is only possible through a four-way partnership with the Government, private sector, the general public and the taxi industry."

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj, Transport director-general Dipak Patel and North West Premier Popo Molefe will be among dignitaries expected to speak at the conference.

Boweni said once the scheme was established, Nowta Holdings, valued at billions of rands, would benefit taxi owners, drivers and commuters in terms of introducing a taxi community medical aid, insurance and funeral schemes, a smart card system and a black taxi industry-owned public macro lending facility.

Taxi groups argue about who can use new Jo'burg city rank

CP 22/11/98 (332)

Political initiative needed to resolve major differences

By SIBUSISO NGOMANE

VARIOUS taxi organisations are on a collision course over the almost-ready Park City taxi deck in Johannesburg.

The use and management of the long-distance taxi facility is at the centre of a controversy that could lead to conflict if an amicable solution is not found.

The taxi rank, next to Wanderers Street, will accommodate more than 1 500 mini-bus taxis when it is fully operational.

Built as part of the Park Station concourse, the facility is intended for long-distance taxis.

Commenting on the impasse, Boetie Letsoale, secretary-general of the South African Long Distance Taxi Organisation (SALDTA), told City Press the erratic handling of the situation by the Greater Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan Council (GJTMC) was bound to create conflict, and a political initiative was required to resolve the issue.

"The GJTMC councillors have on more than one occasion voiced hard anti-SALDTA sentiments, and their motives are suspect," Letsoale said.

"Equally guilty is Intersite, whose handling of the tenure issue is far from transparent while my organisation is sidelined in the process.

"This situation is bound to create havoc if not addressed."

Letsoale said the GJTMC failed to appreciate that SALDTA had been in the industry for a long time, and yet they have not been allocated their own taxi rank.

"We fought with the now-defunct SA Transport Services (SATS), which had a monopoly over public transportation, and we afforded the public efficient and reliable transport.

In the unlikely event that SALDTA signs the lease agreement, we will push strongly for an exemption clause to be entered into our lease agreement.

"Taxis had been ferrying commuters to and from work for decades.

"As such, they should be exempted from the normally high rate of monthly payments," said Letsoale.

GJTMC spokesperson Statson Mafa said five federal taxi structures – SALDTA, SALLDTA, FELDTA,LTO, TOPICA and SABTA Long Distance – had agreed to enter into negotiations with the council and Intersite (the property development and management arm of the South African Rail Commuter Corporation) in the pre-development consultative process. But SALDTA later withdrew, citing the tenure question as the reason for its decision.

"Apparently SALDTA is interested in the sole signing of the security of tenure which will give them a monopoly over the Wanderers Street and the new Park City taxi ranks," Mafa said.

He said SALDTA had exclusive control of long-distance taxi ranks under the old Johannesburg City Council and was having difficulty coming to terms with the new arrangement of joint ownership.

SALDTA president David Mofokeng, however, objects strongly to joint ownership and said his members were not given similar ownership rights at ranks owned by FELDTA, SABTA and LTA.

"Our members have on numerous occasions been killed as a result of joint usage of taxi facilities," he said.

"Moreover, during our pre-development discussion with the council and Intersite it was agreed that the only taxi groups that would be considered for the new facility would be the ones who already have ranking facilities in Johannesburg."

Allegations that Intersite, property managers of Park Station, is fuelling violence between rival taxi organisations are gaining ground. It is now being claimed that they want to award the security of tenure to other taxi groups, sidelining SALDTA because of its refusal to join in negotiations.

This was denied by Intersite spokesperson Roelf Crowther, who insisted that the impasse was between SALDTA and the GJTMC.

Intersite was in no way sidelining any taxi organisation.

"Intersite believes strongly in involving all stakeholders in the pre- and post-developmental stages of any commercial venture.

"Since our inception in 1991 this philosophy has been applied in all capital expenditure projects," Crowther said.

Asked if one particular taxi organisation would be invited to sign the lease agreement, he again stressed that no single organisation would be sidelined and that Intersite was committed to an all-inclusive process.

"Security of tenure will be given to end-users," Crowther said, adding that negotiations to this end had not yet been concluded.

Some taxi industry people claim SALDTA withdrew from the talks because of internal differences that led to the emergence of the splinter group SALLDTA.

Toll rises as city taxi conflict boils over

JOSEPH ARANES
STAFF REPORTER

(332)

Passengers put their lives on the line every time they board a taxi in Mitchell's Plain, where simmering conflict is boiling over.

On Monday Sidwell Mputa, 38, of Old Crossroads was shot dead, just two days after the death of 11-year-old Raygana Abdurahman. Others have been injured in further shooting incidents in the past few days.

In the latest shooting yesterday, Ismail Safodien, 26, a taxi driver from Portlands, Mitchell's Plain, was hit in the left side and arm as he was ferrying 16 passengers to Cape Town along the N2.

ARG 26/11/98

Police spokeswoman Nina Kirsten said a vehicle with four or five occupants drew up alongside and one of the men fired a number of shots at the taxi, injuring Mr Safodien.

He was taken to hospital in a serious condition.

Captain Kirsten said the police suspected the incident was related to the conflict between the Mitchell's Plain Taxi Association and the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) over routes.

Police have so far arrested four men, three from Mitchell's Plain and a Delft resident, in connection with one incident. Other arrested suspects have been released.

Troubled first flared in the area about two weeks ago, when sedan taxi drivers, members of Cata, started ferrying people on routes for which they held no permits.

The local taxi association members objected and fighting broke out on the town centre.

During the next few days, at least 15 shooting incidents were reported, including the weekend incident on Weltevreden Road where little Raygana was killed as gunmen opened fire on the taxi she was travelling in with her mother.

West Metropole police spokesman Mark Romburgh said the police were stepping up their presence in the area and would deploy members of Operation Recoil to help police the area. "We will be putting up roadblocks and will be searching all vehicles using the taxi routes in and out of Mitchell's Plain."

EUROPEAN UNION *John Major stresses economic effects of change*

SA gets euro wake-up cal

ARG 28/11/98

RICHARD STOVIN-BRADFORD
BANKING EDITOR

Johannesburg — A pointed wake-up call was delivered to South Africa yesterday by John Major, the former British prime minister, when he said that few people had grasped the sheer scale of the change or the after-shock represented by the advent of European Monetary Union (EMU) in January.

Speaking at a conference arranged by Warburg Dillon Read, the investment bank, on the practical consequences of the euro on South African investors and corporates, Major said the euro and the dollar would dominate world currency markets and the yen and pound would be a "long way behind".

The arrival of the euro would result in more changes than people had begun to grasp, he said.

"The euro is a currency that is to be born with a silver spoon in its mouth, it will be a currency with huge gold and foreign currency reserves behind it," said Major.

"Although it is going to be born in an economic downturn, I suspect that it'll get off to a rather good start," he said, nevertheless saying that its introduction was somewhat reckless, because of the degree of fudging certain countries had employed to meet the economic criteria for the euro's launch.

But, when the glamour wore off, there were some real economic dangers. The less well-performing economies — mostly in southern Europe — would not be able to compete with their northern European counterparts, partly because of rising unemployment in southern Europe. The Euroland economies were not properly converged, he said.

Major said that the extraordinary changes in the world, referring to the crises in Russia, Japan, Indonesia, China and Brazil, mattered as much in South Africa as they did anywhere else in the world.

"They provide very unexpected circumstances for the launch of a new currency in just a few weeks' time," he said. "The world economy is much more interdependent than ever in the past. South Africa cannot be immune from all this and it isn't," he said.

Addressing possible South African concerns about the recently established trend for local companies to seek primary listings in overseas markets, Major said: "Many South African companies are moving their primary listings to London. It's the most liquid market in the world and an entirely logical place for world-class companies to have a primary listing.

"Capital will go where market conditions seem most favourable for it to go," he said, still praising the South African government's refusal to impose protectionist measures in the face of the emerging markets crisis and thereby divert foreign capital.

But, he said: "If the euro fails, the dollar may become even more of a safe-haven currency. However, if it succeeds, it will become a reserve currency and precisely the reverse may happen." The euro's status depended on the timing and speed with which it took on reserve currency attributes.

"What is certain is that as the euro becomes a reserve currency, it will lead to portfolio allocation switches. It will affect South Africa through financial market transactions and trade finance," Major said.

"The trade finance demands for the euro are ... tremendous. You'll ... ready for that in South ...

He added: "I don' South Africa need ... changes — quite the ... may create new oppor...

South Africa needed come the problems of "Its future lies in ... assets and maximising tions in the world. ... Africa locks out the ... world will go elsewhere,

There are 34 days ... before EMU is introdu... European states.



WINDS OF CHANGE *John Major, the former British prime minister, speaking at a conference arranged by Warburg Dillon yesterday. The subject was the practical effects of the euro on South African investors and corporations* PHOTO: JO...

The deadly daily toll of the taxi war

(332)

By Luke Baker

TAKING public transport is likely to be a chaotic and uncomfortable experience anywhere in the world, but in South Africa it can also be deadly.

For hundreds of thousands of commuters, most of them poor and black, each day means putting their lives at risk as a vicious four-year war among minibus taxi gangs rumbles on.

Given a choice they wouldn't take taxis, but an insufficient transport infrastructure – a legacy of the apartheid past – means there are no cheap, quick alternative ways to get from township to city and back for work each day.

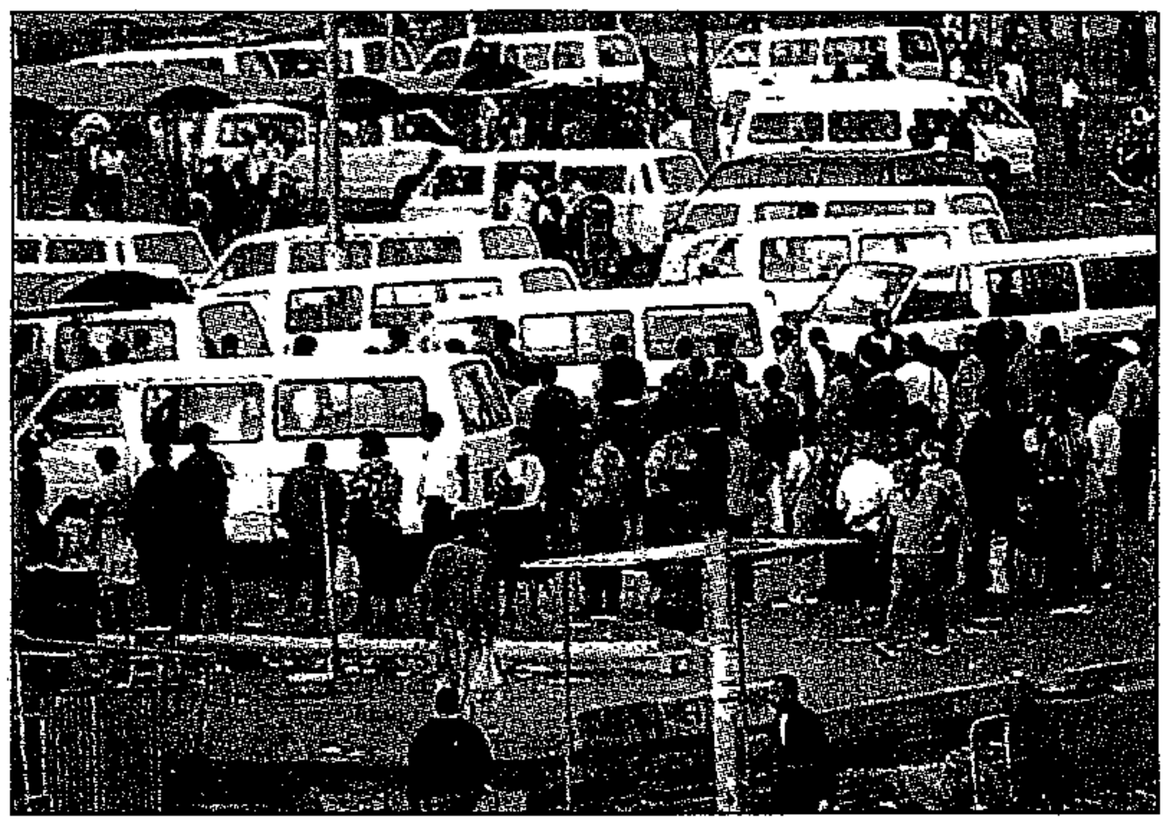
Every week somewhere in South Africa, taxi passengers are caught in the crossfire of a war waged by paid assassins.

When once it was only poorly run and often delayed trains, now minibuses can pick up a commuter in Soweto and drop him off in the plush suburbs of Johannesburg within 40 minutes for a little over R5.

Since the apartheid government deregulated the industry in the 1980s – mainly because it couldn't control it any longer – shuttling South Africans around in 16-seater minibuses has turned into a R8 billion business.

But as the sums have spiralled, so has the intensity between competing organisations, leading to ever more deaths and taxi-crash carnage, those who study the industry say.

For rival associations the key is to hold on to the lucrative routes along which the most passengers travel. To secure those routes, association bosses are prepared to hire assassins to remove any roadblocks to control.



Shuttling South Africans around in 16-seater minibuses has turned into a R8 billion business.

In a typical incident three taxi-owners were shot dead and six bystanders seriously wounded this month when a group of gunmen opened fire with automatic rifles and a 9mm pistol at a rank in the eastern part of the country.

Neville Thoms, who heads a government investigation into taxi violence, says around 1 000 passengers have been killed and countless others wounded in the crossfire of taxi-gang shootouts since 1994.

That doesn't include the number of drivers and association bosses slain in contract killings.

A hit on a driver costs as little as R5 000, Thoms said. Killing the head of an association can earn R50 000, a small fortune for some.

Earlier this year police launched a huge investigation after allegations surfaced that taxi bosses had bussed in 40 heavily armed Mozambicans to carry out hits in South Africa.

While seemingly loosely organised from the outside, taxi associations have a mafia-like structure internally, says Lawrence Venkile, who heads a Department of Transport project investigating the industry.

Controlled by associations

The country's estimated 120 000 registered taxis may be individually owned, but where they drive is controlled by the associations overseeing between 100 and 1 000 taxis at a time.

In turn, some 1 200 associations nationwide come under the influence of a dozen or so "mother" organisations headed by kingpins called executives – if not the brains, then certainly the brawn behind the money-spinning enterprises.

About a third of a taxi's weekly take – which runs upwards of R6 000 – goes to the association for membership fees covering access to the route and everything from rank dues to downpayments for hitmen, according to Thoms.

Of the remainder, about R400 goes to the taxi driver and the owner of the taxi keeps the rest. Of course, some executives control associations and also own several fleets of taxis, giving them access to double the earnings.

"This whole industry is about one thing: money. Who can get their hands on as much as possible, whatever it takes," says Thoms, who estimates the industry has produced more than its fair share of millionaires.

But the complexities don't stop there. Many members of the police force – and some Government officials – own taxis, according to Thoms. Worse, policemen have been known to hire out their weapons for use in hits.

"There's a lot of police complicity with the taxi industry, which strengthens the legitimacy of violence," he said.

Since 1996, 12 policemen were charged in connection with violence in the industry but none has been prosecuted.

Thoms, who has been investigating kingpins and executives for the past two years, says his team has compiled profiles of about 50 "mafia-style bosses" and is making progress in closing the dragnet on the criminal elements.

But with just seven staff helping him in Gauteng – the province responsible for most taxi violence – the odds are not favourable.

Joe Mabaso, chairman of the South African Taxi Council, which he says represents 95 percent of those involved nationwide, is working with the Government to regulate the industry, and reinstate peace.

"We've seen a lot of crime and we've seen a lot of killings caused by the fight for turf. We do want peace, but it's going to be tough and it will take time," he said.

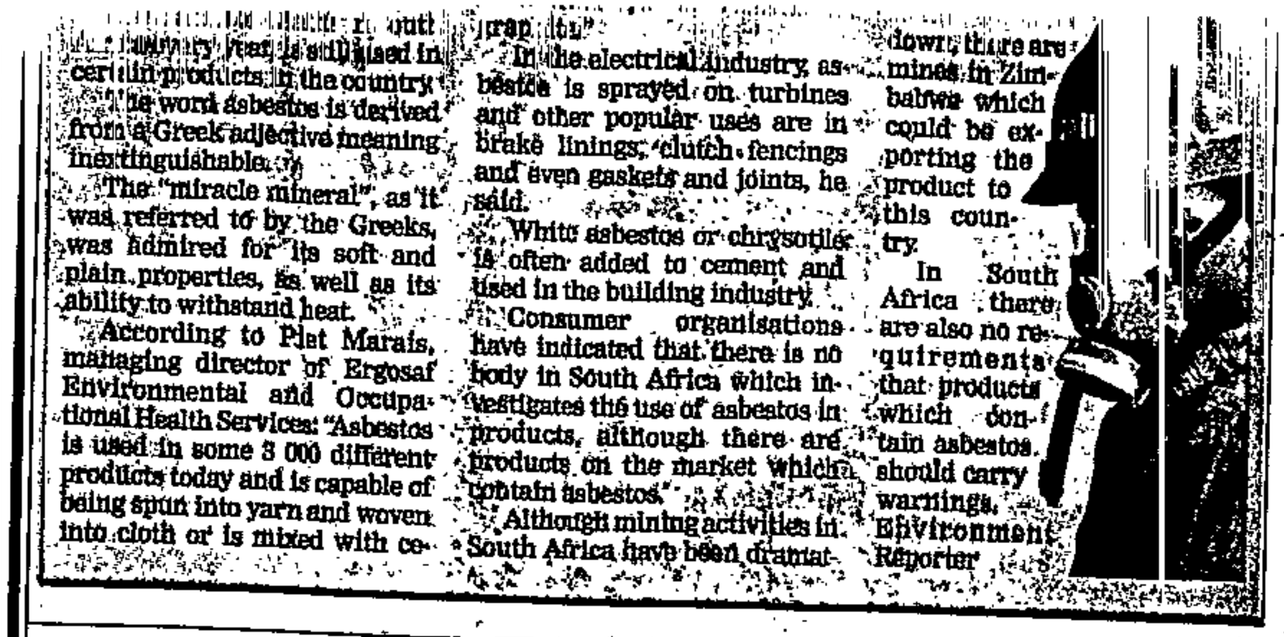
Regulating routes

Proposals include tracking down unregistered taxis – thought to number 10 to 15 percent of all those on the road – regulating routes by distance and direction, and introducing legislation to ensure national and provincial registers.

Transport Minister Mac Maharaj has made it clear his Ministry considers tight regulation a top priority, but getting executives to come to the negotiating table, let alone admit where the untaxed portion of their gains is hidden, is tough.

Meanwhile, commuters will continue to cross themselves before putting their lives on the line for the sake of a job, and even former hitmen will wonder how long they've got to live.

As a confessed assassin, who double-crossed his association, told a local newspaper recently: "I'm sitting on top of my coffin. Gunmen might strike at any time." – *Reuters*.



...rap...

In the electrical industry, asbestos is sprayed on turbines and other popular uses are in brake linings, clutch fencings and even gaskets and joints, he said.

White asbestos or chrysotile is often added to cement and used in the building industry.

Consumer organisations have indicated that there is no body in South Africa which investigates the use of asbestos in products, although there are products on the market which contain asbestos.

Although mining activities in South Africa have been drastat-

down, there are mines in Zimbabwe which could be exporting the product to this country.

In South Africa there are also no requirements that products which contain asbestos should carry warnings.

Environment Reporter

DANGER: SMOKING CAUSES HEART DISEASE

Nicotine: 1.0 mgs Tar: 14 mgs. As per Government agreed method

A Touch of Genius

FORUM

VIRGINIA BLEND FILTER

Estate Tobaccos

Full Flavour Virginia, Medium Virginia, Special Mild & Cool Menthol.

FORUM

asbestos-related diseases

(121) Star 27/11/98

Many South Africans, as well as migrant workers, are left to suffer, without any compensation from mine owners

By Melanie-Ann Ferris
Environment Reporter

William Nakaphala (51) can barely walk without having to stop to take a deep breath.

In an asbestos mine during his youth, Nakaphala worked at chopping up asbestos ore. After five years, he moved on to another asbestos mine.

Nakaphala contracted asbestosis as a result of inhaling asbestos fibres.

He received R12 000 in compensation from Workmen's Compensation several years ago, but this was not enough to see him through his retirement years and he now lives on a monthly government disability grant.

He is one of thousands of South Africans who are suffering from asbestos-related diseases (ARD).

Apart from the thousands of workers dying from ARD in South Africa, there are thousands more migrant workers who are dying in Swaziland, Lesotho and even Mozambique.

Most of those affected die without any compensation from the owners of the asbestos mines.

Other affected people include those communities who live close to asbestos mine dumps, which have not been rehabilitated, in the Northern Cape, the Northern Province and Mpumalanga.

The South African Government has just held a National Asbestos Summit in Johannesburg to try and find a solution to the problems arising from the use of asbestos.

Already, asbestos mining activities have been scaled down.

Gwen Mahlangu, chairperson of the portfolio committee on environment and tourism, said there is only one active mine in the country. It employs fewer than 200 people.

But, asbestos is still widely used and asbestos can still be found in many buildings around the country, she said.

A spokesperson from a Johannesburg-based company which is hired to do asbestos removals, said Eskom was involved in ongoing projects to remove asbestos from some of its power stations.

Asbestos was also removed from the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria and, earlier this year, Johannesburg metropolitan council spent R6-million to contain asbestos contamination in the west wing of the city hall.

The Pomfret military base, in the North West Province, home to nearly 5 000 soldiers and their families, was heavily contaminated with lethal dust and fibres from the asbestos mine which once occupied the site.

In the Northern Cape town of Prieska it has been estimated that 3 000 people have died from ARD in the past 50 years. Blue asbestos or crocidolite was mined in the area for many years.

Eskom spokesperson Peter Adams said there was no conclusive evidence that asbestos was dangerous before the 1980s.

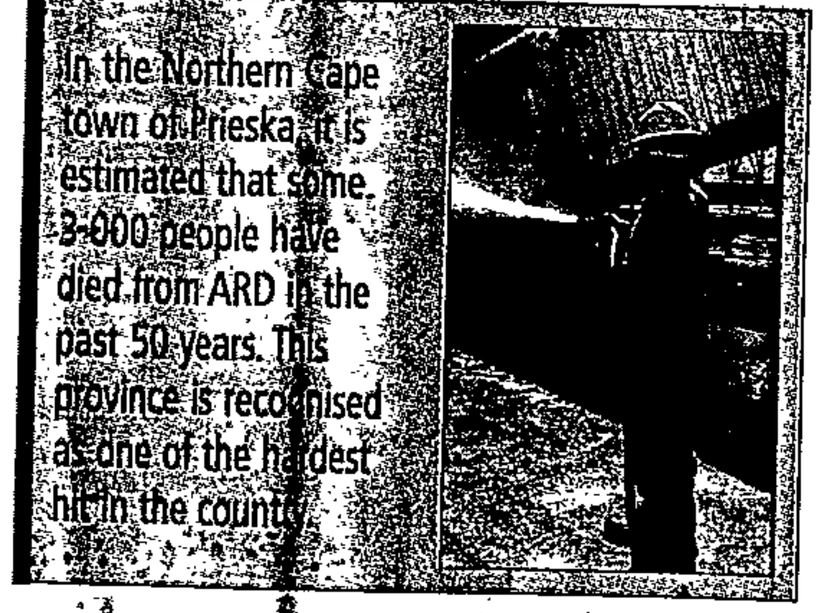
In the mid-80s, when they received conclusive proof, Eskom decided not to use asbestos in insulation at its power stations and to remove it from its plants.

Adams said if work needed to be done on a station they would lodge a plan with the Department of Labour, issue their workers with protective clothing, completely isolate the area and then place the asbestos in prescribed containers for removal to registered dumping sites.

A few years ago Eskom dismantled the Salt River power station in Cape Town to clear it of asbestos, he said. Piet Marais, managing director of Ergosaf Environmental and Occupational Health Services, said patients with mesothelioma often have a history of limited exposure to asbestos – of maybe only a few weeks – many years before they develop the cancer.

Marais said exposure to asbestos dust increased the risk of developing certain diseases, the biggest of which is asbestosis, cancer of the lungs and mesothelioma.

Asbestosis is specifically associated with exposure to asbestos dust and is characterised by the scarring of the lungs. Cancer of the lungs is more common among asbestos workers than the general public while mesothelioma is a rare cancer which spreads across the surface of the lungs.



Environmental organisations and labour unions have called for a halt to the use of asbestos products in the country, for better access to medical treatment and that compensation for those who have been affected by asbestos poisoning be improved.

Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, Peter Mokaba, said this week's summit would act as an information gathering process which would be followed up by legislation.

While this might be too late for Nakaphala it could improve the lives of communities still living next to asbestos mine dumps and the thousands who are dying of asbestos poisoning.

Workers stranded by taxi strike

(332)

Sowetan 4/12/98

THOUSANDS of workers were stranded in Mabopane and Soshanguve townships, north-west of Pretoria, yesterday morning following a strike by taxi operators.

Groups of tough-looking men lined the routes in both townships at about 5.30am and stopped scores of minibus taxis laden with passengers.

They ordered commuters out of the vehicles and told them to travel by train or buses to work.

Taxi drivers were told to park their vehicles on the roadside to wait for a meeting of taxi operators in the area later in the day.

South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) public relations officer Mr Wesley Mpawu yesterday said taxi operators took a decision to strike in protest against threats by the North West transport department to close taxi ranks used by Salldta in Mabopane and Soshanguve.

Mpawu said taxis in Soshanguve affiliated to the rival Federated Long Distance Taxi Association were also not operating.

Asked why the department threatened to close the ranks, Mpawu declined to elaborate and referred Sapa to the office of North West transport MEC Mr F Vilakazi.

Vilakazi's office could not be reached for comment.

Enraged commuters lined various routes in both townships after they were pulled out of the taxis by taxi drivers.

Some of them were seen hitchhiking, while others went to the nearby Mabopane and Soshanguve railway stations to board trains.

Mpawu said taxi drivers affiliated to Salldta were expected to hold a meeting to discuss their grievances. — *Sapa.*

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MEC launches probe into taxi violence

(332)

Sowetan 4/12/98

By Paul Letsoalo

THE Gauteng MEC for transport, Mrs Joyce Kgoali, yesterday announced the appointment of a commission of inquiry into taxi violence in the province.

Speaking at the launch in Johannesburg, Kgoali said the only way to get to the bottom of taxi violence was by appointing a commission of inquiry.

Kgoali said the commission would investigate and obtain any information related to recent and past taxi violence in Gauteng, establish the cause, people responsible and make recommendations for appropriate action.

"It will operate from the offices of the departments of transport and public works which will render administrative support to the commission.

"After bilateral discussions with the taxi industry in Gauteng, I introduced a six-month strategy titled: 'From taxi violence to taxi industry development'," Kgoali said.

The aim of this strategy, she said, was to empower the taxi industry economically by establishing co-operatives and joint ventures.

"The establishment of this commission confirms the success of this strategy," she said.

Advocate Lindi Nkosi-Thomas has been appointed to chair the commission and will be assisted by Mr Mohammed Randera, a practising lawyer.

During the past six months, the Gauteng taxi industry was taken on a process of shifting the mindset from violence to development, and creating an enabling environment to expose perpetrators of taxi violence.

"It was during these workshops that I was requested by the taxi industry to appoint a commission to look deeper into taxi violence with a view to protecting the industry's economic development. It is my hope that the commission will enjoy support and cooperation from the people of Gauteng," Kgoali said.

Warning on market volatility

BD 19/8/96

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SA's external debt was "rather modest by world standards", and while "a significant proportion" of the inflows were short term, there had been "a determined effort" by the Reserve Bank and others to reduce short-term exposure.

"All other macroeconomic variables were moving in the right direction." Throughout last year "the authorities remained broadly on track in their efforts to reduce the fiscal deficit, allowed a limited appreciation of the rand, implemented a sterilised intervention in the spot market and reduced the net oversold forward position of the SA Reserve Bank.

Rand appreciation

"As a result, the rand appreciated 7,7% in real terms from May last year through January this year, net reserves increased from about zero in mid-1994 to $3,5bn by end-1995, and the net forward position declined rapidly.... At the same time, authorities removed capital controls on non-residents and relaxed controls on residents.

"In sum, the direction of policies was appropriate and their achievement significant."

So what, other than rumours of President Nelson Mandela's ill-health and the imminent removal of remaining capital controls, launched the assault on the rand?

Aside from "uncertainty about the course of future policy" — exacerbated by the unexpected departure of finance minister Chris Liebenberg — factors cited in the report include the 7,7% real appreciation of the currency during the preceding months; suspicions raised by the Union Bank of Switzerland that the Reserve Bank was actively intervening to keep the exchange rate within a predetermined band, thus making it a tempting target for speculators; and the sharp increase in international long-term rates in February.

The report finds the last-mentioned theory the least compelling, given the marginal effect of rising rates on other emerging markets.

Unable to pinpoint any precise cause, the authors of the IMF's report fall back on a warning that market sentiment can be volatile and that SA had better be careful now that the sentiment can directly affect the country's macroeconomic balances, particularly through the capital account.

Shifts in sentiment, the report suggests, are likely to be felt disproportionately by SA since its foreign exchange market is "by international standards, relatively small".

IMF staff impart three pieces of advice: implement financial and structural policies that strengthen market confidence; take care that government's commitment to such policies is not called into question; ensure that markets are confident that policies will be adjusted appropriately in the face of unexpected developments.

"If uncertainties in these areas are not addressed," the report concludes, "the benefits for growth of an easing of the external financing constraint ... would be lost as a result of the associated increase in the country risk premium, and thus higher domestic interest rates."

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the military towards police and judicial services. Teachers wages could also be "targeted" more productively, with savings going to improved infrastructure.

The report accepts the macroeconomic plan's goal of increasing foreign investment to just under 4% of GDP by 2000, but says this figure is the highest that can reasonably be expected, even though it falls far short of the 5,5% averaged before the mid-1980s.

How close SA comes to the 4% goal depends in large measure on government maintaining a credibly sustainable fiscal stance, the report stresses.

The report rejects arguments, based on the fact that the yield-to-maturity of government debt exceeds the growth rate of nominal GDP, that SA may be falling into a public debt trap.

The report contends that at current growth rates SA can avoid a public debt trap — defined as an increasing ratio of government debt to GDP — so long as revenues are outpacing non-interest outlays to generate a primary surplus of 1,5% of GDP.

"The current medium-term fiscal framework would lead to a primary surplus exceeding 1,5% of GDP by 1997/8, and assuming that the overall deficit continues to be reduced by 0,5% of GDP a year thereafter, the primary balance would show surpluses ... of 3% of GDP by the turn of the century."

Meanwhile, the projected 4% of GDP upper limit on likely foreign investment means domestic savings, now running at 15,5% of GDP, will have to rise to 22,1% to meet the 26% target for 2000.

The report advises against government, now a net dissaver of 2,7% of GDP, seeking to make a major contribution to the required total savings by raising taxes.

"In SA, any effort to raise public sector saving leads to a decline in private saving. However ... the offset is likely to be lower when expenditure cuts rather than tax hikes produce the increase in public saving."

Government could make a larger contribution to boosting net savings — of up to 1,2% of GDP in 2000 — and thereby put less of the onus on the private sector, if it was serious about implementing structural reforms, including privatisation.

Such reforms would be likely to spur private investment "by imparting greater confidence in the economy's long-term prospects" and, all else being equal, "would eventually raise the availability of foreign savings that could be channelled into the domestic economy beyond 4% of GDP".

However, even under the best of circumstances, fiscal "adjustment" will have to be a "central element of the structural reform effort to stimulate private saving, growth and employment".

Gauteng taxi violence under investigation

CP 6/12/98 (332)

By PERCY MAKHARAMEDZHA

TAXI violence is believed to have claimed more lives in Gauteng than anywhere else.

The death of hundreds of taxi drivers, owners and commuters has sparked a public debate on how the scourge can be eradicated.

To curb taxi violence and prevent deaths resulting from the violence, Gauteng MEC for Transport and Public Works Joyce Kgoali this week said it was necessary to establish the reasons for the violence and to find out who was behind the acts of violence.

Kgoali, who was speaking at the launch of a commission of inquiry into the taxi violence in Gauteng, said she believed appointing the commission was the only way to establish the causes of the violence.

Kgoali appointed Advocate Lindi Nkosi-Thomas as the chair of the commission.

"In an attempt to resolve the scourge of violence in the taxi industry the Gauteng cabinet, on November 4, approved the appointment of a commission of inquiry into the causes of taxi violence and unresolved deaths in Gauteng, as I requested," Kgoali said.

The commission will investigate and obtain any information related to recent and past taxi violence in Gauteng, establish the cause and people responsible, and make recommendations for appropriate action.

In terms of the Provincial Commission Act, the commission shall have powers to subpoena public or government officials where necessary, to enable the commission to achieve its objectives.

Kgoali said that when she was appointed as the MEC in May, there was renewed taxi violence in the province, especially in Soweto and Pretoria, that caused her to begin a process of engaging the taxi industry on the rampant and continuous violence.

"After bilateral discussions with the taxi industry in Gauteng, I introduced a six-months strategy entitled 'from taxi violence to taxi industry development'," she said.

Kgoali added that the aim of that strategy was to empower the taxi industry economically by establishing co-operatives and joint ventures, adding that the establishment of the commission confirmed the success of the strategy.

Taxi violence commission set up following criticism in report

Jonny Steinberg (332)

GAUTENG Transport MEC Joyce Kgoali has convened a commission of inquiry into taxi violence following a report chastising her for allowing perpetrators to hide behind her political coattails.

The report was written by two National Intelligence Agency officials working for the Presidential task team on taxi violence.

A source in the team said Kgoali earned the unit's wrath for "giving political credibility to people who should be nailed".

The source said: "Kgoali's intentions are not dishonest, but the peace agreements she is mediating are superficial and will not stick. In the meantime, her peace agreements are giving credibility to people against whom we are building serious cases."

Her appointment of a commission is clearly a response. She wants to show that she is tough on the bad guys after all."

The report had circulated in government.

Kgoali's spokesman Kate Bapela said: "People can say what they like. Our mandate is to provide safe transport in this province. This is what we are doing."

Kgoali's commission is headed by advocate Lindi Nkosi-Thomas and includes among its members two detectives from the Gauteng Taxi Conflict Unit, recently embroiled in allegations of corruption. The commission, charged with exploring the roots of taxi violence and recommending corrective measures, is due to submit its findings on 31 March next year.

Since her appointment in May this year, Kgoali has mediated a series of peace agreements between rival Gauteng taxi associations.

Gauteng Taxi Council chairman Joe Mabaso said the appointment of the commission was well overdue. However, he was shocked by the commission's composition.

"The police have regularly been found to be one of the many causes of taxi violence," Mabaso said. "Appointing policemen as commissioners immediately destroys the commission's legitimacy."

Mabaso also poured scorn on Kgoali's decision to appoint an unknown young lawyer to chair the commission.

"You need a respected, retired judge. Someone with a reputation to defend, someone who needs to put his neck on the line."

Asked at a press conference yesterday whether the policemen's appointments to the commission would detract from its legitimacy, Kgoali said: "If it emerges that members of the commission are implicated in violence, we will take corrective measures."

BD 4/12/98

20 000 taxis to have smart card scanners fitted

(332)

Jonny Steinberg

A MAJOR taxi association signed an agreement yesterday to have more than 20 000 taxis fitted with smart-card readers.

The SA Local and Long-Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation (Salldtbo) and technology company Aplitec, which launched a joint smart card venture with the Congress of SA Trade Unions earlier this year, are to form a new company to administer the commuter smart card scheme.

"Transport is just one market in which our smart card will be used," Aplitec's Hanoch Nieshlos said yesterday. "Workers' wages will be paid on to our cards. We have deals in the pipeline with two major retail outlets. We are looking at electricity bills. Our ambition is that a working person who uses our card will never have to carry cash."

While Salldtbo represents a sizeable chunk of the taxi industry, the SA Taxi Council (Sataco), the newly established national body which represents the entire taxi industry, has so far resisted signing a deal with Aplitec.

A Sataco executive member, who declined to be named, said: "First, we need experts to evaluate appropriate technology criteria. Second, we need to strike a reasonable deal about where the profits go. The taxi industry needs to recapitalise desperately. Smart cards are only valuable to us if they give taxi owners new sources of capital."

In he deal signed between Salldtbo and Aplitec the taxi organisation could be given a 49% equity share of the new company, depending on how many vehicles it delivers to the scheme.

The deal is not an exclusive one, Nieshlos said. "For this scheme to work, all buses, taxis and trains must use one card."

BD 10/12/98

20 000 taxis to get smart cards

CT (BR) 90/12/98 (332)

RENÉE BONORCHIS

Johannesburg — In a joint initiative between the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation (SALLDTBO) and Net 1 Applied Technology Holdings (Aplitec), all SALLDTBO affiliated taxis will become part of an electronic smart card-based payment system, Aplitec said yesterday.

SALLDTBO represents 74 taxi associations in six provinces, affecting more than 20 000 taxis.

Smart cards are cards loaded with a secure computer chip carrying relevant information and the card system to be installed would give commuters, owners and drivers an alternative to carrying cash.

Aplitec said that the initiative should allow the taxi industry to improve profitability, and begin to operate in line with formal business practices.

Since the industry runs on a cash basis, smart card technology would allow taxi owners to have better control over finances.

"For the taxi industry in general this idea is an enormous achievement," said Simon Sentle, national administrative chairman of SALLDTBO.

"It is in line with the government's desire to see closer working relationships between ourselves and the business sector, and it will play a role in preventing violence."

The joint venture signed this week involves the creation of a new company controlled by Aplitec. Zamokuhle Investment Limited, the investment arm of SALLDTBO, will have an equity stake in it.

The agreement would mean a February roll-out of terminals in more than 20 000 taxis on major inter-city routes.

Each taxi would have a simple offline terminal installed. Advantages of the smart card technology are that card-holders are not required to have bank accounts and that it is an off-line system, meaning that it does not require an operational telephone line to function.

Commuters can load money on to their cards at any retailer that has a terminal, or have part of their wages loaded directly on to their cards by participating employers.

At the end of every day the driver takes his card to a terminal which would dial up to the central server in Johannesburg to settle all transactions. All the day's takings could be cleared with this server.

Aplitec's shares closed 19c lower yesterday at R2,16.

CEF contract faces further scrutiny

BD 3/4/98

Linda Ensor

CAPE TOWN — The Office for Serious Economic Offences (OSEO) was investigating a possible criminal aspect to the R3m-a-year contract signed by the Central Energy Fund (CEF) and Emmanuel Shaw's consulting firm International Advisory Services, office director Jan Swanepoel said yesterday.

The bank accounts of former fund chairman Don Mkhwanazi — who this week turned down an invitation to chair the state fuel company for a further three-year term — would be subpoenaed as part of the probe into why the contract was awarded to Shaw's firm.

Confusion reigned yesterday about whether Mkhwanazi was still an ordinary member of the fund board. Mineral and energy affairs director-general Sandile Nogxina was emphatic that he was "definitely not on the board", having declined both membership and the chairmanship.

The OSEO was asked by public protector Selby Baqwa to examine possible criminal and irregular aspects to the contract, including whether Mkhwanazi was paid "kickbacks" by Shaw.

The investigation was at an early stage and would involve accountants examining the contract in detail. Baqwa's assistant Tinus Schutte said that it would take several months.

Meanwhile, unsubstantiated rumours of a behind-the-scenes deal between Maduna and Mkhwanazi to allow the latter to leave the fund with his name unblemished circulated with intensity yesterday.

Sources in the industry thought it "strange" that about a week before Maduna's announcement of the names of the new board members, Mkhwanazi employed the services of a lawyer who threatened action if the old board members were not reappointed.

Mkhwanazi was reported as saying he would await the report's release before deciding what action to take. He claimed the campaign of vilification against him reflected Maduna's resistance to transformation of the oil industry.

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Taxi violence leaves a chain of pain

(932) Sowetan 10/12/98

By Noxolo Nxusani

JAMES MANASE, a divorcee from Pretoria, was on his way to pick up his seven-year-old daughter, Thembi, from Soshanguve when he was killed.

Manase, not his real name, was murdered when a taxi he boarded was attacked and shot at by four unknown gunmen in the township.

His daughter waited anxiously for his arrival, as he had promised to take her to a movie. What she did not know was that her father was dead.

Only a message brought by an eye-witness about the shooting arrived in Soshanguve. Luckily, Thembi was in another room when Manase's ex-wife, Nomsa, received the tragic news.

Nomsa did not have time to attend to their daughter as she wanted to rush to the scene to confirm her nightmare.

At the scene, she was attended to by Captain Mercia Fryer from the Pretoria Taxi Violence Unit.

"I did not know what to do as the woman was heading straight for the bodies which were still lying in a pool of blood. I tried to console her and answer some of her questions about what happened," Fryer, who is the commander of the unit, said.

"I was also crying at this stage. This woman was mourning the death of her ex-husband, who is the father of her child. I could only imagine what she was going through at that stage. She had no idea how she was going to break the news to her daughter at home and I sympathised with her as this could happen to any woman," she said.

Fryer said since she started the unit four years ago she has had to deal with incidents like these where innocent bystanders and passengers are caught in the crossfire during the ongoing taxi violence countrywide.

"Most of the time it's passengers who are being killed during these battles. Taxi drivers and taxi owners have a way of escaping unhurt," she said.

"Most of the taxi industry fighting is caused by greed.

"Sometimes you find one man owning more than 100 minibus taxis. Even though they have so many cars, they don't care about passengers, all they want is more money coming in. This is mafia style – wanting to control everything," Fryer said.

Fryer, who was once a member of the former security branch unit, is operating the unit with the help of 11 additional members and has about 250 dockets of murder, attempted murder and handling of firearms to investigate.

About 25 to 30 of these dockets are assigned to each unit member.

"Our investigations take us as far afield as the Eastern Cape or Northern Province and the biggest problem we are facing at this stage is that most of the time witnesses are scared to testify against taxi drivers or owners. They feel their lives are in danger and they disappear or decide not to testify in court cases at the last minute," she said. At some stage, unit members raided the offices of a well-known taxi organisation during their routine investigations.

They recovered stolen property and unlicensed firearms but were unable to arrest anyone.

"It's difficult to charge the owners of the place if stolen property and unlicensed guns are not found in their possession, according to the new laws," Fryer said.

A 30-year-old single mother, Fryer has since put in a transfer to go to the organised crime unit in Richard's Bay, KwaZulu-Natal.

"My main concern is my son Donovan's well-being. He went to school one day and told his class teacher that whenever I go to Soshanguve at night he is not sure whether I will be back or not. He is suffering silently and I have to do something about that before it's too late," she said.

According to Superintendent Vince Harris of the taxi violence investigations in Pretoria, about 265 people have been killed during taxi violence countrywide during the past 10 months.

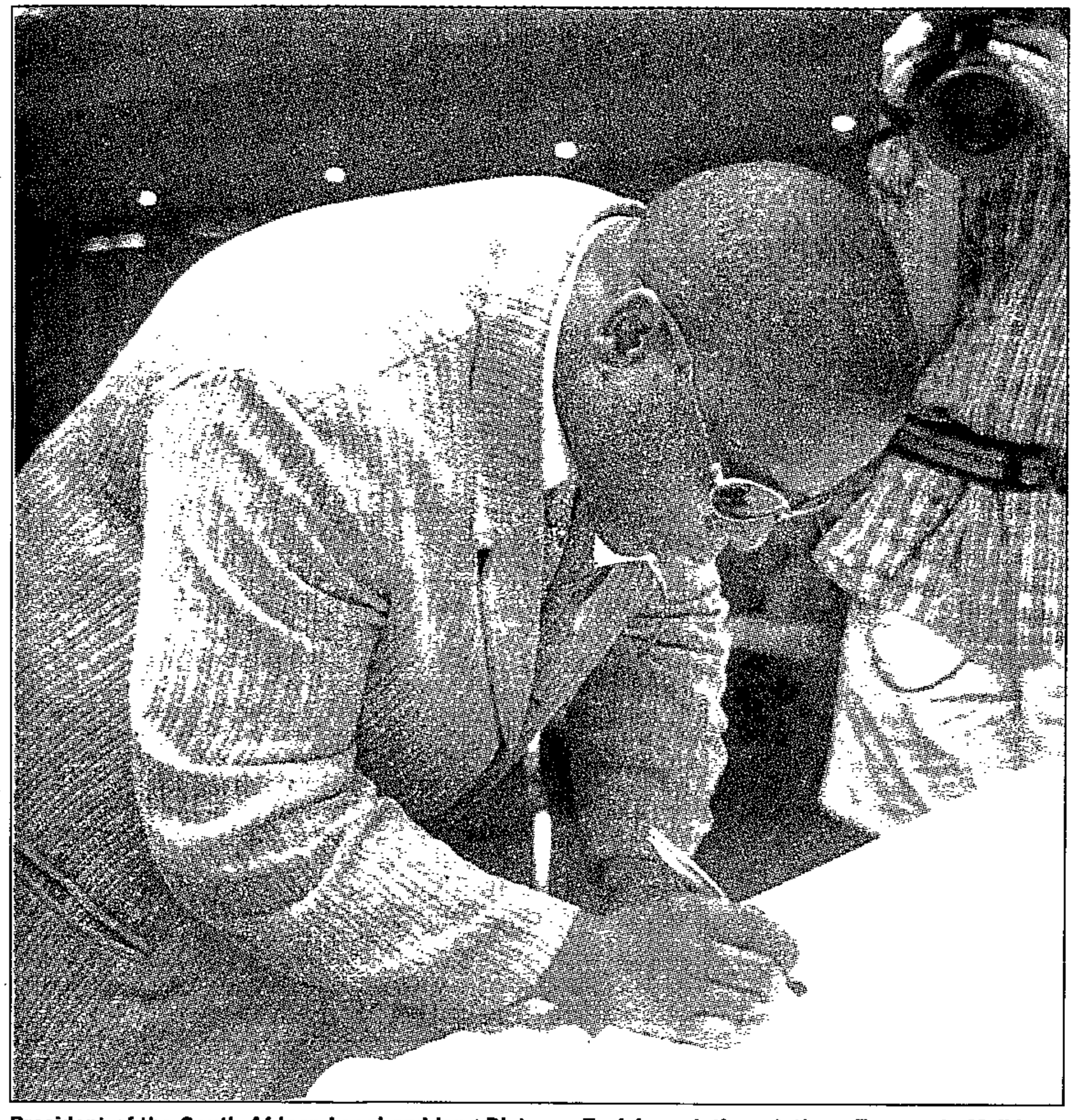
One hundred and twenty people were murdered in Gauteng, followed by KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape.

Over 190 suspects were arrested nationally, with Gauteng on the lead again and Eastern Cape and Western Cape following.

There are about 120 000 registered minibus taxis countrywide.



Captain Mercia Fryer of the Pretoria Taxi Violence Unit.



President of the South African Local and long Distance Taxi Associations Jotham Zanenvula Msibi signs a document that could change the face of South Africa's taxi industry. In a joint initiative between Saldta, which represent 74 large taxi associations in six provinces, and Net 1 Applied Technology Holdings, each affiliated taxi will use an electronic smart card-based payment system.
PIC: CLEMENT LEKANYANE.

Taxi users can soon pay fares by card

(332) Sowetan 10/12/98

MINIBUS taxi passengers would soon be able to pay their fares using electronic smart cards rather than cash, technology company Aplitec said yesterday.

A joint venture was signed this week by the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation, representing 74 taxi associations in six provinces, and Net 1 Applied Technology Holdings (Aplitec).

The system would be used in February by more than 20 000 taxis.

Commuters could use the card to pay for trips, services and purchases without needing to have a bank account or pay transaction fees, Aplitec said.

The system was earlier introduced in East London by the Mdantsane-East London Taxi Association and the East London Taxi Association.

Aplitec said commuters could get the reloadable smart cards, which could last over five years.

Money could be loaded on to the cards at any retailer with a card terminal, or part of wages could be loaded directly by participating employers.

For taxi trips, a simple off-line terminal installed in the taxi would transfer payment from the commuter's card to the driver's card.

At the end of the working day, the driver would take his card to a terminal linked to central servers in Johannesburg to settle the transactions.

The driver could clear the day's takings with the server, and transfer money immediately to the taxi owner, who could then transfer money back to the driver's card if necessary.

Aplitec director, Professor Hanoch Neishlos, said the national joint initiative was a major endorsement of the company's Universal Electronic Payment System.

Further negotiations were in progress to bring more taxi associations on to the system, which held all the processing power, transaction histories and account balances on the cards themselves.

Spokesman of the taxi and bus organisation, Mr Simon Sentle, said the idea was an enormous achievement for the taxi industry, and would allow new focus, resources and business principles to be put into improving efficiency, passenger numbers and profitability.

The joint venture involved the formation of a new company controlled by Aplitec and the organisation's Zamokuhle Investment Limited. – *Sapa.*

Warring taxi men in truce deal

By MATHEW MPETE

EP 13/12/98

TWO major warring taxi bodies in Pretoria have signed a joint declaration to co-operate and share routes and taxi ranks under a new taxi organisation.

The unity agreement, reached last week between the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta), means the taxi war that ruled in Mabopane, Garankuwa, Mamelodi, Soshanguve and the Pretoria city centre for more than two years may now be over.

More than 100 people, including taxi bosses, drivers and commuters, were killed during the fighting for routes and taxi ranks.

The agreement means that Felldta taxis will return to ranks previously controlled by Salldta.

In ratifying the reunification, North West transport MEC Star Vilakazi said one more death was too much and that the peace should be for keeps.

He also added a bonus by declaring to more than 2 000 taxi operators at a rally in Garankuwa that more than 1 000 taxi permits would be issued next year.

The unification of the associations was started last year by Gauteng Premier Mathole Motshekga when he launched Operation Thiba to end the taxi violence.

Operation Thiba engaged taxi bosses head-on and worked closely with the police to identify perpetrators of the violence.

A number of taxi bosses linked to taxi hit squads have since been arrested.

SA cautiously backs EU pact

BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS

By SVEN LUNSCHE

SOUTH AFRICA in principle backed a free-trade agreement with the European Union in the first round of trade negotiations on Friday.

Sources close to the talks stressed, however, that the SA delegation spent the first day of the two-day talks emphasising the impact of the EU deal on SA industry and the southern African region. They cautioned about the impact of an open market on companies in the region.

"This was the first opportunity we had to listen to the views of the South Africans. They have previously indicated to us their support for a free-trade deal but are obviously concerned about the timing and asymmetrical approach that underlies it," a senior EU negotiator said.

The EU has proposed lifting tariffs and duties on most SA exports to Europe in return for a phased opening up of the SA market to European exports over a period of time to be negotiated.

SA officials called on the EU to rethink its approach, to ensure any accord was a wider package to promote development in the region, rather than just a reciprocal deal to cut industrial and agricultural tariffs.

The two-day meeting, which ended yesterday, was largely devoted to establishing ground rules and setting the agenda for future negotiations. Analysts expect the talks to conclude by year-end.

Prior to this week's Pretoria meeting both sides said they were committed to reaching agreement on a package which could reap rich rewards for their export industries.

Picture: BRETT FLOR



CORDIAL RELATIONS ... Philippe Soubestre and Eltie Links at the Union Buildings before tough trade talks on Friday

ST (BT) 26/1/97

"We hope that the negotiations will be very constructive and see the establishment of cordial relations," said SA ambassador to the EU and head of the delegation, Eltie Links.

EU officials have been waiting for over ten months for a response from South Africa to the bloc's initial call last March for negotiations on a free-trade deal with Pretoria, writes Sapa-DPA.

The free-trade pact aims to ensure a reciprocal reduction of European and SA tariffs in both the industrial and farm sectors.

But in a bid to protect European farmers from SA competition, the EU mandate calls for the exclusion of nearly 40% of SA agricultural products from the future free-trade deal.

The EU, however, has pointed out that 96% of South Africa's exports would still enter the EU duty free. The restrictions placed on SA farm exports, and the fact that the country is being offered only partial membership in the Lomé Convention, the trade and aid deal which links the EU to 70 African, Caribbean and Pacific states, has irked Pretoria, which says that the EU is reneging on its promise to aid SA development.

Pretoria officials have also expressed concern that the free trade deal will lead to a loss of income from customs tariffs for members of the Southern African Customs Union, which comprises South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia.

Earlier this week, EU chief negotiator Philippe Soubestre said that given its level of economic development, South Africa could not be given the restriction-free access to European markets accorded to other, poorer African states.

Little sign of end to lethal taxi wars

Star 15/12/98

(332)

Investigations of the kingpins have resulted in a file of 50 'mafia-style' bosses in the industry, but understaffed investigators are not making much impact

By Phalane Motale
Crime Reporter

Taxi violence continued this year despite several peace initiatives. Every week – somewhere in South Africa – taxi passengers, owners or drivers were caught in the crossfire of a war waged by paid assassins.

The arrest of taxi bosses and hitmen allegedly involved in the deaths of hundreds of innocent operators and passengers was expected to quell the tension in the industry. Instead, the murder, mayhem and chaos continued.

Around 1 000 passengers have been killed and countless others wounded in the crossfire of taxi-gang shootouts since 1994, according to Director Neville Thoms, head of the Presidential Special Taxi Task Team (PSTTT).

That does not include the number of drivers and association bosses slain in contract killings.

The PSTTT, which has been investigating kingpins and executives for the past two years, has compiled profiles of about 50 "mafia-style bosses" and claims it is closing the dragnet on the criminal elements.

But with just seven staff helping Thoms in Gauteng – the province with the most killings – the odds are not favourable. The roots of the black taxi industry extend to more than 60 years ago when the first recorded taxi operated in Katlehong in 1939.

Ironically, it is still one of the areas affected by the taxi violence.

After many years of hardships faced by road transportation in general, and the black taxi operator in particular, the Transportation Act 39 of 1930 was finally repealed in 1977 and led to the deregulation of the industry. An important concession was that, for the first time, minibuses could be used as taxis.

But the restrictions and red tape which the prospective taxi operators had to go through when they applied for licences frustrated a number of would-be owners. Some resorted to illegal or pirate taxi operators – who have now unfortunately become an important element in the ongoing violence.

At the centre of the disputes is the control of routes – particularly lucrative long distance routes – and ranks. There have been several moves by national and provincial transport officials to break the spiral of violence.

Last week the Gauteng provincial government appointed a commission to investigate the roots of the violence.

Wesley Mpau, regional president of the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) welcomed the move – with reservations.

"We want an inquiry. But it is a known fact that the same police who will be appointed to investigate are part of the criminal elements involved in the shootings," Mpau said.

Since 1996, 12 policemen were charged in connection with violence in the industry but none have been prosecuted.

Mpau said he had held meetings with police, even pointing out who the perpetrators were, but nothing had happened. "Instead of arresting them, these criminals are roaming free, planning to kill again."

THYS DULLAART



Taxi-boss cops in the dock

By CHRIS HLONGWA

CP 20/12/98

WHILE the Transport Department is conducting a full-scale probe into the issuing of hundreds of fraudulent taxi permits, some brazen taxi bosses do not apparently bother to get any kind of permit – no public driving permit, no carrier permit, nor a roadworthiness certificate – because they are policemen.

Six of these cops are to appear in the Mtubatuba magistrate's court, north of KwaZulu-Natal tomorrow on a host of charges in connection with operating an illegal taxi service.

They are Hezekial Bhengu, who works in the Hluhluwe stock theft unit, Petros Mkhize at the KwaMsane charge office, and Meshack Nkosi, Sipho Ximba, Robertson Khumalo and Timothy Khumalo, all based at Mtubatuba.

Nine taxis of the illegal service have been impounded pending the outcome of the trial.

The six were arrested earlier in the week with eight civilians, all nabbed in a joint operation by detectives from Port Shepstone on the South Coast, the Durban City Police special taxi team and the Mtubatuba local protection services.

They face about 30 charges under the Road Traffic Ordinance.

"The policemen allegedly drove and\or allowed persons in their employ to drive taxis without carrier permits, public driving permits and\or certificates of roadworthiness," said SAPS spokesperson Vishnu Naidoo in a statement.

TRANSPORT - PVT. - GENERAL

1999

Taxi violence flares again in Pretoria

(332)

By McKeed Kotlolo

POLICE have identified the five people, including four taxi operators, killed in renewed taxi violence in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, in the past two days.

Three men were shot dead and four sustained injuries during an attacked by two gunmen in Block W, Soshanguve about 4.30pm on Tuesday.

The victims were, according to the police, standing outside a house in Block W while others were repairing a minibus taxi when two occupants of a BMW sprayed them with bullets.

Taxi violence has plagued Soshanguve and Mabopane in the past two years because of disputes between rival associations, the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association and the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association.

Captain Morné van Wyk of Pretoria police identified the victims as Johannes Motlhalega, Johannes Habe and Samuel Morewa.

Two of the dead were reported to be members of the association.

Two more taxi operators, a 40-year-old owner and his driver, were shot dead in Block T by two gunmen who escaped on foot in the same evening. They were armed with handguns.

Van Wyk said the two were stopped by two men about 8.45pm. The men opened fire on the two taxi men, hitting one in the chest and the other in the head.

He said the driver managed to run about 100m from the vehicle before he collapsed and died.

It was still not clear which association the two victims were affiliated to. However, earlier reports stated that they were members of SALLDTA.

Move on defective minibuses

(333) Star 27/1/99

Unions seek to structure industry and take many dangerous vehicles off roads

BY EDDIE JAYIYA

Transport unions have called on the provincial government to put the brakes on taxi drivers using defective minibuses.

General secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) Randall Howard said defective vehicles caused road fatalities and injuries, and the unions believed that legislation should stop drivers using such vehicles.

"We have discussed our proposals for legislation against defective minibuses with the Gauteng transport MEC Joyce Kgoali. These vehicles often cause dangers to the commuters and the environment.

"Many families have lost breadwinners because of defective minibuses and we call on the Government to assist us in ridding the industry of faulty vehicles," he said.

The South African Taxi Council (SATC) national co-ordinator Maurice Bokaba said the unions also discussed their proposals on working conditions with Gauteng province.

"SATC will hold talks with owners to set in place bargaining structures, conditions of employment, capacity building, and government assistance to purchase cheaper vehicles."

Bokaba said the unions were recommending a 60-hour week, 12 days sick leave per annum, 21 days annual leave and training and education for the drivers, a minimum wage of R2 500 per month, a further provision for subsistence allowance and proper accommodation for long distance drivers.

The unions propose that a grading system be researched for the categories of drivers, rank marshals, administrators, car washers and patrol squads in order to link grading to wages and training in the taxi industry.

Bokaba said the union would co-ordinate all taxi campaigns and activities within TGWU to realise "our objectives of membership and recognition".

He said drivers were being dismissed unfairly, including for their involvement in union activities. "We call on all employers to join hands in developing the taxi industry on a growth path of prosperity through regulation, peace and stability. We want an industry which is no longer ravaged by senseless loss of life through violence and accidents.

"We will strive for an industry that is efficient, reliable, safe and affordable transport sector for the commuters."

Transport spokesperson Kate Bapela said the MEC supported the restructuring process in the industry.

"We encourage the employers and employees to negotiate working conditions. We always hold talks with the stakeholders and we will look at their proposals, including the introduction of the legislation on safety and working conditions," she said.

A Department of Labour spokesperson said the Basic Conditions of Employment Act covered all taxi drivers who worked for owners.

"If the driver is employed to drive a taxi for the owner, there is an employer/employee relationship. But drivers who drive their own minibuses are not covered by the act," he said.

Taxi bodies back latest moves to end violence

(332)

By Eddie Jayiya

The national taxi associations yesterday threw their weight behind anti-terror measures the Government has introduced to combat terrorism, especially in the Western Cape.

The measures were triggered by the spate of violence and bombings in the Western Cape, and can be used in other parts of the country. This was established yesterday at a meeting in Pretoria where a forum was established representing all stakeholders in the taxi industry.

Joe Boweni, managing director of the South African National Taxi Council, said the new measures would reduce the level of violence in the taxi industry and lead to peace and stability.

But he rejected suggestions that, by supporting the measures, the associations were admitting there was covert terrorism in the industry.

"In fact we say the Government, through its civil servants, must shoulder the blame for the ongoing violence." Boweni added: "The associations will work closely with the Government and its agencies to eradicate violence in the industry."

He said the new 26-person forum, made up of members drawn from the taxi industry and government officials and including the board members of five provincial taxi co-operatives, would address pressing socio-economic issues and other problems in the industry. Violence and conflict were top priorities.

"For sustained success," Boweni said, "there is a need for ongoing government support, private sector involvement through economic empowerment partnerships and proper co-ordination of all efforts aimed at the development of the industry."

► Move on faulty minibuses
... Page 7

R97m Russian minibus deal for SA taxi owners

(332)

EDDIE JAYIYA CT 28/11/99

JOHANNESBURG: Russian minibus taxis will be seen on the roads in the next two months as taxi owners look to the East for affordable vehicles.

The South African National Taxi Council (Sataco) has announced that 5 500 fully-assembled minibuses will arrive in South Africa in March.

There are also plans to manufacture the vehicles locally. Sataco has clinched a R97 million partnership with a Russian company to set up an assembly plant in Hammanskraal in North West Province. The plant was previously owned by the former Bophuthatswana government.

Sataco managing director Joe Boweni said the ambitious project would create employment for 4 800 South Africans.

Russian technicians will arrive in South Africa in March on a three-year contract to train workers on a one-year course.

Boweni said about 380 000 minibuses had to be replaced and that his organisation had been forced to look elsewhere for vehicles. "The maintenance costs and high prices of minibuses have prompted us to look to the Russians for affordable and reliable taxis.

"The current price of a local minibus will be enough to buy two of these new taxis. This is a turning-point for the industry and it will be much easier for the members to replace the current fleet."

The Russian vehicles will be sold by black dealers. Boweni said that most of the present taxi dealers were white and manufacturers were still reluctant to enter into partnership with taxi owners.

"We were upset when Toyota South Africa sold shares to Toyota Japan instead of forging links with the taxi owners. We are the buyers of the company's minibuses and we thought they would consider us before seeking foreign partners.

"We are using this deal to revolutionise the industry and we will soon sign a contract with a leading South African tyre company. We want to move to other spheres of transport," he added.

Taxi body seeks state help to import Russian minibuses

By Eddie Javiya

The South African National Taxi Council has asked Deputy President Thabo Mbeki for a three-year relaxation of import duties to enable it to sell 5 500 imported Russian minibus taxis to its members for up to R30 000 less than Japanese-origin models.

The Gazelle minibus, used in London and popular in the US, is a 20-seater which can be modified for local conditions. The rear-wheel-drive vehicle has a four-cylinder in-line petrol engine which gives it a top speed of 115km/h.

Taxi council managing director Joe Boweni confirmed that his organisation had sent a request to Mbeki asking for import-duty relaxation. Mbeki has referred the letter to the Department of Trade and Industry.



Lower duties sought ... the taxi industry is looking to the Russian "Gaz" as a cheaper replacement for Japanese minibus taxis.

"We are appealing to the Government to grant us a three-year 'save' on import duties. We want a special dispensation and we hope the Government will help us," Boweni said.

The 5 500 vehicles are due to arrive in March. The council has clinched a R97-million partnership deal with a Russian company to set up an assembly plant at Hammanskraal in North West province. South Africans will own 60% of the company.

Boweni said the project would create employment for 4 800 South Africans. Russian technicians would arrive in the country next month to train workers.

Boweni said high maintenance costs and escalating prices had forced his organisation to look elsewhere for reliable and cheaper vehicles.

The import-duty request is likely to run into opposition from local car manufacturers.

"Anyone who imports a car pays import duties (50,5%) and we expect these guys to do the same," a spokesperson for the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of SA said. "They must ensure there is after-sales service and technical backup. The operational costs of the car's lifespan should also be taken into consideration."

He warned it did not make sense to import a cheaper vehicle only to find out it was difficult and expensive to obtain parts and accessories.

THEMBA HADEBE



Menace ... hotel guests say taxi drivers threaten those who do not use their services.

Court forces council to enforce by-law

Star 11/2/99

By Anna Cox

The Johannesburg High Court yesterday issued an order forcing the Greater Johannesburg Metro Council to enforce its by-laws.

The mandamus – an order of court forcing a statutory body to carry out its duties – was granted to Johannesburg company PBI Investments, which owns a hotel in Mitchell Street, Berea.

Four years ago, an illegal taxi rank was established in the street. For years, the owners tried to get the council to remove the taxi rank, but to no avail.

PBI's attorney, Solly Gross, said taxi drivers threatened hotel guests and anyone who transported them. Many of the guests came from north Africa for medical attention.

In the mandamus, Mr Justice Hussain ordered the council to take steps within 10 days "to abate the nuisance which it has permitted to arise and continue". The council was ordered to pay costs.

Last week, a Sandton attorney, Irwin Levin, also fed up with what he says is negligence of its duties by Greater Johannesburg's Eastern council, served notice on both the council and the metro of his intention to apply for a mandamus.

Transport MEC puts herself in the firing line of taxi war

A woman has taken on the taxi industry but someone could get hurt, writes **Jonny Steinberg**

BD 25/2/99 (332)

IN APRIL last year, taxi association leaders engaged in a bitter turf war over the routes from Soshanguve and Mabopane took time out from their battle to snigger. Former trade unionist Joyce Kgoali had just been appointed Gauteng transport MEC, and word from the corridors of power was that she was on the war path.

In an industry where men rule vast fiefdoms and women stay at home, news that a middle-aged black woman was out for blood courted laughter. But the chuckling was short-lived.

"Picture her first meeting with us," a Pretoria taxi leader recalled last week. "A big old *gogo* walks into the room and takes her seat among hardened war veterans. She immediately senses the silent derision, sits up straight in her chair and calmly says: 'I am in charge now. Either you get on board, or you'll get f...ed over.' She had our attention."

Sounds good for an MEC with a particularly difficult portfolio. But opinions were not to stay completely positive. Kgoali arrived at a time when some of the big boys in the taxi industry were feeling a mite uncomfortable. A presidential task team had just been appointed to investigate taxi violence, and word on the street was that it had a list of 180 people it had vowed to nail within a year. The national transport department also had its daggers out, insisting that the days of fiefdoms were over and that everyone would have to tender for routes.

"Kgoali came in with a tantalising offer," a long-time observer of the industry recalled. "She said: 'Shake hands under the auspices of my mediation and I will give you profile as peace makers. Resolve your differences with me, in front of the cameras, and you have a future.'"

In July Kgoali announced she would bring peace to the Gauteng industry within six months. She took the leaders of the warring Soweto associations, Top Six and the Witwatersrand Taxi Association, to a weekend retreat in Cape Town. Then she did the same with Pretoria's two embattled associations — Saldta and Feldta.

By October, both the Soweto and the Pretoria conflicts appeared to be resolved. Leaders from both sides smiled into the cameras, a satisfied Kgoali sitting between them, the ink on the peace agreements drying on the table in front of them.

But it was precisely at this point, when Kgoali began to appear as something of a miracle maker, that the story began to twist. Disgruntled murmurings emerged from certain quarters in the presidential task team, the National Intelligence Agency — which had recently been tasked with examining taxi violence — and the national transport department.

"Scratch beneath the surface of Kgoali's miraculous peace agreements and you will find that they are entirely empty," said a source in the intelligence community. "Leaders shaking hands in front of the cameras is in itself a hollow gesture.

"The crux is whether taxi associations are prepared give up their fiefdoms, relinquish control over routes and submit to an open tender process." The key to the taxi industry puzzle is the finesse and sophistication with which government persuades the maflosi to relinquish their empires.

"Examine the fine print of Kgoali's agreements and you will find no acknowledgement that routes are public entities and that associations can only use them under the aegis of performance-driven contracts. In truth, Kgoali was lucky. She entered the stage when Wata was weak and battered in Soweto, and Feldta was in a similar position in Pretoria. These so-called agreements were simply the conclusion of a long and bitter war over turf."

Kgoali responded indignantly. "You are asking us to solve the whole mess in one fell swoop," her spokesman, Kate Bapela, said. "It is public knowledge that the campaign to register associations and regulate routes, Operation Vuka, is in its infancy. If that process fails, then criticise. But not before."

In November, Kgoali's detractors began to turn the screw. An intelligence report was leaked charging Kgoali with obstructing the presidential task team. In effect, the report argued the MEC was hiding suspects of violent crimes under her political coat-tails and giving them political credibility.

Kgoali, rattled by the report and wounded by its insinuations, responded by announcing an independent commission of inquiry into the causes of taxi violence in Gauteng, a definitive indication that she was protecting nobody. But the immediate response only deepened her problems. It appeared that some of those she wooed into peace agreements began to suspect she had betrayed them.

"First the MEC takes people to a weekend retreat and tells them to open their hearts and spill the beans," said a taxi leader who attended one of the cathartic events. "Now she says she will nail your ass to the wall. Conflicting signals to say the least."

Others in the industry, however, openly questioned whether the commission was a whitewash. "The chairman of the commission is a little-known 28-year-old lawyer (Lindi Nkosi-Thomas)," Gauteng taxi council chairman Joe Mabaso said. "If the MEC is serious, she should appoint a high-profile judge, a person with a reputation to defend, someone who must be seen to succeed. She also put two policemen from the taxi violence unit on the commission.

"There are simply too many allegations of corruption against the unit. Nobody will be comfortable giving sensitive evidence."

Nor did Kgoali's move please her detractors in the intelligence community. "Why is a transport MEC convening a commission of inquiry into crime?" asked the intelligence source. "Does she have the investigative and coercive back-up to follow through on the reports' findings? There is already a presidential task team hunting the taxi industry's killers. What on earth does she think she is doing?"

Kgoali is clearly flying close to the sun. Her pronouncements are dramatic, her every move aggressively public, the logic of her actions not always easy to follow. Yet, in fairness to the MEC, her detractors have not yet been proved right.

Last week, Kgoali convened a mass meeting of the Gauteng taxi industry attended by 1 500 people. Nobody was allowed in before donning a T-shirt advertising Operation Vuka — the programme to bring the industry under regulatory control.

"People have been dying," Kgoali told the gathering. "Civil society is asking what is going on. I must get to the bottom of this. I will protect nobody."

In person, the MEC gives the impression of a generous and affable woman, full of energy, shooting om the hip. "We are talking about disarming combatants," Kgoali said. "Somebody has to put her neck on the line."

Loudly and somewhat clumsily, Kgoali has indeed put herself in the firing line. Who will get hurt the MEC or the demons of the taxi industry, remains, for now, a moot point.



Joyce Kgoali has put herself in the firing line

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BD 25/2/99 332

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

Taxi war threatens jobs

Codeta warns employers to stop ferrying own staff

ARG 26/2/99 (332)

HENRI DU PLESSIS AND JOYFUL MLAMLI MANELI
STAFF REPORTERS

Hundreds of Khayelitsha residents may lose their jobs after a demand by the Congress of Democratic Taxi Associations (Codeta) that employers stop picking up and dropping off their own workers.

Codeta leaders have handed threatening letters to farmers, construction company representatives and other employers of non-skilled and semi-skilled labour, warning them to stop ferrying Khayelitsha people to and from work.

In the letter, the taxi group lays claim to having the sole permits to transport people to and from the township and gives employers until next Monday to stop providing workers with company transport.

But farmers and builders have struck back, saying they will simply stop using labour from the township and find their workers elsewhere.

Codeta has warned that ignoring its demands could result in fines of R600 and a confiscation of vehicles.

Spokesman Alfred Gagela said an influx of buses, trucks and vans obstructed routes on which Codeta members were permitted to work.

"We have a number of cases where our cars have been damaged and people got away with impunity," he said.

"Big lorries are meant to load sand and stones, not people. They just stop and load people on and off without considering that we have proper permits to do that.

"We work with people and they do not realise they are taking the bread away from us."

Mr Gagela said buses were beginning to outnumber taxis and most buses operating between Khayelitsha and Wynberg and Bellville were not licensed to do so.



HANNES THIART

Taxi monopoly: the Congress of Democratic Taxi Associations has given farmers and other employers until Monday to stop providing their own transport for Khayelitsha workers

Codeta has also directed its anger at farmers who use their own transport to collect workers. One farmer, who asked not to be named as he was afraid of being victimised, said he would stop employing people from the area if necessary, as he understood people's fear of taxi operators.

"These taxi people are nothing but thugs who want to go back to those days of the ugly taxi violence and gangsterism," he said.

"It wasn't the poor, unemployed people who were dishing out the letters. These guys were the fat cats, driving long shiny cars. They are the ones actually handing out the letters.

"As employers, we can no longer fight for the workers against this kind of intimidation. Now they will have to look out for themselves.

"From March 1, I will simply not go there any more to hire people. I cannot put my loyal full-time workers, my vehicles and my property at risk."

He expressed sympathy for people who

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ARGUS, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1999

Taxi threat puts jobs on the line

ARG 26/2/99 (332)

From page 1

would lose jobs because of this. "I understand the terrible fear the people have for these louts," said the farmer.

"These taxi people have no morals. They simply burn down the house of the person who goes against them."

Outrage was expressed at the Codeta action, with employers saying that even although there was no clear, direct threat in the letter, the intent seemed clear when considered in the light of past taxi violence.

"They think because they have the permits to operate their taxis around Khayelitsha, their taxis should be the only mode of transport people use.

"We are not being paid for the transport we provide our workers, it is just a convenience for both worker and employer."

Employers said farmers from Stellenbosch, Joostenbergvlakte and even as far as Malmesbury provided work for people from Khayelitsha.

"It is not as if there aren't people elsewhere looking for jobs. There are many other places we can go to find workers."

Workers themselves have denounced Codeta's strong-arm tactics.

Silvia Ncaphayi, a single mother of five, earns only R80 a week and appreciates the daily lift arranged by her employer.

"These taximen want to bury us alive. We only work because we want to make ends meet," she said.

Another farm worker, who lives in Site B and asked to be known only as Florence, has three children to support on her weekly income of R80.

"I have worked on a farm for eight years. If we cannot afford transport, who is going to give us work?" she asked.

Farmers defy threats by Khayelitsha taxi drivers

(332)
STAFF REPORTERS
ARG 1/3/99

Farmers and construction companies were still picking up workers from Khayelitsha today, in spite of a threat by taxi drivers to prevent this.

Last week, members of the Congress of Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta) hand-delivered threatening letters to farmers, construction company representatives and other employers, warning them to stop ferrying their own staff to and from Khayelitsha from today.

They claimed these lifts were interfering with their business, and that only Codeta taxis had the necessary permits to carry workers.

In Khayelitsha early today the situation was calm, with farmers picking up workers at the usual spots on the on-ramps to the highway.

There was no response from taxi-drivers.

The Codeta threats have attracted anger from employers, the African National Congress and Khayelitsha residents alike.

While Codeta spokesman Alfred Galela denied the threats affected farm workers because they were picked up and dropped off outside Khayelitsha, farmers said they, too, had been given the letters.

Some employers said the threat would simply mean people losing their jobs, because they would not risk their lives and vehicles in the face of the Codeta threat.

The ANC provincial executive committee has expressed concern. Spokesman Cameron Dugmore said it had set up a committee to look into the situation, saying the party was worried the threats would cost people their jobs.

Wilburforce Kutta, secretary of the Khayelitsha Development Forum, said he had called for a meeting between taxi drivers and the forum to try to resolve the problem.

East Metropole police spokeswoman Anine de Beer said police would not allow intimidation of any kind.

Mpumalanga taxi industry wants a stake in toll roads

CT(BR) 2/3/99 (332) (259)

BONTLE HEADBUSH

Johannesburg — Trans African Concessions (TRAC), the toll road operator, said yesterday that the Mpumalanga Provincial Taxi Office was interested in acquiring an equity stake in TRAC.

Trevor Jackson, the chief executive of TRAC, said talks between TRAC and the taxi industry about a possible acquisition in TRAC began in December last year.

"The taxi industry is very interested in becoming a stakeholder, and even though all shares in TRAC have been allocated, it would still be possible for them to purchase a stake from someone," said Jackson.

TRAC, which won the 30-year concession to build and operate the N4 toll road in 1997, also announced a partnership it had entered into with the Mpumalanga taxi industry aimed at improving safety along the route.

This included payment of a standard fee of R8,00 by all taxis travelling along the N4 toll route through the Middelburg plaza.

TRAC would also train all the taxi drivers in road reserve conditions and first aid, and provide them with a toll-free number to report any accidents on the route.

"It is encouraging to have the taxi industry join hands with us in the interests of the success of the N4 toll route and in particular in the common goal of safety along the route," said Jackson.

He said the partnership would mean improved safety and co-operation, benefiting both parties, the N4 toll route and the Maputo Development Corridor Initiative.

SOWETAN Friday March 12 1999

Taxis up in arms over extra buses

By Gershwin Chuenyane

HUNDREDS of commuters were left stranded in Atteridgeville, west of Pretoria, yesterday after minibus taxis, protesting a sudden increase in buses on their routes, blocked main roads.

Unconfirmed reports said two people were injured during altercations between taxi drivers and bus commuters.

A spokesman for the Kalafong Hospital confirmed that only one woman with a gunshot wound was admitted in the morning.

Acting superintendent Dr Lize Freislich said the woman sustained a wound in her right thigh.

Local police spokesman Sergeant Phillip Kgomosotho said a man was taken to hospital in an ambulance after he was assaulted, allegedly by a group of taxi drivers, in Komane Street only metres from the police station.

The minibus taxis blocked the township's entrances and main routes to prevent buses, owned by the Atteridgeville Bus Service, from operating. The blockade started at about 4am, Kgomosotho said.

He said an official of the Atteridgeville-Saulsville Taxi Organisation told him that the reason for the blockade was to protest against the introduction of more buses on certain routes used by taxis.

A spokesman for the South African Long and Local Distance Taxi Association Mr Wesley Mpau confirmed the reason for the protest. He said negotiations with stakeholders had been suspended until one of their members, arrested for attempted murder, was released.

He said taxis resumed operating later in the day and did not have a problem with buses resuming their operation "as long as they do not interfere with taxi routes".

Spokesman for the bus company Mr Johan Stegmann said they planned to continue operating as normal tomorrow because the police would ensure commuter and bus-driver safety by escorting the buses.

Codeta agrees to hang fire on employers' taxi services

(332) ARG 13/3/99

MOSES MTHETHELELI MACKAY

Workers from Khayelitsha have been given a few days' breathing space before losing their jobs. The Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta) has agreed to hang fire on its bid to ban employers from ferrying workers to and from work.

Last month, Codeta handed threatening letters to farmers, building companies and other employers that arrange transport for their workers living in Khayelitsha.

Codeta said it had the sole right to transport people to and from the township and gave employers until the beginning of this month to stop providing transport for workers. Codeta claimed employers could be fined R600 and have their vehicles confiscated.

Employers reacted by saying they would have to lay off staff from Khayelitsha and find new workers elsewhere.

Codeta has now agreed meet employers and trade unions on March 24 to discuss the issue.

Codeta met farmers' representatives and two construction worker unions in Cape Town this week to begin negotiations. Codeta agreed to a moratorium until the meeting in two weeks' time.

Codeta chairman David Gezile said: "We have decided to convene a meeting later this month. We urge the media to inform farmers and other company representatives about the meeting at a venue still to be announced."

He said the African National Congress, the SA National Civics Organisation and other parties were welcome to attend.

The ANC's Cameron Dugmore said the party welcomed the moratorium. "The ANC does not support gate-keeping of any kind which will lead to conflict that will affect the livelihood of workers."

He said the ANC would attend the meeting to help resolve the matter.

Meanwhile, farmers and other employers should be left to transport people to and from work, Mr Dugmore said.

He said the ANC would like to see the police take firm action against individuals and organisations intimidating employers or workers.

Raymond Mrhawu, the chairman of Khayelitsha Development Forum, also welcomed the latest arrangement.

"Farmers should transport their workers to and from the area until all players agree on March 24 on what should be done to resolve the problem. This matter should be resolved as a matter of urgency," said Mr Mrhawu.

Johnny Waters, a building contractor from Philippi, welcomed the moratorium and said he would attend the meeting.



Good business ... taxi drivers plying the Pretoria/Johannesburg route have found that smart cards are better than cash.

Smart cards avert taxi conflict

Star 16/3/99 (332)

Commuters and drivers find new system helps to reduce arguments

By Selby Bokaba

Taxi operators are unanimous that the introduction of an electronic smart-card system in minibus taxis travelling between Johannesburg and Pretoria has helped to avert perennial arguments between them and commuters.

Operators at the busy Noord Street taxi rank also said the card system had helped to reduce road accidents because drivers now did not have to turn their necks to collect cash while the taxi was in motion.

Mbongeni Hlongwane, who has been travelling the Johannesburg to Pretoria route every day for the past six years, welcomed the introduction of the cards, saying they had alleviated the tension that used to beset the industry.

Hlongwane said the problems centred mainly around commuters fighting among themselves over change, with some invariably claiming to have been robbed of change by operators.

He said it was difficult initially to adapt to the system, but now most drivers had got used to the new method and were enjoying it.

"There is no robbing one another anymore. The chance-takers have nowhere to hide now," Hlongwane said.

Commuters, however, had mixed feelings about the system.

Some said it was time consuming to stand in queues to buy cards, while others said it was more convenient than using cash.

Andrew Mathe, a college student who commutes between Johannesburg and Pretoria, said that at times, when commuters were in a hurry, they had to stand in queues to buy cards.

"When we used cash, we just had to immediately board and pay," Mathe said.

The smart-card system, introduced last month, is a joint venture between the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association, representing 74 taxi associations in six provinces, and Net 1 Applied Technology Holdings (Aplitec).

The company said commuters could buy reloadable smart cards which could last for five years. For taxi trips, a simple off-line terminal installed in the taxi would transfer payment from the commuter's card to the driver's card.

At the end of the working day, the driver would take his card to a terminal linked to central servers in Johannesburg to settle the transactions.

Police mediating bus-taxi war

By Gershwin Chuenyane

A MEETING to resolve the war over routes in Atteridgeville, Pretoria, between the local taxi association and a bus company, is scheduled to take place at the local police station today.

South African Long and Local Distance Taxi Association (Salldta) spokesman Mr Wesley Mpau confirmed that the meeting, convened and to be mediated by the police, was scheduled for this morning.

Mpau said all stakeholders, including the Atteridgeville Bus Service (ABS) and the Community Policing Forum (CPF), are expected to attend the meeting, which is a follow-up of Friday's meeting that was adjourned.

He said the bus company asked for an adjournment after failing to produce route forms. These would have proved they were operating legally on the routes in the township.

"ABS, through CPF chairman Mr Watson Ncele, informed us that they would make the route forms available to us today at the meeting," Mpau said.

Local police spokesman Sergeant Phillip Kgomosotho also confirmed that the meeting between the stakeholders would be held today at the police station.

ABS spokesman Mr Johan Stegmann said they would definitely attend the meeting and promised that they had ample proof that they were operating legally on the disputed routes.

Although buses and taxis were reportedly operating without hindrance, Stegmann said three of ABS's buses were stopped by taxis and escorted back to the bus depot in Pretoria West's industrial area yesterday.

The allegation was denied by Mpau.

He said members of his organisation were given strict instructions to refrain from any intimidation or acts of violence.

Kgomosotho said he had heard of the allegations but nothing concrete had come of the matter as neither the bus drivers nor the ABS reported the matter to the police.

Minibus taxis blocked main entrances and main routes in the township last week, preventing buses belonging to ABS from operating. Commuters, who included workers and scholars, were left stranded for hours.

Two people believed to be commuters were seriously injured during the tension, allegedly between a number of taxi drivers and commuters. A woman was shot in the thigh. Those injured were taken to Kalafong hospital.

A taxi driver was arrested for attempted murder and this resulted in Salldta officials walking out of a meeting on Thursday in protest against his arrest.

Taxi owners said they were protesting against the sudden increase in the number of buses on the routes in the township. They also complained that they were not consulted by anyone when the new move was implemented.

March 18 1999

Border taxis must be insured

Star 18/3/99

'No insurance, no licence'

By Anna Cox

Taxis travelling to neighbouring countries will no longer be able to cross border posts without proof of valid passenger liability cover.

In a major breakthrough for road safety, the Cross Border Road Transport Agency (CBRTA) has decided that it will no longer issue taxi licences or permits, authorising operators to undertake cross border road transport, without this cover.

The agency, which operates on a commercial basis, at arm's length from the national transport department, recently took this decision in the interests of promoting road safety and restoring passengers' confidence in the industry, said chief executive August Maluleka.

"This was unthought of in the industry before, but to improve cross border taxi operations, we decided to make it compulsory. Although there was initial resistance from the industry, we are certain it will become an accepted and standard practice," he said.

The CBRTA, because of perceptions of the taxi industry, had great difficulty persuading the insurance industry to provide such cover, as no underwriter was prepared to assume the risk to cover potential applicants, he said.

"We embarked on serious and lengthy negotiations with the insurance industry and three companies eventually agreed to cover taxis," said Maluleka.

A pilot scheme was launched in November last year and 360 taxis received cover.

"The results have been wonderful. There has only one minor accident reported on the Swaziland route. The drivers, knowing they are paying for insurance cover, appear to be extra cautious now.

"We would like to congratulate the cross border taxi operators on a job well done. Together we will continuously endeavour to improve our passengers' confidence and the promotion of the safety on our roads," said Maluleka.

Bus service fails to bring evidence (332)

Sowetan 18/8/99

By Gershwin Chuenyane

THE Atteridgeville Bus Service – which is involved in a row with the local taxi association over routes – failed to produce documents on Tuesday to prove that the company was operating legally in the township.

The documents had been demanded by local taxi associations at a meeting called to resolve the dispute.

The Atteridgeville-Saulsville Taxi Owners Association (Astoa) had demanded that the ABS produce a route form, a vehicle registration form, the latest tender document, the *Government Gazette* which carried the advertisement for the tender and also to justify the number of buses per route.

Taxi operators blocked routes on Monday and demanded that the ABS stop its operations in the Pretoria township.

Documentary proof

Astoa spokesman Mr Wesley Mpau said the ABS failed to produce the documentary proof of their operations in Atteridgeville.

He added that should the bus company again fail at a meeting scheduled for yesterday, the two parties would have to "sit down and come up with a solution because Astoa wants the dispute resolved amicably".

"We as the taxi industry will not opt for extreme measures by saying no to buses because there exists no community in this country without buses," he said.

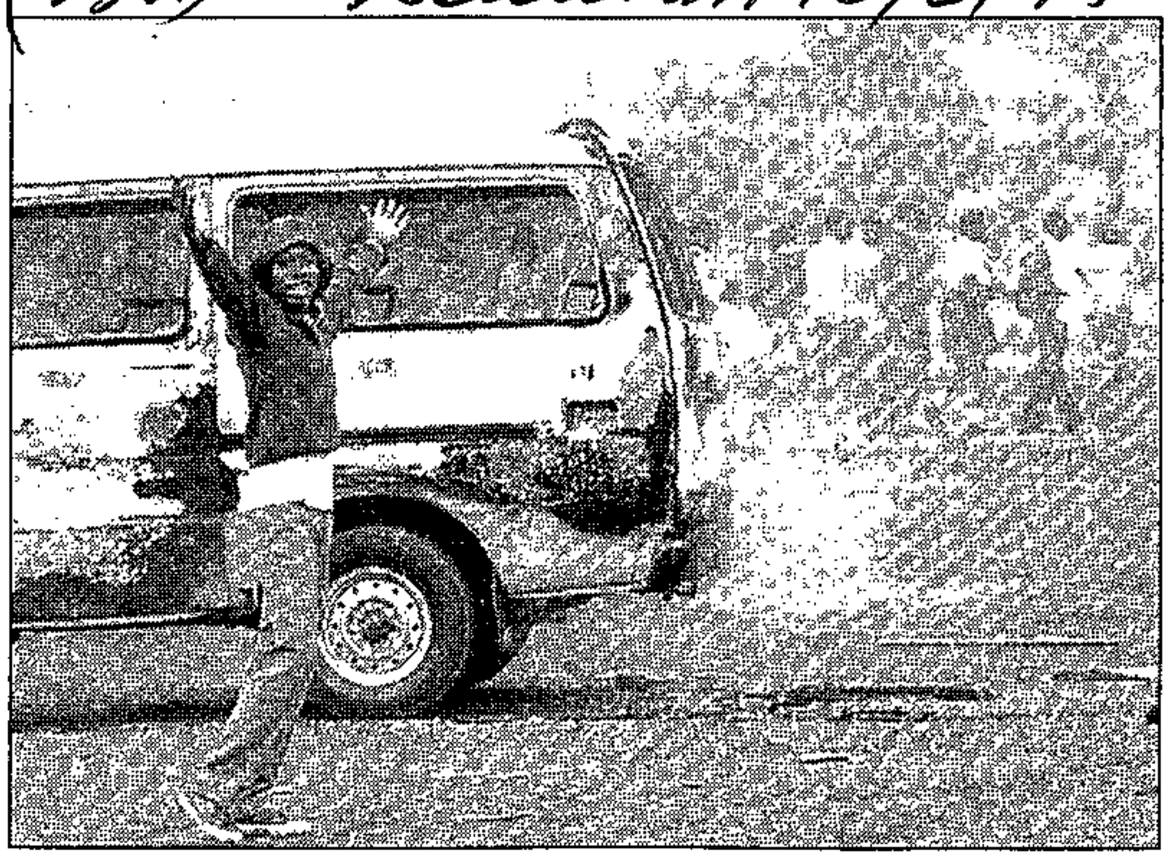
ABS marketing manager Mr Godfrey Mokoboto could not be reached for comment.

Sapa reports that an assistant director in the Gauteng transport department, Ms Nowethu Mphati, said on Tuesday that the bus company had questionable permits to operate in the area. Mphati said her department would investigate the validity of the documents.

The root of violence

Although an enquiry into strife in the taxi industry has just begun, certain patterns are already emerging. **Sharon Chetty** considers developments.

(332) Sowetan 18/3/99



Eyewitnesses of taxi violence have assisted a Gauteng-based commission of inquiry into the conflict by pointing out the perpetrators.

A COMMISSION of inquiry probing taxi violence has had eyewitnesses point out perpetrators and been told of many inadequacies in police investigations into several acts of violence.

The two-person commission, comprising chairman Advocate Lindi Nkosi-Thomas and attorney Mohamed Randera, has been set up by the Gauteng premier's office and is the first to inquire specifically into the ongoing violence in the industry. They are required to table their report – together with recommendations – by May 1.

Randera says that while there have been other inquiries, this one focuses on the violence that has plagued the industry for several years. It is looking into the causes of the conflict and into "related unresolved deaths" in the province.

Since its work started, more than a month ago, the commission has had numerous people contact them with information, and so far hearings have been held in relation to incidents in the West Rand area.

Although it is still too early to discern trends and Randera is reluctant to pre-empt the commission's findings, he did confirm that a lot of the conflict centred on commercial competition.

"Essentially routes are contested. There are also power struggles and acts of intimidation between organisations and between individuals in organisations," he said.

Several witnesses have also told the commission about problems with police investigations and Randera says that if necessary, the commissioners will comment on and make recommendations regarding police probes.

Radio and newspaper advertisements have publicised the hearings and Randera says that despite the "low-key" nature of the sittings, many witnesses, including several who were victims of the conflicts, have come forward to relate their experiences of the violence and to offer their views on the causes.

The hearings, being held in the Johannesburg city centre, have been open to the public, but witnesses who fear intimidation will also be allowed to testify *in camera* to protect their identities.

Although for many years Government regulation of the taxi industry has been cited as a possible way of dealing with some of the problems, Randera says that since the process only started last year, it would be unfair to judge whether or not regulation has led to immediate solutions.

While this latest probe is to be welcomed, especially because it has a specific brief and deadline, Dr Meshack Khosa – research director on democracy and governance at Human Sciences Research Council, and someone who has been researching the industry and its conflicts – raised questions about the timing.

"The report and recommendations are expected literally 30 days before the general elections ... one has to question whether or not the next group of people in office will implement its findings," says Khosa.

Also, it would be unrealistic to expect any prominence to be given to the report in the wake of the electioneering, he says.

Despite the fact that Premier Mathole Motshekga has committed himself to its recommendations, there is no guarantee that either he or the transport MEC Joyce Kgoali will have their jobs after the June 2 elections.

And while the inquiry is now Gauteng based, its findings may have resonance for other areas, but the fact that there is definitely going to be a new national Transport Minister (incumbent Mac Maharaj has already said he will be quitting at the end of this term) also casts doubt on whether or not the findings will be treated with priority.

Khosa says that such lack of continuity meant that the findings of previous investigations, especially that done by the Goldstone Commission, "were wasted".

The Goldstone commission into public violence and intimidation had the task of investigating the violence prevalent in the years of the multi-party negotiations.

In 1993 it looked at the taxi industry and Khosa says that even then its findings pointed to the fact that commercial competition contributed to the conflicts. The recommendations were never dealt with because there was a change in government in 1994.

Khosa says despite the efforts by the present Government to deal with some of the problems through its national taxi task team, it was obvious that a lot of the violence stemmed from competitors in the industry "imposing their own informal rules on each other".

"Quite simply, not all in the industry are organised and there are simply too many taxis chasing too few commuters," says Khosa.

In his view, there has to be "an integrated and comprehensive plan" to deal with the problems and suggests that efforts be made to get taxi drivers and owners "to diversify".

"There has to be a reorientation in thinking ... drivers should be encouraged to think of transporting freight, for example."

The transporting of schoolchildren in an orderly and secure manner could also be another gap in the market that could be developed and filled in, he says.

"There has to be a complete change in attitude ... drivers have to move into new areas and markets and even think about combining the transport of goods and passengers."

Khosa also says that any new plan needs to be implemented at provincial and regional government level so as to be sensitive to the specific problems of that area.

Agreement averts bus and taxi 'war'

Sowetan 19/3/99 (332)

By Gershwin Chuenyane

TWENTY-ONE buses will be withdrawn from Atteridgeville, Pretoria, after an agreement to avert a "war" over routes between the local taxi association and the bus company.

According to Gauteng department of transport and public works director for urban transport Mr Lennox Magwaza, it was agreed that Atteridgeville Bus Service will withdraw 21 of its 28 buses from the Callies Street route.

A further nine buses will be taken off the Atteridgeville-Laudium-Centurion route.

Also included in the agreement is that ABS and the Atteridgeville-Saulsville Taxi Owners Association (Astoa) will form a monitoring committee that will meet on a monthly basis to resolve any problems that may arise in the future.

Astoa spokesman Mr Wesley Mpau hailed the agreement and said it vindicated them.

Mpau said: "I personally want to apologise to the community for the inconvenience caused by the whole fracas."

ABS marketing manager Mr Godfrey Mokoboto confirmed the agreement and said the bus company would stick to the stipulation of its contracts.

Mokoboto said although they would be withdrawing buses from the two routes, commuters needed not to panic because they would stick to their timetables.

● Meanwhile, Atteridgeville police reported that a bus driver has laid a charge of malicious damage to property, robbery and attempted assault against two taxi drivers.

Police spokesman Sergeant Phillip Kgomosotho said an ABS bus driver laid the charges after two taxi drivers slashed four tyres of his bus, took his money bag and threatened to assault him while passengers were getting off the bus in Jeff'sville informal settlement on Tuesday.

The suspects have been arrested.

Minibus 'monuments' plan for war

(330) ARG 22/3/99

New National Party gets tough on traffic offenders and Wiley plans crushing fate for impounded vehicles

CLIVE SAWYER
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Cape Town soon could boast two new roadside monuments, each made from the compacted minibus of a repeat offender against traffic laws.

Meant as a cautionary symbol, each minibus would have been crushed to the size of a suitcase.

Mark Wiley, Western Cape Minister for Community Safety, announced this during the New National Party federal congress in Johannesburg at the weekend.

Mr Wiley said that, although the criminal justice system was the sole preserve of the Government, the Western Cape had illustrated that provinces could do something about zero tolerance for crime.

About 250 minibus taxis had been impounded after last year's taxi violence and, according to road traffic laws, a vehicle impounded three times became forfeit to the state.

This had happened to two taxis already, and, said Mr Wiley: "We're going to put these two taxis in a machine press and put them at the side of the road as an example."

Mr Wiley said later that the minibuses had been impounded during a wider campaign initiated by a task force set up by municipal and provincial traffic authorities, police and the defence force in a bid to bring stability to the minibus taxi industry in the province.

And, in terms of a continuing campaign, unroadworthy minibus taxis and those on wrong routes would be subject to confiscation.

They would be released only if their owners paid any outstanding fines, and an admission-of-guilt fine.

Authorities were also prepared for any protest action by minibus taxi operators, such as blockades.

Low-bed trucks and lifting equipment were ready, and any minibuses seized in such operations could be impounded for a year.

Mr Wiley said the initial phase of the campaign had paid dividends, and the minibus taxi industry was now policing itself.

There would be a further meeting of the task force tomorrow to discuss a visible traffic policing campaign.

Each municipality would be asked to list "choke points" caused by drivers of minibus taxis, and action would be taken in these spots.

The two minibuses facing crushing, Mr Wiley said, had been impounded by Oostenberg traffic officials because they were being used as taxis without permits.

ew gateway to homes opens for poor

te's R500m loan company will dispense cash for houses costing up to R60 000

(123) ARG 16/3/99

IAHLANE
Y BUREAU

500-million institution ady in April to provide pilot project to those uses for less than

housing department's Housing Finance Corpora- stablished Gateway Home th an initial capital of on.

A Gateway loan is a substitute for a bank mortgage and will be paid over eight years in fixed monthly instalments.

At least 50% of the loan will be secured through a pension or provident fund. The loan book will then be sold to investors.

"Essentially, (Gateway) enables formally employed people with a provident fund to combine the loan with a housing subsidy, if eligible, to buy a new house," Housing Minister Sankie Mthembi-Mahanyele told Parliament yesterday.

"The main aim is to enable people to buy houses of between R20 000 and R60 000, depending on their ability to afford loan repayments."

She said accreditation of lenders who would make and service the loans was under way.

Already three banks had applied for accreditation.

Developers who wished to have their projects eligible for Gateway also had applied. Ms Mthembi-Mahanyele said the Government was preparing legislation to force banks to lend to low-income earners.

The draft Fair Lending Practices Bill aims to discourage discrimination on the basis of gender or poverty.

"(This bill) is Government's way of intervening and fulfilling our constitutional obligations to provide access to shelter, by making sure that people's applications for mortgage funding are not rejected simply because they belong to a specific class or gender or lack family status."

Ms Mthembi-Mahanyele said 84% of housing development was subsidy-linked, while the remainder was through credit.

The legislation would force banks and other deposit-taking institutions to disclose information on why certain loan application were turned down, she told the House.

The legislation was not meant to force banks to lend to people who could not pay, but being poor should not be a reason for refusing a loan, she said.

The bill also sought to promote increased lending and disclosure by financial institutions specifically for housing.

Also, it would accelerate the elimination of distortions in lending practices significantly by levelling the playing field.

BD 31/3/99

New venture will empower taxi operators

(332)

Pule Molebeledi

DURBAN — KwaZulu-Natal is set to launch the first multimillion-rand taxi-owned investment company next week in a plan to empower taxi operators.

The new venture, spearheaded by KwaZulu-Natal transport MEC S'bu Ndebele, would result in the Umthombo Investment Company integrating distribution divisions, vehicle insurance and finance, motor assembly and "taxi city" ventures.

The investment company, to be 70% owned by 14 provincial taxi co-operatives, said it was planning to list on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in the next three years.

The firm was still negotiating with other equity partners for the 30% stake.

Ndebele said they took this initiative out of a realisation that the taxi industry was seen as the "step child" and was the most "depressed" industry in SA's business circles.

He said the initiatives were meant to address critical areas facing the industry, like high deposits and instalments paid by taxi operators. This resulted in "death machines" running on the roads and conflicts because of lack of profit, he said.

The KwaZulu-Natal transport department, which has capitalised the project to the tune of R8m — an interest-free grant — would be represented at board level.

George Mahlalela, interim chairman of Umthombo, said the company would play a vital role in the transformation of the economy and ensure real economic empowerment of taxi industry entrepreneurs.

"This would hopefully translate into less violence, better customer focus, employee and business relations, but most of all sustainable growth and employment," he said.

To ensure provision of quality products to the target markets, the firm, with net assets that would hover at R100m by conclusion of the deal, had identified strategic business partners who would bring expert knowledge.

The distribution arm has a supply agreement with Good Year SA tyres and talks have advanced with other parts suppliers.

Loyal Ndwandwe, interim director of the company, said it would own 100% of the insurance company and tyre distribution and own 51% of Malandela motor vehicle assembly.

Ndwandwe said it would not only be the operators who would benefit, but also the taxi users.

Fury as taxi owners get red light in city

Half of 'illegal' operators refused permits

ARG 6/4/99 (332)

BLACKMAN NGORO
STAFF REPORTER

Only half of formerly illegal taxi operators who applied for permits to operate in greater Cape Town have been successful, prompting a row between taxi owners and the provincial transport department.

Adding to the taxi operators' anger is the fact that more than 34 vehicles have been impounded for unroadworthiness.

Taxi operators believe they should be allowed to carry on because they need to earn money to feed their families, whereas the department says the wholesale issuing of permits would result in traffic chaos and taxi wars.

Central to the problem is the announcement by the transport department that it had completed processing 1 700 applications by formerly illegal taxi operators, and 850 had failed to qualify.

Transport spokesman Danny Abrahams said: "They are unhappy about the impounding of unroadworthy vehicles.

"They were given to December 15 to fix up their vehicles. Then they asked for more time and we extended the deadline until January, and then until April 2. Now, they want another postponement until June, while they do nothing about their cars.

"They can't determine the rules of this game."

Mr Abrahams said some applicants had not collected their permits, and other permits would be issued once vehicles had been repaired.

But the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) is angry. Executive member Leslie Mabomba said his organisation had applied for 94 permits, but had been issued only 40.

"The Local Transportation Board said the other 54 don't qualify. But we need the permits to operate and feed our families. There is a conspiracy between the transport department and the police against us. They are using a 1989 law, which they never used before, to impound our vehicles."

A senior Department of Transport official said the wholesale issuing of taxi permits was out of the question.

"If we issue permits anyhow there will be chaos. The result would be wars, because some owners would not make any money so they would seek illegal solutions to make a profit. Permits are issued according to need."

Now the African National Congress has entered the fray, accusing provincial transport minister Piet Meyer of ignoring recommendations by the national taxi task team to legalise small operators.

Former transport minister Leonard Ramatlakane said he had been approached by small operators to intervene on their behalf.

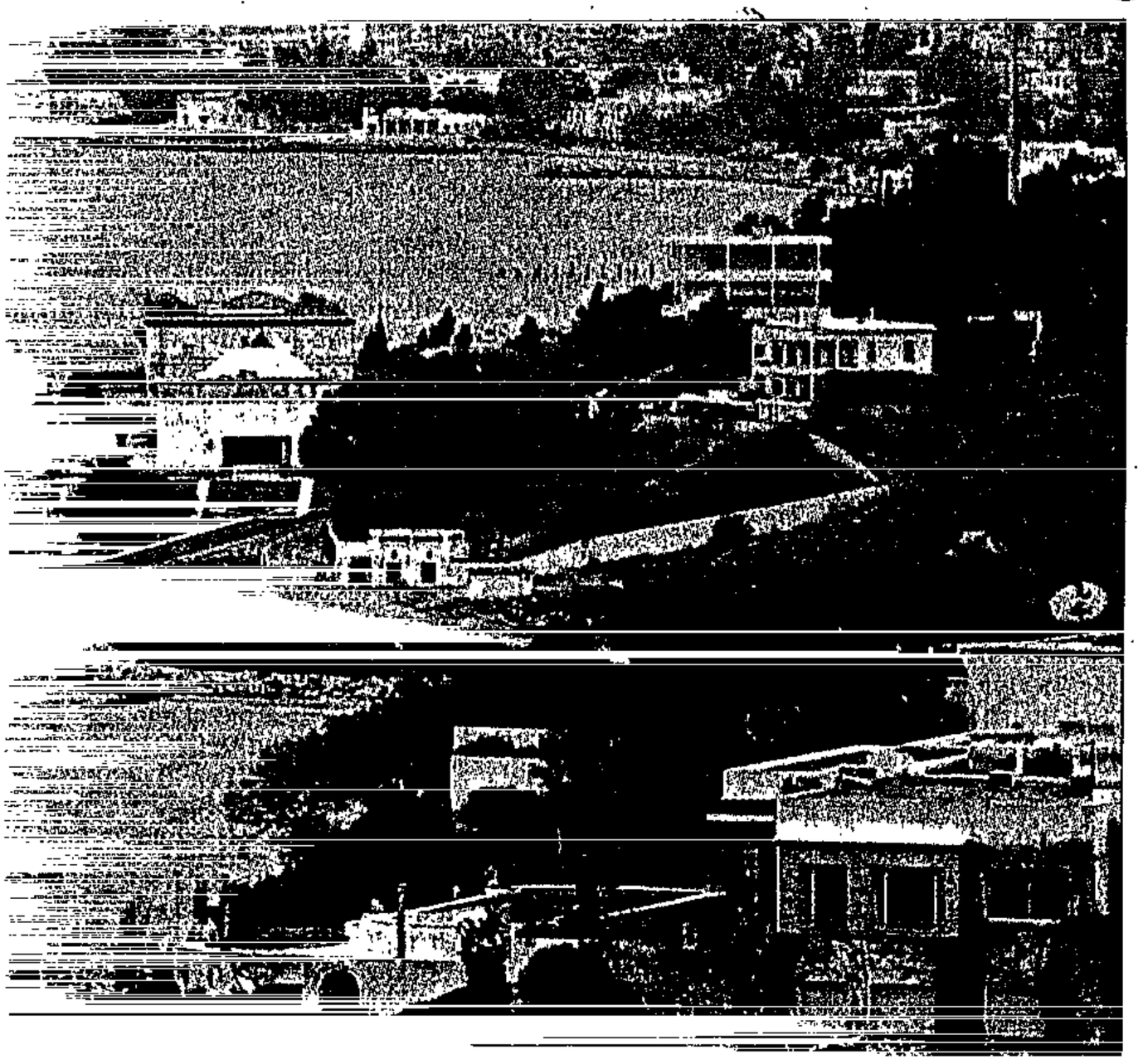
"The minister and the Local Transportation Board must legalise all the 1 700 operators who applied for registration," he said.

US ISSUES

to the real Africa

ARG 1/4/99

ontinent to the information age...



Africa to promote investment in telecommunications. It will take in Tunisia and several other countries

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The notion that Africa's image suffers from a biased Western mindset grows from ignorance of how journalists operate. Media critics seem to assume that each story should offer the current facts plus a full and fair history. We operate as individuals on individual stories limited by space and time.

When news arrives of Sierra Leonean rebels indiscriminately chopping limbs off women and children, reporters do not ask whether it reflects the broader reality of Africa, whether it is fair to Africa's image or how Sierra Leone has made positive contributions to the world.

When tourists are murdered in Uganda, reporters cannot slant the story based on how it might irreparably harm African tourism. That is for the world to decide.

Should journalists, in the interest of Africa's reputation, not report on genocide in the Great Lakes? Should we ignore the larcenous misrule of Mobutu Sese Seko, Laurent Kabila, Daniel Arap Moi or Robert Mugabe?

World leaders generally, and Africans in particular, are chronically hesitant to intervene in the sort of civil wars that plague Africa. If the media suppressed news of the heinous, would anyone ever act decisively?

Part of Africa's problem is the sheer magnitude of crisis news. By my count there are four or five hot wars outside of Africa, including the on-going bombing of Iraq, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Serbia and East Timor. Perhaps there are a few more lower-grade rebellions. In Africa I count wars or rebellions in 10 countries involving armies from 18 nations.

In practice, covering such wars is hugely expensive. The sheer number of conflicts in Africa means most news budgets are drained before reporters get much chance to search for the good news.

I have spent the past three years covering Africa, racing between wars, disasters and political crises. We need hard-hitting crisis news, but I am convinced we need to see the other Africa, the wonderful, exotic, generous, adventurous place that is rarely touched by the media.

Crisis news is necessary but it has become a crutch for editors not courageous or decisive enough to send reporters off the beaten track. Increasingly budgets dictate which reporting ventures in Africa are considered a good value. They implicitly push reporters to stay in capital cities where they can crank out more stories without the high cost of reaching the hinterlands.

As a result the proportion of news resources dedicated to conservation, development, what is working and why is far too low.

In any other continent it would not much matter. But the world's knowledge of Africa is so poor and stereotypes so deep-rooted that a few negative stories can radically shift the balance of investment in ways that would be impossible in continents about which the world has a full, well-grounded knowledge.

And by striking the wrong balance between crisis and non-crisis news, the media affects what may be the most important factor limiting Africa's technological advance – the image of technology that each person holds in his or her psyche.

Asia has raced up the technological ladder in the last half-century because of a very uncomplicated attitude to outside technology.

In contrast, Africans continue to see technology as something alien that requires outside experts. As a result they continue to think of technology as something that must be given either as an act of charity or in exchange for access to resources.

Changing that debilitating self-perception is one of Mr Naidoo's missions for the trip.

He wants to change the view of what is possible by focusing attention on real examples of Africans using technology in their daily lives. For attempting to shine the media spotlight on the unseen, intriguing, positive side of Africa, Mr Naidoo's rally should be commended.

I only hope that once the rally ends, the media barons will hear the call, shift their budgets and let reporters continue to try and discover that other Africa.

Taxi industry revs its engine

Operators unite, form co-operatives and show financial clout by signing multimillion-rand deals

(332)
Star 10/4/99

By ESTELLE RANDALL

South Africa's multibillion-rand taxi industry is beginning to flex its considerable financial muscle, with a listing on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange planned for later this year and the recent signing of several major deals.

Included is a R860-million agreement with a Russian company for the manufacture of taxis in Pretoria and a R90-million deal with Gentyre for the establishment of tyre centres in North West province.

The sudden surge in activity follows the unification of the taxi industry into the South African Taxi Council (Sataco), the establishment of five provincial taxi co-operatives and the formation of a national investment arm.

The industry has an annual turnover of R10-billion and is the largest single user of automobile products in South Africa.

According to the Ministry of Transport, taxis are the biggest movers of commuters, carrying about 2,5 million passengers a day (around 65% of commuters), while buses transport about a million people (about 20%) and just under a million (15%) travel by train.

Transport Ministry spokesperson Didi Moyle said: "The problem up to now has been that the money which the taxi industry generates – through its use of fuel, servicing, parts and tyres – has not gone back into the industry."

Last week, Sataco called for proposals from the private sector for joint ventures. Areas in which proposals have been invited are financial services, fleet management, vehicle manufacturing, spare parts sales and distribution, tyre supply and fitment centres, and smart-card technology.

The taxi industry provides about 125 000 direct jobs and another 300 000 indirect jobs

Fifty-one percent of the proposed company, Ubunye Investments Limited, will be owned by taxi operators organised in Sataco and 49% will be held by investment partners drawn from the private sector. This follows the establishment in September of Sataco (Pty) Limited, an investment arm for the council.

Basil Nagel, chairperson of the council, explained: "For too long we have been associated only with violence and reckless driving. But our industry provides about 125 000 direct jobs and another 300 000 indirect jobs – the panelbeaters, servicing shops, conductors, people who wash taxis at the ranks, those who prepare and sell meals at ranks and so on."

Nagel said that since the industry had united through Sataco and its 12 other national bodies and nine provincial taxi councils, it was time for operators to start drawing financial benefits.

Sataco (Pty) Limited is wholly owned by the estimated 120 000 registered taxi operators who are part of the council, and it negotiates deals on behalf of the industry.

Through government-assisted co-operatives – similar to agricultural co-operatives – the council has already helped to establish joint ventures in provinces such as North West and KwaZulu Natal.

The North West Taxi Association, established in 1995 through the amalgamation of three feuding taxi associations, recently secured a R860-million deal with the Russian Gaz Automobile Manufacturers to establish a vehicle assembly plant in Rosslyn, near Pretoria.

Sataco (Pty) Limited managing director and North West Taxi Association member Joe Mboweni said that in terms of the deal, the Russians would hold 40% of the plant, which was expected to start operations in mid-May. It would provide jobs for 6 800 people.

The North West Taxi Association has also concluded a R90-million deal with Gentyre to establish tyre centres throughout the province.

In KwaZulu Natal, Mthombo Investments, a new empowerment business owned by minibus taxi operators in the province, was launched this week.

R1bn pumped into new taxi company

BD 19/4/99 (332)

Jonny Steinberg

THE taxi industry has launched a multi-million-rand company it intends listing on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, SA Taxi Council (Sataco) leaders say.

While Sataco will not be drawn on who its investment partners are, it is understood that Ubunye has raised almost R1bn in investment capital. Technology firms Aplitec and Paradigm had been vying since the middle of last year to furnish SA's taxi fleet with smart cards, a source close to one of the companies said.

Sataco, which had affiliates across the taxi industry, owned a 51% share of Ubunye. The other 49% was owned by private sector investors, Sataco Ltd chairman Basil Nagel said in Pretoria on Friday.

It is understood that the launch of Ubunye was delayed after government hesitated in signing a memorandum of understanding between itself and Sataco. A provisional memorandum was drafted when Sataco was launched in September, but government has not yet signed it.

Transport ministry spokesman Didi Moyle said that while the ministry had no problems in principle with the memorandum, Sataco had not yet consulted provincial structures sufficiently.

A source close to the department said there had been "bad blood" between the department, which wanted to sign the memorandum as quickly as possible, and "recalcitrant MECs" who were dawdling "for their own rather obscure reasons".

"The agreement with government is important to commercial success because there is a chance the industry will fragment if its national representative body has no relationship with government," an industry observer said. "But government has dragged its feet so long that it is becoming the chief obstacle. Private sector investors were becoming agitated. It was time to move on and form the company with or without government."

Nagel said the industry's motivation for the venture was to tackle chronic undercapitalisation. The largest prizes Sataco envisioned were a national smart-card system for the payment of commuter fares (which the industry believed would carry an R18bn monthly float), loan finance, and cheaper vehicles and parts. Talks with private investors were under way to open a taxi production plant in SA.

The industry has been granted 36 licences authorising it to retail fuel.

TAXI PROTEST CHAOS

ARG 21/4/99 (332)

Thousands late as go-slow convoys bring N1 and N2 to halt

STAFF REPORTERS

Thousands of people were hours late for work today after protesting taxi drivers brought morning peak-hour traffic on the N1 and N2 to a standstill.

The drivers blocked every lane and then stopped. When eventually persuaded by traffic officials to move, they drove towards Cape Town at snail's pace, making a nightmare of a rush hour already complicated by the bus drivers' strike and overnight rain.

Traffic was heavily congested as far back as Kraaifontein on the N1 and Cape Town International Airport on the N2.

A spokesman for the Cape Town traffic department said their taxi unit had been deployed at full strength to monitor slow-moving convoys of minibuses travelling towards the city.

The taximen were heading for WaleStreet provincial administration offices to hold a march and hand in a protest as part of a row about permits.

"Thousands of motorists had to turn away from the N2 and use other routes through the suburbs," said a traffic officer.

Two drivers were reportedly arrested for blockading the N2 and their vehicles were towed away.

When the taxi operators reached the city centre outskirts police ordered them to leave their vehicles in Keizersgracht in District 6.

Taxi operators are angry because of 1 700 drivers who applied to the Local Road Transportation Board to get permits to operate, only 850 succeeded. In addition, a number of taxis were impounded for being unroadworthy.

Two weeks ago operators threatened to take action by blockading roads and police stations.

A spokesman for the traffic department confirmed that taxi bosses had sent them a letter yesterday warning that 1 500 taxis would converge on the city centre today.

Once in town today the drivers marched to the provincial legislature in Wale Street in a bid to hand a memorandum to provincial Transport Minister Piet Meyer. Mr Meyer said he had no intention of seeing them as he would be in a cabinet meeting.

Reggie Malimba, leader of the Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association, said he had reached Mr Meyer by phone.

"He said he had informed the national Minister of Transport, Mac Maharaj, about our march, but I told him this had nothing to do with the national minister. This is a provincial thing. It has something to do with Mr Meyer himself," Mr Malimba said.

Earlier Mr Meyer told the Cape Argus he wasn't interested in speaking to taxi owners and drivers. "I don't have a crisis on my hands," he said.

"They are trying to force me to break the law. They have asked me to allow them to operate without permits and to drive unroadworthy vehicles. I won't help them break the law. We are prepared to talk to them but I will not condone any illegal action."

He also said the operators who were demanding taxi permits had not complied with the requirements set up by the national taxi task team. The impounding of vehicles was a police matter.



Gridlock: taxi drivers block the city-bound lane of the N2 today in protest against the implementation of the permit system intended to control the city's taxi industry

JOHAN CONRADIE

Taxi blockade was 'trial one'

Sceptical industry accuses government of failing to honour its agreements

(338) BD 22/4/99

Jonny Steinberg

YESTERDAY's taxi blockade in Cape Town, which brought rush-hour traffic to a standstill, was planned to test the feasibility of similar blockades in other major cities, taxi industry sources said yesterday.

The decision to embark on the action, which was taken behind the backs of key taxi leaders, came against the backdrop of growing scepticism in the taxi industry about government's commitment to honour agreements made during the past year.

The protest was ostensibly to demand that the Western Cape government revise conditions for issuing road transport permits. A spokesman for the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association said at a demonstration outside the provincial legislature yesterday that 50% of the industry's 1 500 permit applications had been approved and that taxis operating without permits were being impounded.

However a senior industry leader, who preferred not to be named, said the motivation for the action went far deeper.

"Whenever something serious happens in the industry you must know that the industry's undercapitalisation is at issue.

"When the taxi industry united last September to form the SA Taxi Council, government said it would sign a memorandum of understanding with the industry within 14 days. A crucial clause in the memorandum committed government to facilitate the industry renewing its fleet. There was talk of importing cheap Japanese vehicles.

"But it is now April and government has not signed. Elements in the industry have had enough and want to play hard-ball."

The industry has claimed repeatedly that most of its members cannot afford locally-produced minibuses and financial institutions refuse to underwrite vehicle finance loans.

Transport ministry spokesman Didi Moyle said last week that government had no principled objection to signing the memorandum but that the industry had not yet consulted provincial structures sufficiently.

15 DRIVERS ARRESTED

Threat of more taxi action

(332) CT 22/4/99

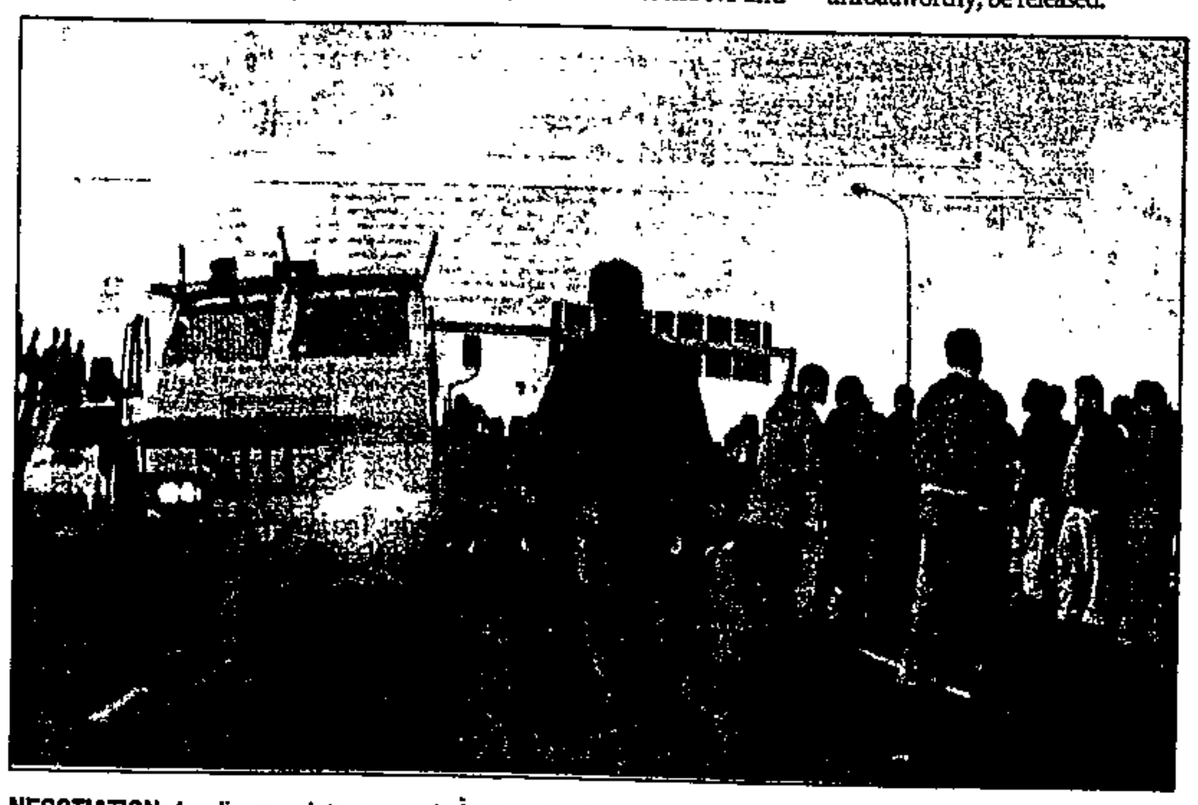
TAXI DRIVERS are demanding permits to operate their taxis and insist that the traffic department stop impounding their vehicles.

HUNDREDS of taxi operators have threatened more action today if their demands are not considered by MEC for Transport Piet Meyer.

This follows yesterday's blockades by Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) and Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta) members on the N1 and N2, which caused widespread congestion.

Thousands of motorists were delayed and had to change their routes because of the blockades.

The two taxi associations have demanded that their vehicles impounded for not having public permits or for being unroadworthy, be released.



NEGOTIATION: A policeman intervenes during the blockade on the N2 yesterday. Two drivers were arrested for blockading the N2 and had their vehicles towed away by police.

A delegation was allowed to hand Meyer a memorandum in which they demanded permits to operate their taxis and that traffic authorities stop impounding their vehicles.

Meyer said that at the heart of the memorandum were demands by certain members of the taxi industry that they be left to their own devices to operate taxis, irrespective of roadworthiness or permits.

"Government is committed to having an orderly and safe public transport system, and it is not in the interests of the general public to allow unroadworthy and illegal vehicles to operate as part of the public transport system, or to tolerate negligent driving practices on our roads, where we already experience unacceptably high accident and fatality statistics.

"The department and the local road transportation board operate strictly according to the agreement reached within the national taxi task team and the special legalisation project.

"Of the 1 676 applications received, only 215 did not qualify for legalisation and may now apply afresh according to the prescribed procedures. A total of 596 of the applications were withdrawn by operators themselves for various reasons of their own."

Meyer said the blockades and the gathering at the provincial legislature were an admission by the industry that they harboured a number of illegal operators who had either not qualified to apply in terms of the special legalisation project, or who had commenced operation without permits.

"This can unfortunately not be tolerated, since it compounds the overtrading situation which leads to further aggravation and violence," Meyer said.



BLOCKADE: Stationary taxis on the N2 between Pinelands and Athlone yesterday morning. A spokesperson for the taxi industry did not rule out the possibility of further blockades.

PICTURES: DAVID HENNING

Despite the action by the taxi operators yesterday, Meyer said his doors remained open for orderly discussion with the taxi industry.

A spokesperson for the taxi industry said their management committee would meet today. He did not rule out further blockades.

Codeta spokesperson Reggie Malimba admitted there were unroadworthy vehicles in his organisation but said members were "still fixing them".

Malimba also insisted that some of the impounded vehicles were roadworthy.

Two drivers were arrested for blockading the N2 and had their vehicles towed away by police.

Ten operators were arrested in Mowbray on their way to the protest in the city centre but were later released.

Three operators from the Cape Taxi Alliance were arrested during a confrontation with police after 20 minibuses blockaded Victoria Road and Salt River Avenue. Police Captain Craig Shawee said charges of crimen injuria, attempted murder and assault of a policeman were being investigated.



HANNES THIART

Protest: Codeta's Reggie Malimba addresses taxi operators at the provincial legislature, where they were demanding permits

Heated war of words over taxi permits (332)

Few applications denied, says Province

ARG 22/4/99

LYNNE RIPPENAAR
STAFF REPORTER

The Western Cape government's department of transport has denied claims by taxi drivers that it has unilaterally refused hundreds of permits to operate taxis.

It had turned down only 215 of 1 676 applications for taxi permits, while 596 applicants had withdrawn their applications when they found they didn't qualify.

Yesterday, taxi drivers blockaded the N2 and N1 freeways in an attempt to pressurise the department into granting permits to all 811 unsuccessful applicants.

Early today, traffic was flowing normally on the two freeways – the city's major access routes.

Provincial Transport Minister Piet Meyer said in a statement that the taxi demonstration proved the industry harboured a large number of illegal operators.

"(These illegals) have either not qualified to apply in terms of the Special Legalisation Process (SLP) or have commenced operation regardless of the processes to obtain permits to do so. This can unfortunately not be tolerated."

He also said the operators were demanding to be allowed to operate with unroadworthy vehicles.

This was denied by the taxi industry's Special Crisis Committee spokesperson Reggie Malimba of Codeta (Convention for Democratic Taxi Association).

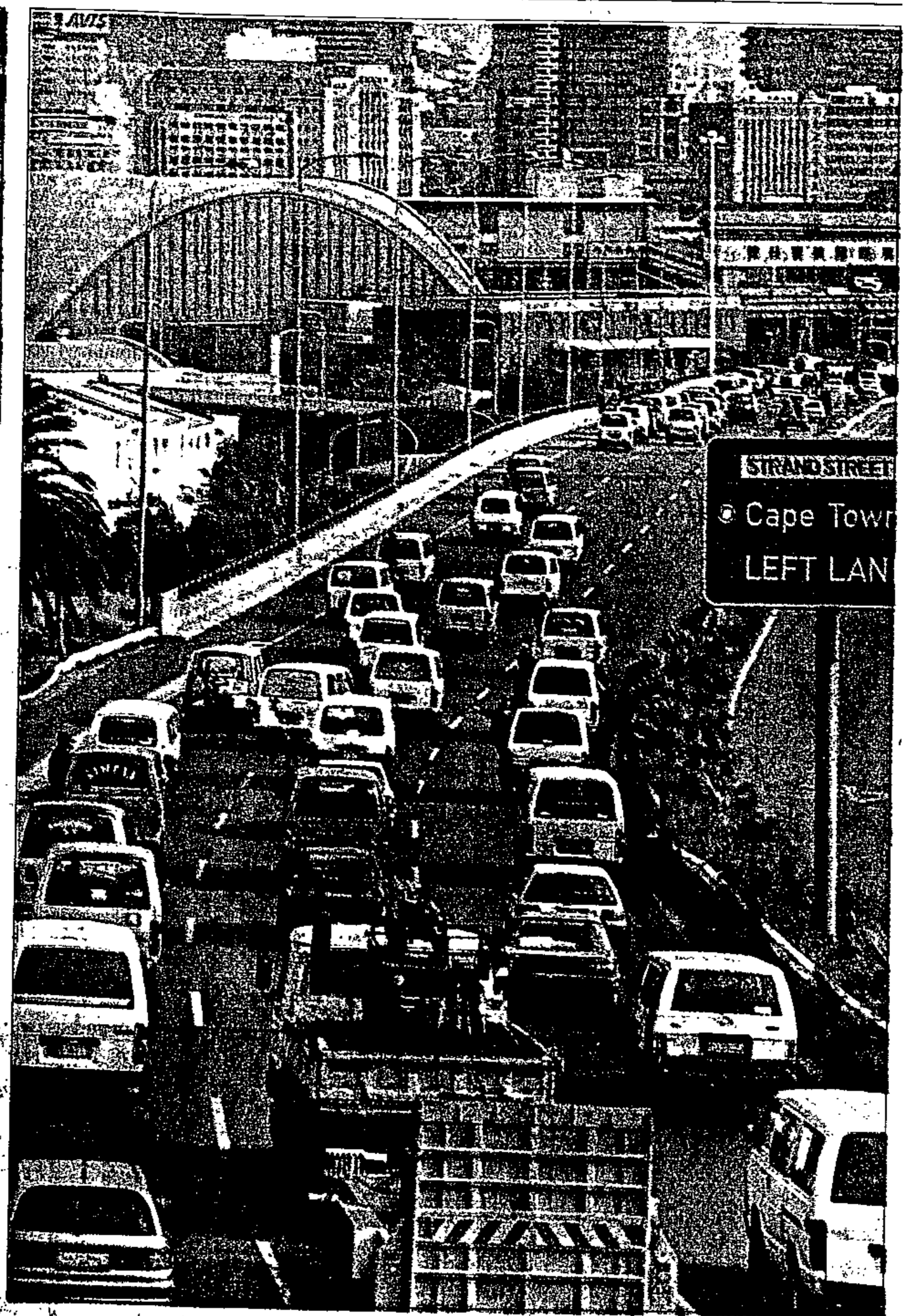
"We have agreed that if a person has an unroadworthy vehicle, then they (the police) can impound the vehicle. We are not fighting for that. All we are asking is for him (Mr Meyer) to grant permits to people who qualify for the permits.

"Most of us only got one permit, even if we applied for three or four permits," said Mr Malimba.

He alleged that Mr Meyer's department was using the 1989 Road Act against the taxi operators, which allowed officials to impound their vehicles, instead of using the 1996 Road Act which allowed taxi operators who had been operating illegally before 1994, a chance to be legalised.

In terms of the 1996 act, there was no authority for impounding taxis, he said.

Mr Malimba also said that in their memorandum which was handed in at the provincial legislature in Wale Street during yesterday's protest, they had also called for representatives of the taxi industry to be included in the Local Transportation Board.



ANDREW INGRAM

Snail's pace: many motorists were delayed yesterday as taxi drivers took part in a 'go-slow' protest on major routes

'Unroadworthy taxis are not dangerous' (332)

ARG 24/4/99

Associations demand blanket permits

MOSES MTHETHELELI MACKAY

Cape Town's major taxi associations say unroadworthy minibus taxis are not dangerous – but road authorities have rejected the claim as being outrageous.

Cape Town's taxi industry has long been plagued both by taxi wars resulting from rival associations battling for turf and by horrific smashes in which many passengers have been killed.

The Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association (Codeta) and the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) this week blocked the N1 and N2 highways to protest against the refusal by the Western Cape provincial authorities to issue permits to all taxis, including those that are unroadworthy.

Cata and Codeta rejected a provincial Department of Transport claim that many commuters were at great risk because of vehicles being unroadworthy.

Codeta spokesman Reggie Malimba accused Western Cape Minister of Transport Piet Meyer of "spreading propaganda" by saying that taxi operators put commuters at risk through unroadworthy vehicles and reckless driving.

Cata president Stephen Williams said: "It is not the vehicle that causes an accident, it's the driver. The driver causes accidents whether the vehicle he or she drives is roadworthy or unroadworthy. The driver should be blamed for this."

Mr Williams said nobody was above the law and that taxi operators should repair their unroadworthy vehicles.

But taxi operators need more permits to operate. Thousands of motorists were delayed and had to change their routes because of this week's taxi blockade.

The two associations have demanded that their members' vehicles impounded for not having public permits or for being unroadworthy be released.

They handed a memorandum to Mr Meyer in which they demanded permits as well as an end to traffic authorities impounding their vehicles. Mr Meyer, on the other hand, said taxi operators wanted to pressure his department into letting them operate taxis irrespective of whether they were roadworthy or had permits.

"This will not and cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. The Government is committed to having an orderly and safe public transport system and it cannot be in the interest of the general public to allow unroadworthy and illegal vehicles to operate as part of the system, or to tolerate negligent driving on our roads."

The safety of commuters is of utmost importance, he said, adding that unroadworthy vehicles were a contributing factor to the unacceptably high accident and fatality rate that people are already exposed to. All taxis are obliged to meet specific criteria to obtain operating permits.

"Isn't there a responsibility from their side towards the communities to see that their vehicles are roadworthy? Isn't there responsible governance to ensure order in an industry like this?" he asked.

He said his ministry made itself available at all times for orderly discussion with the taxi industry and would continue to follow this open-door policy.

"All we ask is that taxi operators obey the laws that were agreed upon by the taxi industry itself," he added.

Mr Malimba of Codeta said that if the department refused to grant the disputed permits, the association would approach Western Cape Premier Gerald Morkel and ask Deputy President Thabo Mbeki to step in.

"We are about to write to Premier Morkel and Deputy President Mbeki. We want to meet them so that they can intervene."

The department said that it had turned down only 215 of 1 676 applications for taxi permits, while 596 applicants had withdrawn their applications when they found they did not qualify.



ALL PUMPED UP: the unorthodox fuel system found in an unroadworthy taxi Picture: LEON MULLER

Taxi revolution around corner

Clipcards, colour-coded routes and salaried drivers on way

(332)

ARG 30/4/99

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

Johannesburg – The taxi industry in the Western Cape and other provinces is set to change beyond recognition within a year after a pilot project in Gauteng.

The Gauteng Transport Department, in conjunction with the private sector, has announced far-reaching measures aimed at regulating the troubled taxi industry.

Innovations include:

■ The colour-coding of routes

■ Electronic satellite surveillance of taxis to avoid drivers leaving their routes and in case of hijackings

■ Card fare systems to eliminate theft of fares by drivers (estimated at between 50% and 60% of fares collected) and so that commuters will not have to carry cash

■ Star ratings to show that certain taxis are better maintained than others

■ 24-hour money depot facilities

■ Phone message systems.

Operators also will have access to smart cards for buying tyres, medical aid, oil, fuel, vehicle cleaning services, insurance, cars and panelbeating.

Taxi drivers will be put on to fixed salaries with commissions for fares collected. They will also have access to pension funds, medical aid, and death and disability cover.

Commuters will be expected to buy a pack of colour-coded cards for R30 which will include death and disability liability and discount vouchers.

The commuter will flash the card bearing the colour of the route on which he or she wants to be transported. This will eliminate unnecessary stops, confusing hand signals and hooting.

A pilot scheme using the colour-coded routes and fare cards has been launched in Pretoria and is expected to begin in the rest of Gauteng within the next three months.

The restructuring will introduce new, customer-friendly operating systems based on six pillars, said Gauteng Transport MEC Joyce Kgoali.

These are fast-tracking of the registration of taxis, the formation of co-operatives and joint venture in each province, the establishment of a Taxi Violence Victims' Fund, one-stop counselling centres, a taxi hotline, and training and development for industry members.

The new scheme would be beneficial to drivers and commuters alike, said Ms Kgoali.

Commuters could look forward to better organised, safer and more efficient taxis.

The South African Taxi Council (Sataco), in partnership with the private sector, has already raised R7,5-million to kickstart the process.

They have created Ubunye Investments, which is majority-owned by the taxi industry and will list on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange this year.

The company will serve as the investment leg of Sataco and raise capital for the taxi industry.

Not everyone is happy with the proposed changes. A Johannesburg taxi driver, who asked not to be named, said he did not approve.

"I don't like this. They are taking away our money. We don't want to work for a salary – we can make much more money driving for ourselves," he said.

Another taxi owner, Basil Nagel, said owners were excited as this would bring them tremendous savings in terms of reduced finance rates, premiums and better recovery of cash income.

"There will be numerous benefits for the commuter and drivers. Drivers will now enjoy medical aid and pension schemes.

"Commuters, in the event of a collision, will get payouts of R5 000 a person to cover basic funeral costs.

"It is a win-win situation," said Mr Nagel.

Taxi industry in Gauteng to be revamped

(332) Star 30/4/99

New streamlined and user-friendly system will act as national pilot plan

By Anna Cox

The taxi industry in Gauteng is to be changed beyond recognition in the next six months, and the national industry within a year.

The Gauteng transport department, in conjunction with the private sector, yesterday announced far-reaching measures aimed at regulating the troubled South African taxi industry into an era of stability.

Innovations include:

- The colour-coding of routes.
- Electronic satellite surveillance of taxis.
- Card fare systems to eliminate theft of fares by drivers (estimated at between 50 and 60% of fares), so that commuters won't have to carry cash.
- Rating of taxis with "stars" to show that certain taxis are better maintained than others.
- Twenty-four-hour money depot facilities.
- Phone message systems.

Operators will also have access to smart cards for pay for tyres, oil, fuel, vehicle cleaning services, panelbeating, and insurance and medical aid, among others.

Taxi drivers will also in future be put on fixed salaries, with commissions for fares collected. They will also be covered by pension funds, medical aid, and death and disability cover.

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The new scheme would be beneficial to both drivers and commuters, Kgoali said.

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"I don't like this. They are taking away our money. We don't want to work for a salary, we can make much more driving for ourselves," he said.

Ubunye to bring unity to the taxi industry

(332)

Relief as new body brings legitimacy and meaning

By MOIPONE KOMANE

THE GAUTENG transport department has brokered a major breakthrough that would unite warring members of the taxi industry to operate under one umbrella body.

Gauteng MEC for Transport, Joyce Kgoali, has been credited with the formation of Ubunye Investment Limited, which will be owned by the South African Taxi Council (Sataco).

Sataco, which holds the majority 51 percent share, announced this week that Ubunye aims to list on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

The entire industry will be stakeholders: taxi owners, drivers, suppliers and communities who support the taxi industry.

Kgoali said the initiative would enable the industry to be regulated in a legitimate and meaningful way.

"This initiative is intrumental in nation-building – fighting factions are sitting around the table to resolve the issues around violence and crime," she explained to City Press.

Kgoali said the initiative is endorsed and supported by government.

Leaders will be meeting transport MECs from each province and government support from the other eight provinces will be announced later.

She said the initiative is expected to create about 150 jobs and help to eradicate crime in the metropolitan areas of Greater Johannesburg, East Gauteng, Kyalami, Pretoria and West Gauteng.

In addition, the organisation would restructure its focus on the following aspects: fast-tracking co-operatives and joint ventures, taxi violence victims' fund, one-stop counselling centres, the taxi hotline as well as training and development.

The Gauteng Taxi Council will be focusing its attention on the economic development of the industry.

The restructuring forms part of the Sataco national initiative, with each of the provinces playing a role in the national structure.

Sataco is also creating a buying card and will be streamlining their system through investment technology, with a tracking system, telecommunications, registration system and the most up-to-date database available.

Kgoali explained that the benefit of this initiative to the operators, owners and employees of the taxi industry is that they would be able to have discounts on parts, oil, fuel, insurance, panel-beating, vehicle prices, bank rates, medical aids, training, valet and steam cleaning.

She added that it would also ensure that the co-operatives will have representation and input as far as transport legislation, route markings, information centres and the investigation into larger vehicles are concerned.

The envisaged restructuring and introduction of new consumer-friendly operating systems will come as relief to the millions of commuters who for decades found themselves caught in a spiral of violence and bloodshed as warring taxi operators and organisations fought for dominance.

'Let Maharaj run privatisation unit'

(332) BD 4/5/99

Linda Ensor

CAPE TOWN — Outgoing Transport Minister Mac Maharaj should be made CEO of a dedicated privatisation unit under the finance ministry, Democratic Party (DP) leader Tony Leon said in Brakpan yesterday.

He said the dismally underperforming public enterprises department headed by Stella Sigcau should be abolished.

Leon said Maharaj, who had "impeccable political credentials", had succeeded in selling the Airports Company for R819m to Aeroporti di Roma.

Sigcau had successfully managed only the privatisation of Sun Air, there having been "interminable delays" with the privatisation of SA Forestry Company (Safcol), SA Airways and arms manufacturer Denel.

To accelerate privatisation and boost foreign investor confidence, a dedicated privatisation unit with focus and purpose was needed. Similar units in Germany, Zambia and Mozambique had been successful.

"We don't have much time. Government's leisurely pace is unacceptable. Other emerging market economies such as Brazil, Uruguay, and New Zealand are offering lucrative privatisation deals," Leon said.

Armed taximen hold disabled kids captive

ARG 7/5/99

(332)

MYOLISI GOPHE
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Armed taxi drivers held three busloads of terrified disabled children and teachers "hostage" for more than an hour in Guguletu, refusing to let them leave the township for a day out.

About seven taxi drivers from the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) demanded that the group of about 200 pupils from Nompumelelo School for the mentally handicapped use their taxis to go to the Bellville Velodrome.

They and 6 000 other Cape Town pupils had been invited to a day of entertainment yesterday by Vision South Africa.

A teacher, who asked not to be named, said the angry taxi drivers blockaded the road about 10.30am in front of the school, where the hired Golden Arrow buses, with the pupils and teachers already aboard, were parked.

The taxi drivers claimed the school was enriching the bus company at their expense. Police were called and escorted the buses out of the township.

When officials from Vision South Africa confronted Cata leadership, the taximen agreed the drivers had been out of line.

The drivers' action has been condemned by Cata chairman Steven Williams, who said some drivers were behaving badly and damaging the association's good name.

Mr Williams also blamed residents who, he said, used the taxi industry to fight their battles and punish people accused of crimes.

"Communities are dishonest. A lot of bad things are done by drivers – people and children are beaten severely – without my permission or Cata's authority.

"Even in this matter, there might be some community members behind it," said Mr Williams, adding that he did not want to get involved.

He said he would not take any action until the community formally complained to Cata, "then I will stop it".

The teacher said the taxi drivers needed to explain to the community why they blockaded the school buses.

Guguletu police spokesman Charles Kakudi said he would negotiate with Cata to prevent similar incidents from happening again.

Bystander shot in gun battle as West Coast traffic cops intercept taxi

(332) War convoy MAY 12/94

JOHAN SCHRONEN
CRIME CORRESPONDENT

A woman was seriously wounded in crossfire during a shootout between West Coast traffic police and Cape Town taximen as the taxi war spread to Saldanha and Vredenburg.

Bystander Angeline Rudolph, 30, of Louwville, was wounded in the side and taken by ambulance to N1 City Hospital in Cape Town.

Police spokeswoman Anine de Beer said the drama unfolded when a group of minibus taxi operators from Nyanga, Khayelitsha and Philippi arrived in Vredenburg yesterday, apparently intent on taking over lucrative commuter routes from local drivers in the area.

The shooting erupted when traffic police intercepted the taximen, all members of the Convention for a Democratic Taxi Association, as they drove in convoy to Saldanha, allegedly to confront West Coast operators or claim their routes.

Twelve drivers were arrested and police confiscated 27 pistols and ammunition, and two minibuses.

A house, a private vehicle and a traffic patrol car were damaged in the clash, police said.

Public order police had sealed off the Vredenburg entrance to Saldanha to prevent heavily armed operators entering the town.

Captain De Beer said the convoy then turned and headed back to Vredenburg, but ran into another police blockade on the Hopefield Road.

The arrested men were charged with attempted murder, malicious damage to property and unlawfully firing guns. They were detained at Malmesbury police station and were expected to appear in the Vredenburg Magistrate's Court today.

Maharaj lashes out at taxis

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

Johannesburg - Most minibus taxis and buses on South African roads are death traps, says Transport Minister Mac Maharaj.

Speaking at the launch of his department's "Moving South Africa - the action agenda" at the Presidential Guest House yesterday, Mr Maharaj said the average age of minibus taxis was nine years - two years away from full economic life - while the average age of a bus was 13 years and a train carriage 25 years.

This was as a result a legacy of neglect and lack of re-investment.

"These facts have not only highlighted how close we have come to system unsustainability in service provision, but have also shown us the dangerous levels of safety risk that pervade the entire system," said Mr Maharaj.

For this reason the Department of Transport and the departments of Finance, Trade and Industry and Minerals and Energy had launched a programme for low cost vehicles, carrying between 18 and 28 passengers.

Access to these vehicles would be linked to compliance by operators with new traffic legislation and regulatory standards.

"This initiative is under way already and a set of proposals will be presented to cabinet within the next few months," said Mr Maharaj.

Mr Maharaj said the SA Rail Commuter Corporation had given him a set of proposals to systematically improve the quality and safety of rail transport through a programme of rolling stock rehabilitation and replacements.

The Government's decision to convert sections of the existing commuter rail service to concessioned services would, however, provide a unique opportunity to develop this programme through public-private partnerships.

Move to empower taxi owners and drivers

By Justice Mohale

THE taxi industry should cooperate with government in an effort to find ways of making the industry viable and professional.

Speaking at a conference organised by the Western Gauteng Taxi Cooperatives (WGTC) in Randfontein yesterday, Gauteng MEC for transport Mrs Joyce Khoali said government had showed commitment towards empowering the taxi industry.

"The time has come for the taxi industry to realise its potential in the economic development of South Africa," Khoali said.

The WGTC, a business wing of the Western Gauteng Taxi Council, was initiated by government as part of economic empowerment.

She said the department of transport had trained more than 1 050 taxi drivers and owners in business management to ensure that the industry was managed professionally.

Eleven members of the WGTC had attended a three-week crash course in leadership skills, bookkeeping, conflict resolution and business management offered under the auspices of the department of transport.

Chairman of the WGTC Mr Amos Magodielo said the taxi industry was convinced that government was serious in trying to instill a culture of tolerance between the various taxi associations.

"Government is trying to help establish businesses that will be owned and managed by us," Magodielo said.

He was sure the taxi operators would use their acquired skills well.

New body has the support of over 60 businesswomen

(332)

By Dan Fuphe

MORE than 60 women delegates from 10 East Rand taxi associations attended the launch of the Eastern Gauteng Taxi Women's League (EGTWL) aimed at ending the ongoing violence which has claimed at least a 100 lives in the area since 1994.

Delegates said they had had enough of the indiscriminate assasinations of their spouses, sons and other relatives as a result of the never-ending and apparently well-orchestrated killings.

The EGTWL's newly elected chairwoman, Mrs Matsidiso Zwane, of the Katlehong People's Taxi Association (Kapta), said women in the industry felt it was time the senseless killing of the innocent people ended.

"As partners in this lucrative business, we are of the opinion that these unnecessary bickering over routes by our male counterparts should at least be turned into compromises with all the stakeholders reaping handsomely from the fruits of their hard-earned investments," Zwane said.

Several delegates said that although there were no documented statistics on the killings in their areas, all agreed there could be well over 100 murders on the East Rand.

Among the areas represented were Heidelburg, Springs, Katlehong, Nigel, Brakpan, Greater Alberton, Vosloorus, Boksburg, Benoni, Duduza and Kempton Park.

Zwane said some of their future plans included:

- operating a taxi business freely and within a violence-free environment;
- cultivating good working relationships between the groups;
- establishing medical and educational schemes for taxi operators and their children;
- eventually converting into a company with the aim of listing on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange; and
- negotiating with banks for affordable loans for their members to buy vehicles.

Among the dignitaries at the launch were the mayor of Benoni, Mr Ronnie Kuta and the deputy mayor of Springs, Ms Auntie Nyathela as well as Gauteng MPL Maggie Magubane and Gauteng director of welfare projects Ms Kgomotso Rammego.

Maharaj and top officials sign up to end violence

By Dan Fuphe

TRANSPORT Minister Mac Maharaj and senior officials of the South African Taxi Associations Council (Sataco) signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding yesterday aimed at streamlining the industry and ending violence.

The event, held in Woodmead, Johannesburg, was attended by at least 21 Sataco executive members drawn from the nine provinces and 12 federal structures affiliated to the council.

In his address Maharaj said the signing of the memorandum represented a milestone in the formalisation of the taxi industry. It also brought to a close a chapter on the National Taxi Task Team which saw 36 public hearings being held throughout the country and which culminated in the tabling of the final recommendation in August1996.

"The establishment of Sataco signals an important development in the history of the taxi industry and begins to redress the anomalies of the past.

"For the first time all the players across the association lines have come together to form Sataco.

"This unity has been brought about by a desire in the industry to move away from conflict and towards formalised operations and in the belief in the sincerity in its undertaking to recognise the industry and support its endeavours to formalise itself by putting in place adequate regulatory framework support structures.

"The decline in incidents of taxi violence over the last three years serves as a clear signal that the industry is ready to embrace peace and unity," Maharaj said.

He added that the memorandum embodied a commitment, both by the Government and the industry, to work together for peace, stability, economic growth and safety in the industry.

Sataco chairman Mr Joe Mabaso said: "We are at a stage where we can easily say that we have managed to reduce violence by almost 50 percent."

Among other things, the signatories to the memorandum have pledged to overcome the injustices that have torn the industry apart, resulting in loss of lives and valuable business opportunities.

● **See picture on page 4.**

DP holds talks with taxi organisation

332

Pearl Sebolao

THE Democratic Party (DP) has been making overtures to the National Taxi Drivers' Organisation in a bid to woo black support for the party.

The organisation has held discussions with DP leader Tony Leon.

At a media briefing in Johannesburg yesterday DP spokesman Douglas Gibson said the meeting between the DP and the organisation was an indication that the party's proposals for the taxi industry were being taken seriously.

The organisation's chairman, Themba Mgabhi, who was also at the briefing, would not say whether it would endorse the DP or not. An announcement would be made today, he said. Mgabhi said his was not a political organisation, but that it would support any political party that promoted the interest of the taxi industry.

Gibson also declared the DP's policy on transport. It proposes that transport subsidies be redirected to the commuters rather than to the provider. Commuters would buy tokens to be used for any mode of transport.

The DP called for the deregulation of the petrol price, advanced driving courses for taxi drivers, the revamping of taxi ranks and access to the fund for victims of violent crime.

Welcoming Ari Serillis, head of the SA Quadriplegic Association, Gibson said the DP would "fight back" for the disabled. He also introduced the party's parliamentary candidate for the disabled, Vincent Gore.

BD 28/5/99

Govt signs pact with taxi body

BD 28/5/99 (332)

The motor vehicle and financial sectors appear to be warming to industry, writes **Jonny Steinberg**

GOVERNMENT signed a memorandum of understanding with the taxi industry yesterday, paving the way for the replacement of the industry's ageing fleet and its absorption in SA's formal economy.

The signing drew to a close a fraught eight-month period of stormy negotiations between the department of transport and the SA Taxi Council (Sataco) — the national body which represents all of SA's major taxi associations.

The memorandum commits Sataco to act against violent elements in the industry, to participate in the regulation of the industry by ensuring its members have legal operations, and to implement a programme of acceptable labour practices.

Government, in turn, is bound by the memorandum to find an acceptable solution to the industry's recapitalisation crisis, to legalise illegal operations within agreed parameters and to provide taxi operators with extensive training.

The average age of a taxi in the SA fleet is nine years. Financial institutions have consistently refused to go near the chaos and complexity of the industry, with the result that loans on new vehicles are largely unavailable to taxi operators. Only the richest of the rich can afford to replace their fleets.

With the signing of the memorandum and the security of official government backing, the motor vehicle and financial sectors appear to be ready to be warming to taxi industry. It is understood that Toyota SA, which has previously kept an icy distance from the taxi industry, has now pledged to match the best price the industry can get on imported new vehicles. Industry sources say if Toyota keeps its word, vehicles will be available on the market for as little as R80 000, about 30% less than current retail prices.

"As a potential market, the industry has always had a Janus face," a senior vehicle manufacture executive said yesterday. "Given its size it is a potential gold mine. But given its instability it is a potential hell. With a unified taxi industry structure backed by government the gold mine option is looking less a hopeless dream and more a reality."

There is more than wishful thinking behind the executive's comment. Maharaj said yesterday an inter-ministerial committee — comprising the departments of transport, finance, trade and industry and mineral and energy affairs — was working on a recapitalisation proposal. Sources say government is considering underwriting 80% of the value of loans taxi operators take out on new vehicles. If this is true, financial institutions are as good as on board, since their risks will be negligible.

However, serious questions remain. In its interim form, Sataco comprises representatives from nine provincial taxi councils as well as all 11 national taxi associations. A minority of these associations are little more than mafias, wielding market power through the barrel of a gun.

Sataco has committed itself to scrapping this interim structure. It will hold democratic elections among all taxi operators within 18 months, and its composition will reflect the outcome of the election. Why have violent associations agreed to this process? Do they believe they will win the election, or do they have contingency plans to scupper the process when it becomes clear they are losing? Sataco is as yet an untested body. It has yet to stamp its authority on the industry. There is another area of concern. Government's long-term transport strategy — Moving SA — appears to envisage downscaling the role of minibus taxis in public transport. It recommends that medium and high density transport corridors be serviced by trains and buses. Taxis would be reduced to feeding buses and trains, and servicing low density corridors.

"The implication is that if the taxi industry is to survive in the long-term it will have to adapt," a long-time observer of the industry said this week. "If the future is not in mini-bus taxis, operators must start thinking of investing in larger vehicles. Otherwise there will be trouble."

What sort of trouble? Many veterans of the taxi industry who won their routes through years of sweat and blood will not be happy to have to tender for what they believe is theirs.

If government wants the minibus-taxi fleet to shrink, it must offer such people sweeteners. If it does not, it will have a fight on its hands.



Transport Minister Mac Maharaj, left, and SA Taxi Council chairman Joe Mabaso signed a memorandum of understanding yesterday on the state of the taxi industry. Picture: TREVOR SAMSON

MAIL & GUARDIAN
April 30 to May 6 1999

Taxi factions move closer together

M+G 30/4-6/5/99 (332)

Thokozani Mtshali

The announcement this week by the Gauteng Ministry of Transport and the South African Taxi Council of agreed measures to regulate the troubled industry brings hope for commuters caught in the crossfire of warring taxi factions.

The announcement comes after years of hard work by the national Ministry of Transport in a quest to unify the industry's 11 federations.

In 1992 the national taxi task team was set up to investigate the causes and ways of ending the conflicts which have engulfed the industry since its inception. Some of the task team's recommendations were that the ministry regulate and formalise the industry and work towards its economic development. These recommendations led to negotiations between the government and taxi organisations, which ultimately saw all taxi organisations agreeing to work together.

As a result the South African Taxi Council was formed in August last year. The council has organs in all nine provinces and now represents all minibus taxi operators.

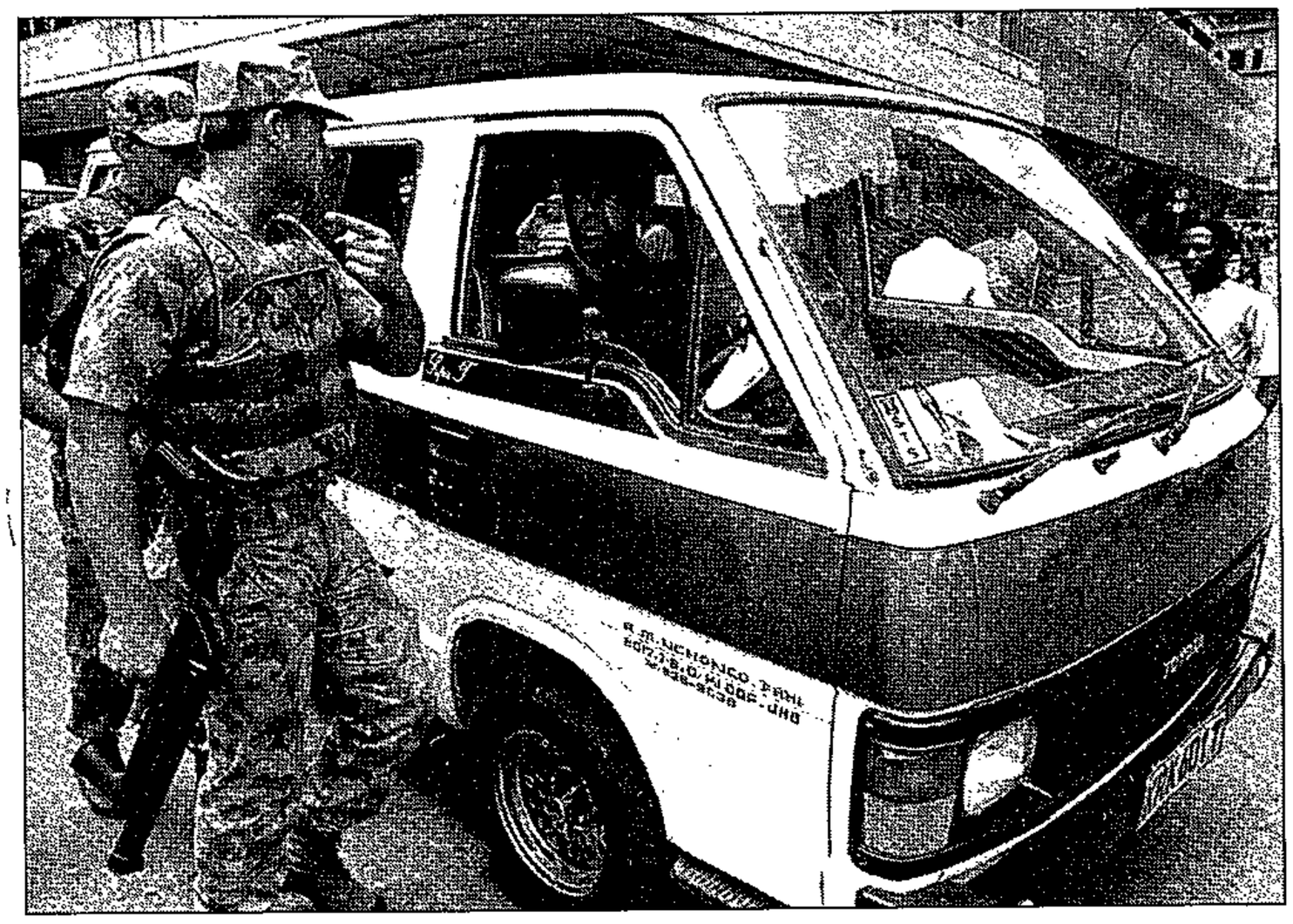
The announcement this week by Gauteng MEC for Transport Joyce Kgoali of the birth of the Gauteng Taxi Council makes the province the first to set in place the structures agreed upon by the national ministry and the South African Taxi Council.

The province has been demarcated into six districts for the purpose of formalising the industry: Greater Johannesburg, Lekoa Vaal, East Gauteng, Kyalami, Pretoria and West Gauteng. They will have an input in formulating transport legislation and route markings.

Kgoali said another development agreed upon with the council is that the national government will subsidise all registered minibus taxis. Until now minibus taxis, unlike trains and buses, did not receive a government subsidy.

To ensure economic growth and self-sustainment of the taxi industry, the government will also pursue joint business ventures with taxi associations. The two parties have agreed to focus on the economic development of the taxi industry, which contributes an estimated R12-billion towards the country's economy each year.

Kgoali unveiled plans to launch Ubunye Investment Limited, which will be listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. It will serve as the investment leg of the South African Taxi Council, and will help raise capital for members.



Closer to peace: An agreement on measures to regulate the taxi industry brings hope for commuters caught in the crossfire of warring factions. PHOTO: STEVE HILTON-BARBER

The two parties also aim to strike co-operative agreements with various supplier companies. Council members will have access to smart cards to buy tyres, cars and other spare parts.

The industry has been issued with 36 licences — each estimated to be worth R10-million — to sell petrol. This will benefit taxi operators, owners and employees because they will receive discounts on car parts, fuel, oil and servicing, and it protects them from high bank rates.

The restructuring is aimed at transforming the taxi industry into a customer-friendly business, which will give relief to the 12-million regular taxi commuters caught up in the fight for dominance among taxi organisations.

In a bid to end conflicts, the council and the national ministry have agreed to overhaul the issuing of new permits to emerging taxi entrepreneurs since most routes are already over-subscribed. The two parties plan to introduce a colour-coded route system, satellite surveillance and a taxi-card fare system for commuters.

Taxi-men fear threats of violence

By HANGWANI MULAUDZI

THE peace initiative by the Federated Long Distance Taxi Association (FELDTA) in the Northern Province aimed at quelling taxi violence on South African roads is set for jeopardy as their counterparts in Tembisa are allegedly fuelling the resurgence.

This claim was made by panic-stricken taxi owners who fear that their lives and that of their commuters are now at risk and set for a repeat of the 1992 violence which claimed innocent lives.

It is understood that their counterparts who are allegedly not members of the federation are working in tandem with members of the South African Police Services (SAPS) in Pietersburg, who are also taxi owners.

According to the owners who spoke on condition of anonymity, the tensions simmered three weeks ago after a meeting with the provincial transport department on the registration of taxis, as stipulated in the new law.

The owners claimed it emerged that many of the taxis were not properly registered with the federation, and a decision was taken rope in new members to equal the number required by the department.

They claimed that their counterparts who are known criminals to them allegedly came to their Pick and Pay rank in Pietersburg on Wednesday and ordered that the new members be struck off in favour of their taxis, failing which there would be trouble.

Three days before that, it is alleged that the same group exchanged gunfire with members of the federation who were ferrying people from Pietersburg to Johannesburg, fortunately no one was injured in the incident.

The owners alleged that some members of the police were allegedly seen with the criminals and promised to come back if their demands were taken lightly.

"We are now living in fear as these people are hell bent on bringing mayhem in the industry again.

"It is also disturbing that the people who are supposed to uphold the law are involved in this mess," they said.

They said they have lodged a complaint with the police.

Police spokesman Superintendent Frans Mojapelo confirmed that they have a complaint from the owners.

Randy taxi (es) protest ends

By Pam Fuhrer

A TWO-HOUR blockade by disgruntled drivers of the Greater Brakpan Taxi Association (GBTA) over working conditions, poor which had slow of traffic in Brakpan's central business district, ended peaceful yesterday morning.

The 700 registered taxis involved more than 100 of the operators and drivers, Brakpan ended after between and Tsakane protracted the and GBTA committee of the drivers public relations Lumkile said by the

talks

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Vesihad taken his association by surprise as to the

plans regarding conditions had

been communicated to the

GBTA office?

"As to what sparked off today's behaviour by our drivers is something I, for one, cannot understand. Until we were local traffic a called by the department in Johannesburg, we were in the dark and did not suspect anything," Mkhabiphi said.

However, a spokesman for the drivers, who spoke on condition of anonymity, painted a bleak picture of their working conditions.

He said drivers were subject to high security charges, running and lack of job benefits and employees.

He said he expected to pay for their vehicles. They also were fines handed out for expected to pay for their vehicles. They also were also expected to pay for their vehicles, running costs, and lack of communications and benefits.

He said drivers were employed by the taxi owners – Both parties have agreed to issue and receive monthly wages, the GBTA

COMPANY NEWS

State airline stands to gain from improving market for converted freighters and passenger growth

Airbus demand is a $48m bonanza for SAA

CT 17/6/99 (332)

AUDREY D'ANGELO

Cape Town – SAA, the state airline in the final stage of partial privatisation, has had a $48 million windfall.

Rising demand for ageing Airbus A300s for conversion from passenger aircraft to freighters has almost doubled their residual value from $8 million each to $14 million.

SAA, which is renewing its fleet, has eight of these aircraft. It has converted one to a freighter, using it on cargo flights from Cape Town to Europe and other parts of Africa.

Linden Birns, South Africa's Airbus representative, said there was a huge demand for these conversions to replace older freighters, which are not allowed to use European airports because of regulations limiting pollution and noise.

Airbus Industries' global market forecast, released at the Paris Air Show this week, said demand for new aircraft was boosted by the worldwide need to replace ageing passenger aircraft and by rising demand for freighters.

Airbus expected a demand for 254 aircraft in Africa alone over the next 20 years.

It forecast that demand for seats between Africa and Europe would grow at an annual rate of 4,2 percent, between Africa and the US at 4,7 percent, between Africa and Asia at 4,2 percent, between Africa and the Middle East at 4,6 percent and between Africa and Pacific countries at 6 percent.

This expected growth has stimulated interest in acquiring a stake in SAA. Binding offers for an equity stake in the airline were due this week, but spokesmen for Transnet were tightlipped about the process.

However the choice of the strategic equity partner was believed to be between Lufthansa in partnership with Singapore Airlines, Swissair, American Airlines, and a consortium of US business people with substantial shareholdings in Northwest Airlines and Continental Airlines.

Northwest and Continental are partners in a global alliance with KLM and Alitalia. Industry sources said if the American consortium were chosen as SAA's strategic equity partner, it was likely to lead to co-operation between SAA and the KLM alliance.

KLM and Kenya Airways currently compete head-on with SAA and Alliance Air, in which SAA has a 40 percent stake.

Last week, despite the possibility of a connection with SAA, the KLM alliance strengthened its presence in South Africa through the complete integration of Kenya Airways.

KLM took a 26 percent stake in Kenya Airways in 1996. The Kenyan airline has also entered into an arrangement to use Sun Air, the South African independent airline, as a feeder service with favourable add-on fares.

BD 18/6/99

Cabinet gives go-ahead for taxi fleet overhaul

(332).

Jonny Steinberg

CABINET has approved a plan to replace SA's ageing taxi fleet that may see the setting up of a vehicle assembly plant and creation of thousands of jobs.

The plan, which includes scrapping SA's 120 000 taxis within the Mbeki government's current term of office, is designed to wean taxi operators from minibuses to larger and safer vehicles.

Transport department senior manager Harold Harvey said yesterday the plan was in its early stages and details concerning equity stakes in the making of the new vehicles, vehicle sizes and government involvement in underwriting loan finance were still in the air.

Other government sources said a government-backed tender for a 32-seat vehicle would go out later this year, and manufacturers from 40 countries had signalled an intention to bid. Sources say that if a foreign company wins the bid, a condition will be that the vehicles are assembled in SA, which entails establishing an assembly plant. Another condition would be that the SA Taxi Council (a national structure representing major taxi industry interests) would own a significant share of the venture.

Vehicle accessories, such as floors, seats and windows, would be produced by local firms. "Spin-offs from the venture should extend beyond the recapitalisation of the taxi industry and perhaps tap markets across sub-Saharan Africa," a government source said.

While Harvey denied that it had put a loan guarantee on the table, it is understood that government is to underwrite loans for 60% of the value of new vehicles. Taxi operators would trade in their old vehicles for a voucher worth about 30% of the value of a new vehicle.

"The theory is that financial institutions will carry a 10% risk," the government source said. "This overcomes a major hurdle to recapitalisation. No financier will go near the industry and no manufacturer will start production until the risk is reduced dramatically."

It is understood that government plans to scrap 16-seat minibuses, and that the value of the voucher traded for scrap will increase considerably for operators who plan to buy 32-seaters.

Harvey said an interdepartmental committee on recapitalisation met the taxi council this week to discuss the plan. The council responded positively.

Taxi owners condemn plan for bigger buses

By Bhungani Mzolo

SOWETO taxi owners and drivers have condemned the government's proposed plan to replace taxis with larger buses.

Taxi driver Mr John Ximba said buses were expensive and their monthly instalments would be unaffordable. He said most drivers had Code 8 licences, while buses would need someone with a Code 10.

"Where is the money to train drivers going to come from?" he asked.

Another taxi driver said buses took a long time to fill and passengers did not want to wait for long.

"There are few commuters during weekdays, even for minibuses. This means that many people are going to lose their jobs."

Another operator said instead of building more firms so that more people could get jobs, the government was interfering in the taxi industry.

Mr Benjamin Modingoana, who operates between Meadowlands and Mlamlankunzi in his 24-seater bus, said buses were needed but the problem was that they took too long to fill.

Mr Charles Khambule, a taxi driver for more than eight years, said the buses were needed because there was no profit in minibuses. According to the plan, taxi operators would trade in their old vehicles for a voucher worth about 30 percent of the value of a new bus.

SA gearing up for new taxi vehicle

ARG 22/6/99

ARGUS CORRESPONDENT

(332)

Johannesburg – Three Government departments are trying to come up with a vehicle suitable for the South African minibus taxi industry.

Transport Ministry spokeswoman Didi Moyle said the present fleet of taxis was too old and most owners had converted private minibuses to taxis.

A committee drawn from the departments of transport, trade and industry, and energy affairs was looking at ways of overhauling the industry.

"As part of transforming the industry, the committee is consulting all the stakeholders and the introduction of bigger and safer vehicles is part of the restructuring process," she said.

"We believe passengers want to travel in safer and more comfortable vehicles.

"We will be calling for tenders before the end of the year," she added.

Taxi industry to get 30-seaters

(332)

By Joshua Raboroko

THE South African Commuter Organisation (Saco) has fully supported the initiatives of the Government, the private sector and taxi associations to improve the standard of the beleaguered taxi industry.

The parties have pledged to introduce 30-seater buses as opposed to the present 16-seater minibus taxis which have been a sore point as a result of ongoing violence in many parts of the country.

Saco's spokesman Mr George Ngwenya said there was a need to change strategies in the taxi industry – once the flagship of black economic empowerment.

He was commenting on reports that motor manufacturing company Topdev and the Benoni Taxi Association have started a pilot scheme by introducing the new 30-seater buses.

The scheme has been met with outrage from taxi owners, who say that the 30-seaters will cause further problems in an industry plagued by violence.

Taxi violence has been sparked by various factors, including routes, ranks and sometimes, even the size of vehicles used by operators.

There had been threats from the commuters to boycott the minibus taxis and to use other modes of transport as the wars continue in the taxi industry.

It is hoped that changing the size of vehicle may help reverse the situation.

Ngwenya said that the Government should not only transform the mode of transport, but also the behaviour and conduct of taxi owners and operators, adding that "we advocate for the formation of taxi councils to address the violence".

He suggested a code of conduct for taxi operators along with better customer care and relations.

Ngwenya urged investment from the private sector for the transformation of the industry.

Sowetan 28/6/99

Industry overhaul plan splits taxi associations

ET (BR) 30/6/99 (B32)

BONTLE HEADBUSH

Johannesburg – The announcement by the government of plans to recapitalise the taxi industry in conjunction with the South African Taxi Council (Sataco), the national body representing major taxi industry interests, has prompted disgruntled member associations to form a splinter group.

These member associations, comprising nine of the mother bodies which are part of Sataco, from all the provinces except the Eastern and Western Cape, have formed the National Taxi Associations Mother Bodies Alliance, aimed at addressing the discrepancies within Sataco and the whole taxi industry recapitalisation process.

This process would see the government issuing a tender by the end of July for the manufacture of the proposed new 32-seat vehicles which would replace South Africa's 120 000 minibus taxis. It would also entail setting up a vehicle assembly plant in which Sataco would have a shareholding.

Sicelo Mabaso, a member of the splinter group, said it was not opposed to the idea of the unification of the taxi industry as represented by Sataco.

"What we are opposed to is the Sataco council telling its affiliates that they cannot do business and continue with their individual investment initiatives except through them, and also its tendency to make decisions for the entire industry without consulting us," said Mabaso.

Mabaso said the initiative would create a taxi industry monopoly. He said it seemed as though the intentions of the promoters of Sataco was to push through legislation to support their own private endeavours.

He said the new splinter taxi association had presented Alec Erwin, the trade and industry minister, as well as the transport, finance and mineral and energy affairs departments, with a joint statement of its grievances before the Cabinet gave the go-ahead for the overhaul of South Africa's taxi fleet.

Karen Pearce, a spokesman for the transport department, said the department was not aware of this, or of any problems existing within Sataco.

The transport department plans to complete the recapitalisation process within the next five years.

(333)

Soweto vigilantes assaulting taxi drivers

By DOMINIC MAHLANGU

A VIGILANTE group which has in the past month gone on a rampage, assaulting taxi drivers around Gauteng was said to be a 'Mafia' style group operating from Soweto.

Simon Mtshali, a taxi owner from Katlehong, was the second victim to be assaulted and left for dead by the group after he was kidnapped at gun point from his house.

He said he was driven to Southgate near Soweto, where he was assaulted.

Police in both Katlehong and Soweto said that they had received complaints of assault, but had so far not arrested anyone in connection with the alleged assaults.

Thulane Dube, a taxi driver from Zonkizizwe, was also assaulted. He was later forced to swallow a bullet after he was allegedly kidnapped and later assaulted near Southgate last week. He said he was kidnapped and assaulted by the same group.

Mtshali who this week recounted his near-death experience to City Press, said it was just luck that he was still alive. He said that more than 10 cars drove past his house last Wednesday. At the time, he thought the men were escorting a high-profile government official.

"One car stopped at my gate and a group of heavily armed men came straight at me. They said I must accompany them."



VICTIMISED... Simon Mtshali, a taxi owner in Katlehong, was assaulted and left for dead after he was kidnapped from his house on Wednesday
Picture Mpho Mphotho

Mtshali said he was forced at gun point into one of the cars, where he was assaulted. He was later driven to Southgate near Soweto.

"When we arrived there, I was taken out, assaulted again and asked about a missing mini-bus which they said had been hi-jacked a week before."

Mtshali said he had never been involved in hi-jacking syndicates. He added that were it not for the intervention of the police who were passing by, he would have been killed or forced to swallow a bullet.

Nelson Ngonyama, a public relations officer for Katlehong People's Taxi Association (KAPTA) said many of their drivers had fallen victim to the group. He said that in the past weeks the group had assaulted many taxi drivers and owners.

He said KAPTA was concerned by the luke-warm approach the police had taken with regard to the matter.

"A number of similar incidents have been reported to the police but nothing has been done to stop the vigilantes. If no action is taken, there will be war between various taxi associations," said Ngonyama.

Dube, who was also assaulted near Southgate, was admitted to Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital where he was found to have suffered a skull fracture.

Vosloo residents boycott taxis (332)

By DOMINIC MAHLANGU

CP 18/7/99

TAXI commuters will be left stranded in Vosloorus as from tomorrow after local community organisations said they will boycott the local taxis.

This follows a decision deemed unilateral by the organisations after the local taxi operators announced fare hikes.

South African National Civics Organisation (Sanco) in the area said local taxis in Vosloorus would be boycotted as from tomorrow after they increased taxi fares without reaching an agreement with the community.

Sanco branch secretary, Zulu Ratsoane said the action was intendend to prevent the Vosloorus/Boksburg Taxi Association (VBTA) from increasing the fares by 50 cents.

Ratsoane said the defiance action was taken after the taxi association failed to agree with community structures on not increasing local taxi fares.

Oupa Simelane, route chairman of the area said the taxi association was aware of the intended boycott by the community.

Ratsoane said it was mischievous of the taxi association to hold negotiations with Sanco, while on the other hand, take decisions about issues which were being discussed.

He said they were shocked to read notices pasted around the township about the fare increase.

"We are going to boycott their taxis to prove to them that they must not take decisions behind closed doors and think that the community will not take action.

"The issue of taxi increases will be decided upon after the Transport Summit to be held on July 24 at the Boksburg City Hall," said Ratsoane.

He said on the following day there would be a mass meeting in Vosloorus stadium where the community would be informed about resolutions taken at the summit.

Nedlac publishes retrenchment code

ET(BR) 19/7/99 (332)

ROY COKAYNE

Pretoria – A code of good practice for retrenchments was issued in terms of the Labour Relations Act (LRA) by Nedlac on Friday.

A notice published in the Government Gazette said the LRA defined retrenchments – or dismissals based on the operational requirements of an employer – as dismissal for the economic, technological, structural or similar needs of the employer.

It was difficult to define all the circumstances that might legitimately form the basis of a dismissal for these reasons.

"As a general rule, economic reasons are those that relate to the financial management of the enterprise. Technological reasons refer to the introduction of new technology which affects work relationships either by making existing jobs redundant or by requiring employees to adapt to the new technology or a restructuring of the workplace.

"Structural reasons relate to the redundancy of posts consequent to a restructuring of the employer's enterprise," it said.

According to the code, dismissals for operational requirements had been categorised as "no fault" dismissals because the employee was not responsible for the termination of employment.

It said the LRA placed particular procedural and substantive obligations on an employer, most of which were directed towards ensuring that all possible alternatives to dismissal were explored and employees were treated fairly.

The purpose of consultation was to enable the parties to strive for consensus on, among other things, measures to avoid dismissals. The consultation process must start as soon as a reduction of the workforce through retrenchment was contemplated so alternatives could be explored.

"The employer should in all good faith keep an open mind throughout and seriously consider proposals put forward," it said.

Criteria for dismissal that infringed on a fundamental right protected by the LRA could never be fair. "These include selection on the basis of union membership or activity, pregnancy or some other unfair discriminatory ground."

Criteria that were neutral on the face of it should be carefully examined to ensure they did not discriminate when applied. "For example, to select only part-time workers for retrenchment might discriminate against women, since women are predominantly employed in part-time work."

Probe into taxi route clash

(332) CT 20/7/99

POLICE suspect a link between the murder on Sunday of three taxi drivers near Strand and rival gang attacks over taxi routes. Crime Writer **GASANT ABADER** reports.

THREE taxi owners, all members of the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata), were gunned down in a shebeen in Nomzamo near Strand on Sunday.

Phumelelo Ngthwatwa, Elliott Ngumuke and William Shuma were shot dead by an attacker believed to be armed with an AK-47 rifle, while they were sitting in the Thandu Bantu shebeen in Michael Street.

Two other people — one of them the ANC ward councillor for the area, Vuyo Kavi — were also shot and wounded in the attack, at about 7.20pm.

As the gunman fled, a Cata taxi pulled up outside the shebeen and Kavi fired at the driver, Zenzela Weliso, wounding him. A panic-stricken Weliso crashed into a bakkie parked about 300m from the shebeen.

Cata and the Congress of Democratic Taxi Associations (Codeta) are fierce rivals in the Western Cape and have been locked in a long-standing feud over routes.

Last Thursday, a 14-year-old taxi fare collector was killed in a shooting between members of Cata and Codeta at the Bellville taxi rank. In five separate attacks last Wednesday and Thursday, at least three minibuses were set alight.

Crisis talks were called by the police, and both organisations promised that the issue would be dealt with as a high priority.

It emerged at the meeting that a dispute over a new road leading to the N2 from Delft, which has not yet officially been opened, was the cause of the fighting. Apparently, members from both taxi organisations had been picking up commuters on this road.

East Metropole police spokesperson Riaan Pool said that while no single group could be fingered as being responsible for Sunday's bloody attack, police were looking into the possibility that the murders were linked to last week's violent clashes.

"The possibility that the attack was related to rivalry in the taxi industry is one of the avenues being investigated, but we can't say for sure. It is difficult to attribute any attack as part of the conflict," Pool said.

Weliso and the two other injured men were in a serious condition in hospital.

Duma Jaxa, spokesperson for Cata, said it was unclear who had carried out the attack, but that the organisation would investigate.

"We would not like to blame any organisation. We have never had a problem with Codeta in the Strand area," Jaxa said.

Codeta spokesperson Reggie Malimba said yesterday that one of the Codeta members at Delft had been arrested in connection with last week's shootings.

"I would not like to comment on the Strand killings," Malimba said. "We only have about four or five taxis in that area, and as far as I am concerned (our taxis) are not linked to the taxi violence."

ANC provincial secretary Mcebisi Skwatsha said: "We are sick of this sort of violence and call upon the provincial authorities to intervene decisively.

We are alarmed that an AK-47 was used in the attack.

"This once again demonstrates the need for tighter policing and gun laws."

Airlines object to new charge

BD 22/7/99

Aviation safety contribution to replace fuel levy

(269) (338) (183)

Stephané Bothma

PRETORIA — Foreign airlines operating scheduled services to SA will have to pay almost R17m to the SA Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) over the next 18 months as a contribution to a general aviation safety charge.

The general safety charge was implemented after some foreign airlines refused to pay a fuel levy to fund the CAA.

Although the new charge has been agreed upon by the International Air Transport Authority (Iata), several foreign carriers strongly objected yesterday to funding SA's CAA, saying they fund their own aviation authorities.

"We are not saying the charge is not valid, but unless the CAA gives full details of exactly what it is for, we will not pay," said a Virgin Atlantic spokesman. He said UK-based airlines subsidised the British civil aviation authority; SA Airways was not required to contribute to the UK authority.

The charge will replace a 1,5c a litre levy on aviation fuel that was implemented in January this year to fund the CAA for activities which were not directly attributable to any specific user or product but which benefited the industry as a whole.

These services include the promotion of aviation safety, the management of the national airspace committee and route planning over Africa.

The fuel levy had to be scrapped after several foreign airlines refused to pay, saying the government-to-government bilateral air services agreement that covers their operations to SA specifically excluded a fuel levy.

Foreign carriers flying to SA on a non-scheduled basis and domestic carriers will continue to pay the fuel levy, the CAA said.

According to Board of Airline Representatives chairman Juan van Rensburg most of the foreign airlines were "not too happy to pay" contributions to the CAA.

"Some paid the fuel levy under great protest while others refused to pay," Van Rensburg said.

The board, however, agreed that the new charge was preferable to a fuel levy.

"At least now there will be a structured mechanism of paying," Van Rensburg said, referring to a decision that the safety charge would be applied in addition to existing air traffic and navigation service charges using the Eurocontrol air traffic formula.

The agreement between the CAA and Iata to implement the general charge comes into effect from September 1.

"It was agreed that a total amount of US$1,3m will be charged for the CAA's April 1 to March 31 2000 financial year but be collected over the seven-month period from September 1," CAA CEO Trevor Abrahams said.

"A total of US$1,5m will be charged for the following financial year and will be collected monthly over the 12-month period," he said.

Abrahams said the foreign operators that had been paying the fuel levy would be credited for any payments already made against payment due under the safety charge.

Union rejects taxi smart cards

(332)

Jonny Steinberg

TAXI drivers will boycott the introduction of smart cards to the taxi industry until taxi owners negotiate standards of employment with driver representatives, says the National Taxi Driver's Organisation (Natdo), a minor union in the sector.

The Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), which organises 25 000 taxi drivers, condemned the call for a boycott as premature, arguing that Natdo had failed to do "basic research on the potential advantages of smart cards".

Natdo president Themba Mgabhi demanded in Johannesburg that the transport department reveal whether its plans to recapitalise the industry, and to replace 16-seaters with larger vehicles, would result in job-shedding.

SA Taxi Council (Sataco) president Joe Mabaso, whose organisation represents all major taxi owner associations in SA, said it was ironic that a drivers' organisation should oppose the smart card system since it was an opportunity to formalise labour relations in the taxi industry.

"Once transactions in the industry take place electronically, rather than in cash, it will be possible for union dues, UIF, pensions and medical aid contributions to be paid automatically," Mabaso said.

TGWU organiser Maurice Bokaba said the union had been involved in intensive consultation with Sataco since its formation late last year.

"We have not yet formulated a position on smart cards but there are potential advantages," Bokaba said.

"The point is that smart cards must come as part of a package that includes formalising the industry, recapitalising the national fleet and introducing a thorough regulatory framework.

"We are encouraged by the formation of Sataco, for we can now negotiate with a single employer organisation that is recognised by government."

Responding to Natdo's concerns that the recapitalisation of the taxi fleet would result in job losses, transport department senior general manager Harald Harvey said: "Recapitalisation does not mean that every 16-seater will be taken off the road and replaced with a 35-seater.

"Which mode is appropriate will depend on the local context."

BD 22/7/99

'New scheme will be end of bus industry'

(332)

A PROPOSED scheme whereby Government would help taxi owners replace their existing vehicles seems to be aimed at destroying the bus industry, it was said yesterday.

Mr George Maluka, chairman of the Western Cape Southern African Bus Operators' Association, said proposals by the Transport Department to replace the country's ageing fleet of taxis with 18-seater minibus and 35-seater "midibus taxis" discriminated against bus operators.

According to the proposals, the Government will subsidise 30 percent of the cost of a new vehicle for each vehicle scrapped.

Transport department spokesman Mr Mike Mabaso said: "These are only proposals at this stage."

He said Transport Minister Dullah Omar and all nine provincial transport MECs would discuss the proposals in Pretoria today to see if they were viable.

"The issue has reached a delicate stage and needs to go through Cabinet first. There is nothing definite yet," said Mabaso, who acknowledged they had received complaints from various taxi and bus organisations over the proposals.

Maluka said: "It has been negotiated behind the scenes, without consulting bus operators.

"No account has been taken of the thousands of job losses involving trained, skilled workers that would flow from the demise of the bus industry."

Unless regulation, supported by strict law, was put in place, the proposed scheme was likely to lead to chaos in the public transport industry and on the country's roads, he said.

There was no clarity on what was to become of any vehicles that were replaced.

Unless they were removed from the market or withdrawn from service, the number of unroadworthy vehicles operating illegal services was likely to increase, Maluka said.– *Sapa*

Taxi signs 'magnets for criminals'

But the law says permanent insignia must be carried at all times

ARG 10/8/99

(330)

HELEN BAMFORD
STAFF REPORTER

Sedan taxi drivers who have to shuttle between the upmarket Waterfront and more dangerous parts of the city say they are being unfairly targeted because they carry removable signs on their roofs.

They argue that the magnetic signs prevent them from becoming crime statistics when going about their business in dangerous areas because they can take them off their cars.

But traffic police are cracking down and ticketing drivers with these signs in a campaign against pirate operations.

The law requires drivers to have permanent signs on their vehicles.

To illustrate the point, taxi driver Dominique Redman describes how, while on her way to Hanover Park to drop off clients, she was nearly attacked after leaving her sign on because she was worried she would be ticketed.

When she stopped at a red robot, she noticed about five men running towards her and without thinking she put her foot flat and roared off.

She is one of a number of sedan taxi drivers operating in the harbour area who claim they are being harassed by police and traffic officials because they are using magnetic signs on their taxis.

A number of the drivers live on the Cape Flats and say they are becoming soft targets for hijackers when driving home after a shift.

Cheryl Pinto said: "Wherever we go we are in danger – it's like a sign saying 'shoot me, do what you want with me'."

Abdullah Khan, who has been operating a sedan taxi for 31 years, said traffic officials had suddenly blitzed drivers.

"We've been using these magnetic signs for about five years. Traffic officials have always been fairly lax about taking action but suddenly we are all being victimised.

"They are confiscating our transportation permits and refuse to give them back until we put permanent signs up," he said.

Reyaaz Ebrahim is so upset that he has written to Frank Kahn, Director of Public Prosecutions.

"I've appealed to him to intervene because I don't understand how one day it can be legal and suddenly the traffic department says its not fine.

"Often tourists and business people ask me to take off the signs because they know taxis are targeted by criminals."

Magnetic signs, available from any spares shop, cost R140 for the roof sign and R120 each for the doors.

The drivers questioned why the traffic department allowed the marketing of the signs if it was illegal.

They say the harassment is a waste of police resources and claim that many pirate taxi drivers appear to be exempt.

However Captain Keith Blake of the Table Bay Harbour SAPS said, in terms of the Road Transportation Act, signs had to be fixed and the name of the business printed on the doors.

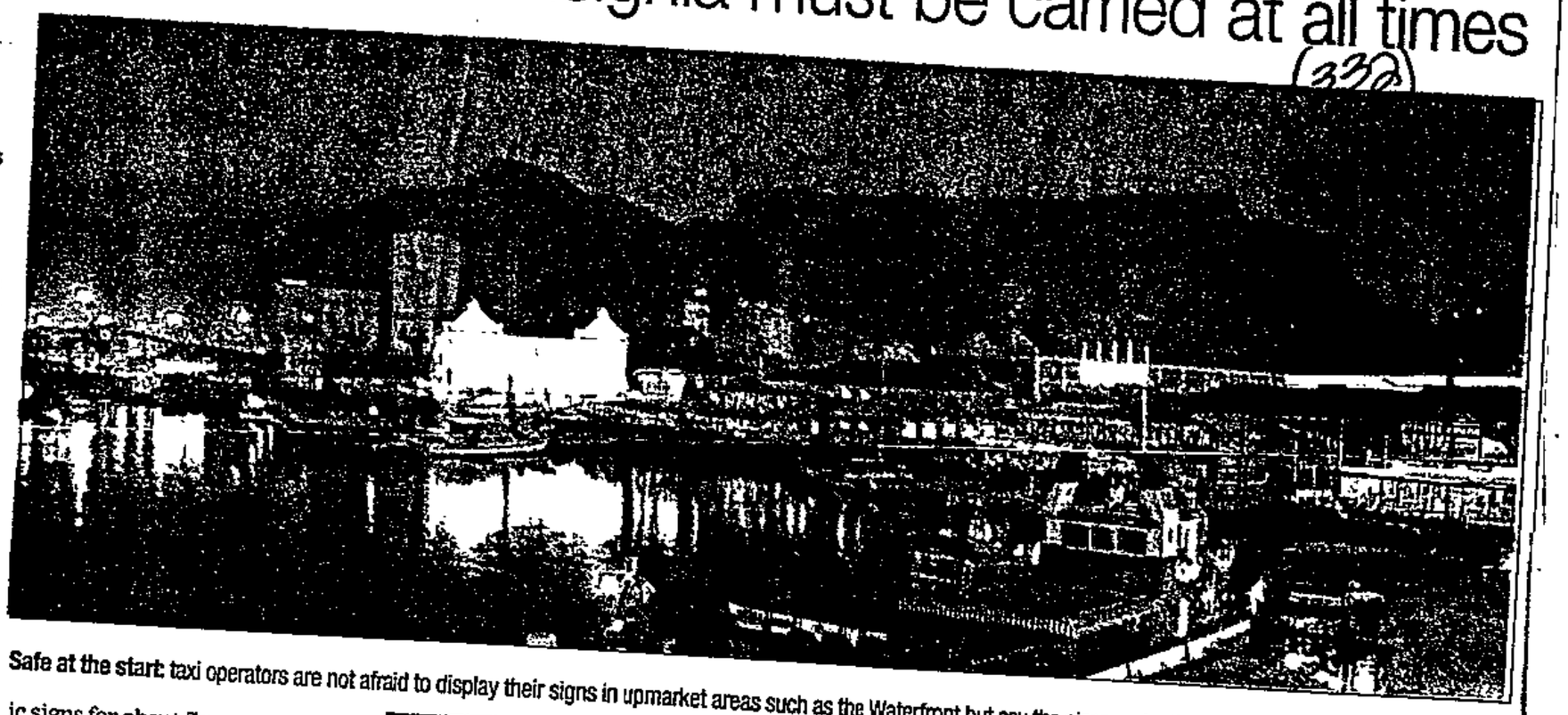
"I think we have succeeded in making the cars look better.

"In the past so few drivers used signs that it was impossible to tell the difference between a taxi and a private vehicle," said Captain Blake.

"I believe with our close co-operation with the traffic department, we are doing more than most to get rid of pirate taxis," he said.

Acting traffic manager Alex Lawrence said there had been complaints from tourists who had been overcharged by illegal taxi operators using magnetic signs, which was the reason for the clampdown.

"We ran a public awareness campaign last year to inform taxi drivers that it would be for their own safety to be easily identifiable and to make it more difficult for pirates to operate," he said.



Safe at the start: taxi operators are not afraid to display their signs in upmarket areas such as the Waterfront but say the signs make them a target for crime elsewhere



Where danger lurks: police vehicles on standby in Hanover Park

Govt's plan to replace taxis stalls

Sataco chairman criticises KwaZulu-Natal transport MEC of having a 'vested interest'

Jonny Steinberg

A GOVERNMENT plan to replace SA's ageing taxi fleet and invite tenders for a new vehicle assembly plant has been stalled after transport MECs held back their endorsement of the initiative.

SA Taxi Council (Sataco) chairman Joe Mabaso yesterday criticised KwaZulu-Natal transport MEC S'bu Ndebele, saying his department's "vested interest" in vehicle manufacturing was hampering national government's plans.

It is understood that government plans to replace SA's 120 000 16-seater taxis with 35- and 18-seaters within the next five years. The tender for the new vehicles would stipulate that they are assembled in SA and that Sataco owns a significant share of the venture.

In March this year Ndebele spearheaded the launch of a multimillion-rand investment company, Umthombo Investments, which is designing a 27-seat vehicle for the domestic market — a size that fails to meet the specifications of government's proposed tender.

The KwaZulu-Natal transport department capitalised Umthombo Investments to the tune of R8m at its inception. Umthombo interim chairman George Mahlalela is also the director-general of the KwaZulu-Natal transport department.

"Ndebele is intimately involved with a company that is competing in the taxi manufacture market," Mabaso said. "He worries that the company with which he is involved will lose out." Ndebele's spokesman, Mlungisi Ndhlela, refused to comment yesterday.

Transport Minister Dullah Omar's spokesman Mike Mabaso said singling out Ndebele was "grossly unfair".

"Whatever Ndebele raised at the mincom meeting (attended by MECs) was raised by other MECs as well. A national recapitalisation scheme has profound implications at provincial level and it is understandable that MEC's will want to scrutinise every detail."

Mabaso said the meeting of MECs did not reject the recapitalisation plans in principle, but wanted more time "to go through the documentation".

The matter would be discussed at a two-day bosberaad between the minister and the MECs to be held later this month, Mabaso said.

However, sources close to the process said yesterday that if the MECs delayed much longer, crucial legislative changes to the permit system would not be passed in the current parliamentary session, effectively delaying recapitalisation plans for as long as a year.

"A year-long delay ... might well unravel the flimsy unity the taxi industry has achieved in the last few months," a source said. "The capitalisation crisis is the industry's biggest problem. Sataco, a unified structure representing all major industry interests, was launched on the promise of taking care of the problem. Failing to deliver now will weaken it substantially."

Government signed a memorandum of understanding with the taxi industry earlier this year, drawing to a close an eight-month period of stormy negotiations between the transport department and Sataco. The memorandum commits government to finding an acceptable solution to the industry's recapitalisation crisis.

BD 11/8/99 (332)

ORGANISED UNEMPLOYMENT

FM 13/8/99

LAYING CLAIM TO THE MANTLE

(332)

Lack of co-ordination limits representation of unemployed

Last week unemployed workers in Gauteng took to the streets to demand more jobs. And not a trade union in sight. At least for now.

The march was organised by Unemployed Masses of SA (Umsa), one of a plethora of organisations representing the unemployed. Half a dozen have emerged in the last five years. Most, such as the Malamulela Social Movement for the Unemployed, Umsa, the Unemployed Labour Alliance (ULA) and Employment Movement of SA (Emsa), draw their support from the unskilled. The SA Graduate Development Association (Sagda) represents graduates struggling to enter the labour market.

Wits Sociology of Work Unit director Professor Eddie Webster says a number of factors account for the proliferation of organisations representing jobless — among them high unemployment, and the fact that SA has no social security network.

"You do not find organisations of the unemployed in advanced industrial countries as these have a social security system in place," says Webster.

He believes the organisations are "more political advocacy groups than organisations of the unemployed". Nevertheless, they represent more than half a million potential workers. Their key demand centres on the need for a more flexible labour market, to enable workers to enter the jobs market, even if it is for lower pay. Indeed, a recent Human Sciences Research Council survey found that 90% of respondents said they would take "any job". More than half would participate in job creation initiatives "unconditionally".

The demands of the organisations reflect with a curious accuracy the objectives of government's Growth Employment & Redistribution (Gear) policy. They want economic growth and job creation through labour-intensive foreign investment, and the promotion of small and medium-size enterprises.

All agree that recently introduced labour legislation, some of which introduces rigidities to the labour market, should be revised, and they appear to have finally been heard. Probably because they echo similar calls from business, particularly on labour market flexibility.

But the organisations' ability to have a major impact on policy has been muted by a lack of co-ordination, and in some instances, open differences on policy.

Umsa and the ULA gained publicity in the run-up to elections when they aligned themselves with the DP. Umsa still receives support from the DP.

Umsa president Godfrey Debeila says his organisation represents more than 60 000 unemployed people nationwide, with more than 32 000 registered members in Gauteng alone. Malamulela board executive member Corley Mashego is critical of Umsa's political affiliation however, claiming that his organisation is "nonpolitical and continues to be nonaligned".



Robert Tshabalala

***Vukile Nkabinde** . . . says he's "part of the solution"*

Malamulela claims to have 250 000 members (50 000 paid up). The movement calls for a free-market system. "The economic status quo in SA is flawed. There is continued organised labour intervention in the economy. There is a highly militarised trade union sector. There is a continued assumption on the part of some trade unions that they have the right to represent the interests of those who don't have formal wage jobs," argues Malamulela.

Less visible than the others, Emsa exists in the form of a political party. But it appears to have gone into retreat since it failed to raise the R100 000 needed to register for the June 2 national elections.

The party criticises Section 32 of the new Labour Relations Act, the provision that allows for the "compulsory extension of bargaining councils' wage agreements to nonparties". Emsa says this entrenches employed workers' privileges. It also says the legislation creates a labour elite.

"We argue for the creation of a second-tier labour market — the unemployed should be allowed to sell their labour below the minimum wage. A low wage is better than no wage" says Emsa party leader Michael Reitz.

Of the organisations for the unemployed, the most "organised" and the easiest to contact is Sagda. Executive director Vukile Nkabinde says his organisation is not just a pressure group but "part of the solution". He criticises the SA education system for having institutions not relevant to society's needs and neglecting community service — Sagda supports affirmative action legislation.

And this is not just talk. Sagda has established a business development centre in Emdeni, Soweto, after securing funds from George Soros's Open Society SA. It runs a self-financing tourism facility for companies interested in visiting the township and participates in the Gauteng government's youth placement and internship programme.

The fact that the message from these disparate groupings is getting to government is also getting to organised labour. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) is aware of the dangers of leaving a political vacuum among the unemployed. Zwelinzima Vavi, acting general secretary of Cosatu, admits the federation made a "fundamental mistake" when it abandoned attempts to organise the unemployed, leaving the field open to opposition parties such as the DP.

"I can imagine that one day they will march on Cosatu House because they will see Cosatu as a problem. That could happen if we don't move speedily to create an unemployment movement which understands that joblessness is not the result of labour market policies but is the result of structural problems; which understands that it is not organised workers who retrench workers," says Vavi. **Sello Mabotja**

Sun Air ceases operations

(332) BD 13/8/99

Hasty closure comes as a surprise to airline's almost 400 employees

Stephané Bothma

SUN Air, the recently privatised airline, will cease all operations at midnight tonight and will be liquidated almost immediately by its new majority shareholder, SA Airways (SAA).

In a move which took the airline's almost 400 employees by surprise, Sun Air's major shareholders, black empowerment groups Rethabile and the National Empowerment Fund (NEF), agreed to a deal late yesterday afternoon in which SAA would acquire a 75% equity stake in the carrier. SAA would also try to accommodate passengers with paid Sun Air tickets and pay salaries up to the end of this month.

British Airways-Comair will retain its 25% stake in Sun Air and will join SAA in the liquidation procedure.

Although Sun Air's demise will benefit SAA's privatisation plans by making the national carrier more profitable, observers said the move would give those opposed to government's privatisation programme some ammunition.

Sun Air, formerly Bop Air, was started by the former Bophuthatswana homeland government and became an SA government asset after the 1994 elections. Sun Air officials could not be reached for comment, but industry sources said last night that the airline, which has been operating in the red for several months, owes "tens of millions" of rands.

The deal, which will also include SAA and Comair absorbing some of Sun Air's staff, was condoned by the Competition Board.

Board spokesman David Lewis said the decision was influenced by evidence "that clearly establishes that Sun Air is a failing company and that the threat of liquidation is, under any circumstances, imminent".

Observers said the demise of Sun Air, the third major SA carrier to go under in the past seven years, after Flitestar and Phoenix Air, proved that the size of the country's domestic market was incapable of supporting four players. Sun Air was the third-largest domestic carrier in the country after SAA and Comair, with about 10% of the market share.

Sheiks Makhado, Sun Air director and representative of Rethabile, said recently that lower yields had plunged Sun Air into losses and that it was no longer viable.

The Association of South African Travel Agents (Asata), said the move was extremely damaging to the image of the local travel industry. It was distressing that the perception would exist that it was black empowerment groups which were involved in the failure, Asata president Kananelo Makhetha said. "I hope this does not scare away other empowerment groups from becoming involved in the wider travel industry in the country."

SAA said last night it had put in place an extensive programme to assist Sun Air passengers and staff. It would also interview Sun Air employees for jobs currently open at SAA.

SAA said Sun Air's demise resulted primarily from two factors: the SA airline business was too small to support so many carriers and Sun Air's costs had spiralled out of control.

According to the board, various alternatives to liquidation were explored, but none proved commercially viable.

Public interest considerations dictated that an orderly liquidation was preferable to the uncontrolled closure of the airline. The transaction would leave three robust competitors in the domestic passenger market, Lewis said.

AVIATION *SAA and BA-Comair will honour ticket-holders as industry absorbs shock news*

Sun Air folds its wings for ever

CT (BR) 13/8/99 (332)

AUDREY D'ANGELO

Cape Town – Sun Air, the domestic airline, will stop flying after tomorrow but South African Airways (SAA), which will buy 75 percent of the failed airline, and BA/Comair, which holds 25 percent, will carry passengers who have already bought tickets.

David Lewis, the chairman of the Competitions Board, said the board had approved the transaction because it was satisfied that the South African market was too small to support four domestic airlines and Sun Air was a failing company.

A statement issued by the Competition Board said SAA would buy the equity stake held by black empowerment shareholders. The shareholders would then immediately put Sun Air into liquidation.

The statement said Sun Air was unlikely to attract another buyer. "An orderly liquidation following the process suggested by SAA is infinitely preferable to an uncontrolled closure of the company."

Sun Air now joins Flight Star and Phoenix as airlines that have tried but failed to succeed in the domestic market.



POINT OF NO RETURN *Passengers hover around Sun Air's check-in desk yesterday as the airline announces its imminent liquidation. SAA said it would buy the equity stake held by black empowerment shareholders*

PHOTO JOHN WOODROOF

Sun Air, regarded by many people in the travel industry as South Africa's best domestic airline, was known to be in difficulties after a protracted price war. But news late yesterday that it would close so soon came as a shock to the industry and passengers. It had been in negotiations with SAA for several weeks.

Grant MacKenzie, the general manager of Virgin Atlantic Airways in southern Africa, said a few days ago that his company had been prepared to pay R35 million for 25 percent of Sun Air, the maximum stake a foreign airline would have been allowed to buy. Virgin had withdrawn because of difficulties over control.

Grant said it had been an impossible situation for Sun Air that BA-Comair, a competitor, had been represented on the board.

But other people in the industry said the excellence of Sun Air's standards and service had contributed to its difficulties. Kananile Makheta, the president of the Association of Southern African Travel Agents, said: "Sun was offering a four-star service for three-star prices in a competitive environment. Profit margins were squeezed and its expenses were too high."

Makheta said he also feared that the failure of an airline with a large black empowerment shareholding might discourage black people from investing in the tourism industry.

SAA said yesterday that members of Sun Air's frequent flyer programme who held confirmed Sun Air tickets could book confirmed reservations in the same class on SAA flights where space was available.

SAA to the rescue as cash-strapped Sun Air crashes

Travel industry shocked as top airline folds

(332)

ARG 13/8/99

STAFF REPORTER

Johannesburg – South African Airways has moved swiftly to rescue passengers stranded by the closure today of cash-strapped local airline Sun Air.

Although Sun Air's management yesterday dodged the media and refused to publicly comment on its position, the Competition Board agreed on Wednesday to have it liquidated and condoned an application by SAA to buy a 75% stake in the airline. The other 25% is to go to British Airways/Comair.

The board said in a statement that its decision was influenced by evidence that clearly established that Sun Air was a failing company and the threat of liquidation was, under any circumstances, imminent and its shareholders intended to immediately liquidate Sun Air.

Sun Air's attempts to find international investors in recent months had proved fruitless.

Meanwhile, travel agents have described Sun Air's demise as a "severe blow to competition in the airline industry" and accused SAA of planning to create a monopoly.

Pentravel manager Alison Groves said the industry needed as much competition as possible for the benefit of passengers, and the news that Sun Air had gone bust "is a sad day for commercial airlines".

"It seems SAA is winning the battle to create a monopoly. They bought the majority interest in Sun Air and the first thing they did is to close it down. That's what I believe happened."

But SAA spokesperson Leon Els denied this, saying British Airways/Comair and Nationwide Airline were still strong competitors.

Competition Board spokesperson David Lewis said after examining the domestic airline passenger markets in other developing countries, and after seeking the opinion of industry experts, the board was of the view that the South African market was incapable of supporting four players and that this significantly reduced the prospect of an alternative buyer for Sun Air.

Sun Air's high costs recently began spiralling out of control and its downfall was also due to fact that the airline business in South Africa was simply too small to support as many carriers as there now were.

In fact, Sun Air's directors had recently argued that no other country in the world with a similar-sized economy had as many carriers as South Africa did.

Mr Els said discussions with Sun Air had failed to come up with a financially viable strategy. However, SAA undertook to provide funding for the August salaries of Sun Air employees, as well as to start interviewing staff for jobs that are currently open at SAA.

Mr Els said SAA had also reached agreement with Sun Air's principal creditors and shareholders to facilitate an orderly winding down of the company's business.

The Pilots' Association said it was not surprised by the news, saying Sun Air's major shareholders appeared to have been "lured by quick commercial gain into selling Sun Air into hostile liquidation".

The association's chairperson, Glen Watson, said: "It is a tragedy that one of the truly racially integrated companies, which epitomises the spirit and hope of the new SA, had to close its doors due to profit and commercial considerations."

He disputed the shareholders' claim that the airline was not financially viable, saying it had been a profitable concern two years ago, "earning numerous awards in the industry for excellence".

Plan in place to help ticket-holders

SA Airways has put in place an extensive programme to assist Sun Air ticket-holders.

Sun Air's Air Rewards Gold and Silver members who are currently holding confirmed air tickets which were issued on or before August 12, may book confirmed reservations on SAA flights where space is available.

Apart from these, the following passengers will be carried by SAA without additional charge:

- All those with confirmed reservations, except for free tickets, will be accommodated on standby.
- Passengers booked on Sun Air but who have not bought tickets should call SAA or their local Asata travel agent to make reservations and arrange payment.

However, the applicable ticketing and pricing conditions will apply.

- SAA has offered additional flights per week to all of Sun Air's destinations.

Sun Air welcomes passengers to 'Titanic last flight'

ARG 14/8/99 (332)

BRENDEN NEL

Sun Air staff gave the liquidated airline a farewell in style on its last flight to Cape Town yesterday.

In a bizarre yet fun ritual, crew and flight attendants greeted passengers on flight BV0719 in life jackets.

"We've sunk, so welcome to the Titanic," quipped an attendant as they welcomed passengers on board. "This will be our last voyage, so do enjoy yourselves."

During the flight, cabin crew lightened the mood by playing music and chatting to passengers, giving them their last taste of the service that earned the airline the label of best in South Africa.

Then the captain took passengers on a quick, low-altitude tour of Cape Town and surrounds before touching down – on time – thanking them for flying Sun Air and wishing them "good luck with any other carriers you will be using in the future".

Cabin staff wept openly and embraced passengers who comforted them.

The two-hour journey marked the demise of an airline which became known for outstanding service but ended up a victim of an overtraded market and a ticket price war with competitors.

Staff said that although they knew the company was closing, they had not yet been briefed about their future.

"We can't really say anything at the moment," said an attendant.

"We're waiting to get to Cape Town when we will know what is going on."

A similar response came from ground staff at Cape Town and Johannesburg airports who said they did not know what the future held. South African Airways has said it will take on some Sun Air staff.

Many Sun Air passengers were still wait-listed last night for return flights on SAA and Comair.

Sun Air joins Flitestar and Phoenix Air in the graveyard of South African airlines which have failed in recent years.

(332) ST(MT) 15/8/99

Prices set to rise as Sun Air goes to ground

AVIATION INDUSTRY
By ROGER MAKINGS

SUN Air's demise means passengers can expect to see fares rise, but not because of a lack of capacity, say airline bosses.

The three carriers still flying major trunk routes say they won't take advantage of Sun Air's looming liquidation, although all are hurting from the nine-month price war that led to Sun Air's crash.

SAA, which has bought 75% of Sun Air (Comair owns 25%) believes it will take a couple of weeks for it, Comair and Nationwide to absorb Sun Air's approximately 70 000 to 80 000 passengers a month — roughly 10% of the market. SAA will initially increase capacity to accommodate passengers with confirmed bookings and "thereafter it will be business as usual", said chief executive Coleman Andrews.

"The liquidation of Sun Air will make the remaining three carriers flying the major trunk routes that much more viable and put them in a position to compete more robustly with each other."

He was, however, adamant that fares would be increased only to offset increased operating costs such as the rise in fuel price and the declining rand-dollar value.

He said he was determined to keep SA's domestic fares the lowest in the world.

With regard to staff and aircraft, Andrews said SAA would attempt to absorb as many Sun Air employees as possible.

"We need more staff and Sun Air offered an extremely good product provided by very capable check-in personnel and cabin attendants, as well as others, and we will begin interviewing them this week."

Of the aircraft he said: "They will be returned to the leasing companies or the banks that financed them."

This could pose a problem for Safair, which has leased five MD80s and one Boeing 727 to Sun Air.

And, although the downfall of Sun Air was good news for opposition domestic airlines, passengers could expect to get less value for their money, said Sun Air's managing director, Johan Borstlap.

Piet van Hoven, managing director of BA/Comair, said this week the airline had written off its 25% share in Sun Air, for which it had paid R6-million two years ago and which caused a 10% drop in the carrier's share price on Friday.

"On the upside, however, we expect to gain about 25% of Sun Air's passengers. This should push our market share from about 18% to just over 20%."

Sun Air closure not a failure – Radebe

PUBLIC Enterprises Minister Jeff Radebe on Saturday said the closure of Sun Air should not be seen as the failure of another empowerment initiative.

He said in a statement the Competition Board has supported the opinion that SA's domestic air-travel, by international standards, could not sustain a fourth airline and this raised concerns when Sun Air was privatised. "Essentially government has a responsibility to ensure that those entities like Sun Air are able to have a better life after privatisation. We cannot have a situation where the objectives of government are undermined through additional costs to the state when privatised entities fail."

The Competition Board earlier said a number of alternatives to the airline's liquidation were explored, but none were found to be practical.

It said South Africa's domestic airline market was notoriously fickle and the past few years have seen the demise of a number of other local airlines, including Phoenix Air and Flightstar.

After examining the domestic airline passenger markets in other developing countries, and after seeking the opinion of industry experts, the Board is firmly of the view that the South African market was incapable of supporting four players and that this significantly reduced the prospect of an alternative suitor for Sun Air.

South African Airways obtained a 75 percent stake in the airline. The other 25 percent is owned by British Airways/Comair.

Radebe commended measures taken to minimise the impact on passengers arising from Sun Air's liquidation.

He welcomed measures taken to cushion the impact for employees by ensuring that they receive salaries for August and possible re-employment by SA Airways.

Sun Air ceased to operate as an independent entity from midnight, August 12. – Sapa

CP 15/8/99

(332)

Taxi alliance urges govt to halt recapitalisation

BD 16/8/99 (332)

Pearl Sebolao

THE National Taxi Associations' Alliance has called on Transport Minister Dullah Omar to halt the white paper on public transport and recapitalisation of the taxi industry until there has been "proper consultation".

The alliance, which claims the support of the majority of taxi operators in the country, said the taxi industry had been hijacked by individuals, who purported to be speaking on behalf of the industry, for their own enrichment.

The alliance called on government to halt taxi initiatives at all levels of government, the national public transport plan and any taxi-related government-sponsored roadshows, including the one starting in Gauteng today.

Government has, however, refused to back down and is going ahead with its plans.

"The recapitalisation of the taxi industry will not be put on hold as requested by the alliance," Omar's spokesman Mike Mabasa said. However, he said Omar would attend to its concerns "as a matter of urgency".

A written response would be forwarded to the alliance this week and a meeting between Omar and the nine provincial transport MECs would be convened before the end of the month to discuss issues relating to the taxi industry, Mabasa said.

He said the meeting would look at the "question of consultation and how inclusive the process was".

Alliance chairman Sicelo Mabaso claims that the SA Taxi Council (Sataco), which was originally mandated by the industry to represent it in talks with government, has not been consulted by any taxi association or individual operator about its initiatives.

SA Local and Long Distance Taxi Bus Association's Setumo Sentle said former Gauteng Transport MEC Joyce Kgoali had appealed on a number of occasions to Sataco to brief taxi operators, but to no avail.

The alliance has withdrawn its mandate with Sataco, and "requested a clear statement of what government expects of it (Sataco)" and clarity on its legal standing.

It has accused private company Ubunye Consortium, which is connected to Sataco and its head, of trying to dupe operators into joining it under the pretext that it is a government initiative with statutory powers, and that they are compelled to do so.

Mabaso said members of the industry had a right to "choose whomever they went to bed with" and to form their own private ventures. "They want to be our godfather and to tell us when to go to the loo," he said of Ubunye.

The alliance also accused the Gauteng transport department of trying to intimidate and "sideline operators who bought into the smart card system being implemented in some parts in the province".

"We were told over the radio that we ran before the gun could go off," despite the initiative having been launched with the approval and full knowledge of Kgoali and her adviser Jacob Ngakane in November last year, Mabaso said.

"We are not saying that government should buy into it (our smart card scheme), but we are saying that we should be left alone to do what we think is good for us. Government should stick to governance", Mabaso said.

Sataco head Joe Mabaso was not available for comment.

SUN AIR (332) FM 20/8/99

COSTLY DEATH OF AN AIRLINE

SAA's R25m taxpayers' gift

It's not surprising Sun Air is dead. Those who read the *FM* would have known it had problems, and why (*Economy & Business*, July 9). What is surprising is just how far gone Sun Air was at the end — and how national carrier SA Airways went about dealing with the situation.

SAA has assumed the role of benevolent godfather (or, perhaps, a central banker) in the mess; surprising many in the airline industry by deciding not only to buy a controlling stake in the insolvent carrier but, with the help of Sun Air shareholder Comair, to fly Sun Air ticketholders to their destinations for free.

SAA president Coleman Andrews says details of the arrangement have yet to be finalised, but that the cost of free tickets and a majority equity stake will amount to between R25m and R30m. A small part of it will be recouped, but it's as near to charity as it can get — and yes, it's taxpayers' money. So, what was SAA thinking?

"If Sun Air had gone out of business this afternoon (without SAA stepping in) there would have been 10 000 passengers stranded, air rewards lost and employees not paid. It would have been bad for air transportation in SA," answers Andrews.

Besides arguing for the greater good, Andrews says the airline wanted to provide some relief to the black investors in Sun Air, Rethabile and Co-ordinated Network Investments (CNI). But he says the price paid by SAA for equity will be at a discount to the price paid when Sun Air was privatised.



WHY SUN AIR WAS SKIMMING THE TREETOPS

Aircraft leases	R800m-R900m
Immediate claims	R70m-R80m
Value of issued tickets	R18m
Cash in bank	R3m-R4m



The only financial benefit to SAA from the rescue will be that the airline gets to fly Sun Air customers and may convert some of those faithful into regular passengers of its own.

Andrews has already alerted staff to the opportunity. "Let's empathise with the fact that these developments have caused considerable inconvenience for them (Sun Air customers)," he writes in an internal SAA memo. "And let's use this opportunity to win them over to SAA by handling them with extra special care every step of the way."

But the chiefs of all three remaining airlines, including Andrews, say the 70 000 passengers that Sun Air flew monthly will divide themselves into roughly the same proportions as the existing market shares. So, SAA won't benefit to a disproportionate extent.

SAA insists there was no pressure from on high to play rescuer. But its actions have the blessing of government. Public Enterprises Minister Jeff Radebe has extended his "support to BA Comair and particularly SAA for the comprehensive rescue plan that will minimise the potential chaos".

Andrews adds that the rescue plan "was approved by our board in principle a couple of weeks ago and we will have the support of the appropriate government Ministers".

He appeals to those who may feel it a waste of taxpayers' money to consider whether SAA "has created value on aggregate". He says that with the turnaround and the equity sale to Swissair, the airline's estimated value has increased by R4bn-R5bn to R6,9bn in the past few months.

The second interesting feature of the Sun Air death is just how badly off the airline was at the end. When the *FM* interviewed Rethabile luminaries Sheiks Makhado and Jackie Mphafudi early in July they insisted Sun Air had sufficient cash reserves to continue for several months, while they looked for a saviour. That has now proved incorrect.

They also claimed that Rethabile had concluded a deal to purchase CNI's stake in Sun Air — another untruth.

But the *FM* wasn't the only one to have been misled in this. Andrews says when he first met with the Sun Air management in early May, "we were told they had six months of cash available. But when we saw their books, we realised that they couldn't fly past Saturday".

Andrews says Sun Air is sitting with aircraft leases totalling R800m to R900m, immediate claims of between R70m and R80m and R18m worth of issued tickets. Against these commitments it has just R3m to R4m in the bank. That leaves little for the creditors, notably Investec and Safair, to fight over.

There is also the question of the outstanding payments that must be made by shareholders on the original Sun Air purchase. In terms of the privatisation deal, the shareholders are due to pay the remaining 50% of the purchase price in January 2000.

SAA has made clear it will not take responsibility for this liability; that will have to remain with the original shareholders, or government will have to write it off, it says.

Ministry of Public Enterprises communications director Zaid Nordien says government is discussing this issue with Rethabile and CNI. Comair has yet to approach government, but they must also be keen to renegotiate the deal.

The empowerment shareholders may well find a sympathetic Ministry.

"The declaration of the Competition Board supports the position that our domestic air travel, by international standards, could not sustain a fourth airline," says Radebe. "This raises concern about some of the basic assumptions that were made when Sun Air was privatised."

The final financial knock to Rethabile and CNI will depend greatly on the terms of the deal with SAA, how they raised the capital and what government decides to do with the unpaid amount. Comair, meanwhile, will write off its full investment of R8m and carry some additional cost related to the free tickets. But like all the other airlines, it stands to gain more in the medium term from the lower seat supply in the market.

The death of Sun Air leaves a bitter taste. The SA market may have been overtraded, but Nationwide and Comair argue that it was SAA's seat-dumping that chased Sun Air out of the market. If that's true, then Sun Air is being given a good burial by its own murderer.

Nationwide's owner Vernon Bricknell is concerned about the Competition Board's role: "By the time it woke up and did something it was too late to save Sun Air."

Last week, Comair and Nationwide withdrew their objections from the Competition Board. They say the end of Sun Air means there's no longer excess capacity in the market and that SAA withdrew some services to Durban and Port Elizabeth.

Andrews refuses to take the blame for Sun Air's demise.

"The problems resulted primarily from two things: one, the market couldn't support four carriers; two, when we saw their financials, we discovered their costs were materially higher than you would expect," he says. "In the last four months, their costs spiralled out of control; plus, they had a dysfunctional board situation which made it difficult to make progress."

That leads to another question: Did mismanagement, or even fraud, take place? Andrews says he doesn't yet know enough to answer that. But if such evidence emerges, he promises to pursue it as aggressively as he has within SAA in the past 12 months.

Stuart Rutherford

Rethabile refuses blame for SunAir fall

By SIMBA MAKUNIKE

THE minority shareholders of Sun Air were collectively responsible for the demise of the airline, Rethabile Group chairperson, Dr Jackie Mphafudi said on Thursday.

In an exclusive interview with City Press, the chairman of the black empowerment group which owns a 35,75 percent stake in Sun Air said the airline was a still birth, with rival airline Comair directly and indirectly calling the shots.

"Our hands were tied from the very beginning when we went to bed with a rival airline. That is when everything went wrong," Mphafudi said.

During its privatisation process, Sun Air had eight local and foreign suitors vying for it.

The Rethabile-Comair group clinched the deal for R50 million as the only bidders in the race after the other local and foreign consortiums lost interest.

Rethabile has been blamed for the demise of the airline, with analysts saying their lack of experience in aviation coupled with the unavailability of financial resources to recapitalise the airline were partly responsible for its fall.

They said Sun Air's downfall could vindicate allegations that the privatisation programme under minister Stella Sigcau was poorly managed.

Mphafudi refuted the allegations, saying business conflicts and the fact that the domestic market was not big enough for four airlines were largely responsible for the demise.

Apart from Rethabile's 35,75 percent stake, Co-ordinated Network Investments (CNI) held a 19 percent shareholding while Comair had a 25 percent stake.

The National Empowerment Fund (NEF) had a 15 percent stake and the rest was owned by minority shareholders.

"It is very obvious there were conflicts because Comair, one of our main competitors, not only had shares but also sat on the board of Sun Air ... and a director of Comair was the chairman of Sun Air," Mphafudi said, adding that there was bound to be a conflict of interest.

Sun Air had a domestic market niche of 10 percent and employed more than 700 people.

"Our hands were completely tied and we have been trying to opt out for a long time. We initially offered Comair our stake but they turned it down. We have been talking to South African Airways (SAA) for the past six months and they have now offered to buy us out.

"We never got to vote on crucial issues because we knew we were out-numbered."

Comair's Piet van Hoven told City Press their conduct in the whole deal was above board.

"There is nothing in the board minutes to show that we acted out of the ordinary. We fulfilled our fiduciary duties well. Any suggestion that we went into the deal with the aim of rendering the opposition ineffective are rubbish and anyone who dares say so will be sued," Van Hoven said.

SAA caused a furore in the aviation industry last week when it purchased 75 percent of Sun Air and immediately announced its intention to liquidate it.

Under the deal, SAA agreed to take over Rethabile's debts and promised to honour all pre-paid tickets and to absorb some of the Sun Air staffers.

According to the share sale agreement, SAA also guaranteed to keep the jobs of the absorbed employees for two years.

Negotiations for Sun Air's technical subsidiary, Amtec were still taking place despite speculation that Amtec bosses want the entity to continue to exist as a subsidiary of SAA or on sub-contract.

It also entered into separate deals with CNI and other minority shareholders. Comair held on to its 25 percent shareholding.

Van Hoven said Comair was only holding on to the shareholding because no-one had approached it for the stake.

The deals are still awaiting the minister of public enterprises, Jeff Radebe's approval but his spokesman, Zaid Nordien said the government would not write off the R20 million debt or commit any further funds to the deal.

He said Radebe was waiting for concrete proposals from the staffers of Sun Air and potential investors.

Glen Watson, representing the staff, said the airline had potential to recover from the three months of negative growth and claimed the SAA deal was only structured to save Rethabile from leaving the airline with a "bloody nose".

"They had little experience in the airline industry. The industry is cyclical and the poor performance experienced in the past two years could be reversed, given adequate financial backing and sound management," Watson said.

About R150 million is needed to lease aircraft, capitalise the airline and provide guarantees.

"Frankly, I do not see them raising that amount of money. The international airlines they purport to be in discussion with are not prepared to put money into Sun Air as long as Comair is a shareholder," said Mphafudi.



BELEAGUERED ... Jackie Mphafudi, Rethabile Group chairperson

SAA confident loss will not hit earnings

AVIATION INDUSTRY

By ROGER MAKINGS and ANDREW GILL

ALTHOUGH SAA had lost money as planned in the first three months of operation in the 1999 financial year, the airline said it was on track to record a profit for the year-end.

CE Coleman Andrews was responding to allegations that the airline would show an overall loss for the year-end.

He said SAA had thus far lost about R120-million in its traditionally off-peak season, but that this was only half of the comparable loss for the same period last year. "We expect to show a R5-million to R10-million contribution on the London-Johannesburg route, and to profit from operations despite a 25% increase in capacity."

This came at a time when major European carriers were experiencing overcapacity on the North Atlantic route and were cutting back drastically to maintain profitability.

Andrews said: "Profits are dropping like a rock for many of the major international carriers — British Airways is down 84%, Lufthansa 60%, and SAS 67%. This is resulting in even more intense price competition on our major European routes."

He said British Airways would cut 1 000 jobs to prevent the airline sinking into the red for the first quarter after an 84% slump in pre-tax profits due to a decline in yield-revenue per passenger. The carrier would also cut capacity by 12% in the next three years, while Dutch carrier KLM had warned that profits would decrease by 75%. "Our western operations are looking good, especially flights to Miami and New York, where we have increased capacity. Our new alliance routes are outperforming all expectations. On the Zurich route with Swissair, our traffic is up 35% compared with a year ago. And Hong Kong has become a real star since we began our codeshare on July 1."

Andrews said despite a 67% increase in capacity in Africa in the last year, load factors had improved by 1% to 78%. Domestic operations were also profitable where SAA held 63% of the market, and this was expected to rise with the liquidation of Sun Air.

"Whatever we pay for Sun Air, which held about 10% of the market, some losses will be recouped from the liquidation of assets and others from an increase in the number of passengers," he said. Andrews said SAA had lost R243-million in the first half of the '98-'99 financial year and made profit of R294-million in the second half.

In the second half of last year a R101-million profit from operations was recorded compared with a R106-million loss for the previous year, indicating a swing of R207-million.

"We have reduced losses in the first half of this year and expect an improved profit in the second half, which should mean an improved profit for the year-end," he said.

State irate but Sun Air is dead

AIRLINE COLLAPSE

By ROGER MAKINGS

DESPITE efforts to rescue Sun Air from closure by both the government and Sun Air staff, the airline appears beyond salvage.

Sun Air's managing director, Johan Borstlap, said this week it would cost in the region of R150-million to get the airline operational — far more than its worth.

"But even so, nothing will have changed. We still have the same market size and the same number of competitors. We would be back to square one."

He agreed that the Sun Air brand was dead and that a restructured airline would be hard-pressed to regain the confidence of the travelling public.

The government, however, says it cannot accept the closure of the airline as a fait accompli.

Ian Phillips, adviser to the Minister of Private Enterprises, Jeff Radebe, says besides the fact that R20-million is still owed by shareholders which the government will not allow to be written off, there is the principle of abiding by contractual agreements between private investors buying into state-owned corporations and the government.

"In this case we simply cannot allow investors to ignore terms of agreement. This could jeopardise the future privatisation of state assets. We will have to look more closely at future privatisation deals.

"At the core of the state's objection to Sun Air's closure is that shares are changing hands, staff have lost their jobs and the airline has ceased operation before the stipulated two-year time limit agreed to by shareholders and government.

"Also there is the outstanding R20-million, payable in January, which has serious implications for the fiscus, and which we are adamant we will not write off," says Phillips.

"We have also not been presented with evidence that Sun Air has failed — that is merely SAA's opinion — which we do not necessarily accept."

'Put taxi plan on hold'

THE National Alliance, an umbrella body of several taxi organisations, has called for the White Paper on public transport and the national public transport plan to be put on hold until all relevant stakeholders have discussed the issues to their satisfaction.

In a letter sent to Transport Minister Dullah Omar, National Alliance chairman Mr Sicelo Mabaso said: "Our view is that the process is currently heading for disaster. Our experience is vast and we will help put the taxi industry and the national transport plan back on track."

Among the most burning issues contained in the White Paper is the plan to replace South Africa's ageing taxi fleet and invite tenders for a new vehicle assembly plant.

This will result in South Africa's 120 000 16-seater taxis being replaced with 35- and 18-seaters within the next five years.

At the same time, the National Alliance has complained that the partnership between the Government and South African Taxi Council (Sataco) "leaves out other key players".

"While we support regulatory practices to ensure that an acceptable set of rules are in place to regulate the industry, we are dissatisfied with the apparent manipulation of Sataco by private entities, individuals and consultants," Mabaso said.

The National Alliance wanted to work with the Government in formulating a joint plan which meets the requirements of its affiliates, commuters and employees.

"The National Alliance will ensure that the best interests of the taxi industry and its commuters are served and that good governance and transparency will prevail in all dealings with the industry."

The alliance, Mabaso said, was committed to seeing to it that the industry "shed its bad image" and operated as professionally and as efficiently as possible in line with world class customer care.

Sataco wants public involved

THE all-important road-show by the South African Taxi Council (Sataco) gets under way countrywide today as part of the body's attempt to publicise its role in the transport industry.

The shows will be highlighted at prominent community centres and taxi ranks, according to Sataco official, Mr Joc Mabaso.

Among issues to the fore are:

- Creating a viable and sustainable structure for the taxi industry;
- Improving safety and creating a culture of non-violence for all members of the industry;
- Promoting a code of acceptable business ethics within a culture of democracy;
- Improving the image of the industry and educating the general public about the pivotal role played by the taxi industry; and
- Acting as a link between the industry and Government and advising it in all aspects of relevant legislation.

Mabaso said Sataco also aim at informing industry leaders, operators, drivers and other beneficiaries about the role of the organisation in promoting peace and unity within the industry.

Sataco also wants to provide a historical perspective of the organisation as well as talk about Government assistance to the industry and regulatory processes in the pipeline that include the much debated recapitalisation programme.

New cash-free era dawns for taxis

Sowetan 24/8/99

By Mokgadi Pela (332)

A NEW era dawns in the taxi industry today when the much-talked-about smart card system takes off on the Pretoria-Soshanguve route.

The system, already in use in certain parts of the country, replaces the cash collection method in which money physically changes hands from the commuter to the driver and eventually to the vehicle owner.

South African Long and Local Taxi and Bus Organisation spokesman Mr Simon Sentle said about 1 300 taxis operating along the busy route had already been fitted with the hardware and technology for processing the card, which will electronically transfer the money to the owner's account.

Sentle said the advantage of the system was that drivers would not have to move around with cash anymore. "Their safety is paramount and cash exposed them to danger in the past," Sentle said.

This system will allow commuters to buy coupons at a kiosk. Provision will be made for coupons to be used for single trips and long term use.

Once a week owners will get a bank reconciliation statement detailing the numbers transported and ensuring corresponding money.

Taxi body 'paves way for official recognition'

Nomavenda Mathiane

THE establishment of the Gauteng provincial taxi council at the weekend would give the industry statutory recognition for the first time, newly elected council chairman Dan Molefe said yesterday.

The council, which is made up of 185 taxi associations, is being seen as a major breakthrough for an industry that has been dogged by controversy and violence. Molefe said he was encouraged by the formation of the council because it would enable operators to take charge of their businesses and bring unity to the industry.

"It is now up to us operators to strive to change the image of the industry and eradicate violence."

(332) BD 24/8/99

CT 27/8/99

Govt to subsidise taxi industry

(332)

PHINDILE NGUBANE
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

THE Department of Transport is planning to subsidise the country's taxi industry to improve its status to become one of the country's safe and attractive means of transport, Transport Minister Dullah Omar said.

Speaking during a media briefing in Parliament yesterday, Omar said it was particularly important for the government to formalise this industry as it was an essential part of the country's economy, used by over 60% of South Africa's urban working people.

The government had begun the process of regulating the industry to eliminate the lawlessness that existed, ensuring mini-bus taxis on roads were registered and operators operated within the law.

Omar said the deregulation of the taxi industry had left it unsubsidised and neglected, leading to a competitiveness and rivalry that grew into lawlessness.

"The government needs to offer financial assistance to ensure that the industry is recapitalised.

"If the process succeeds, then over the next few years we will see the complete transformation of the industry.

"There will be reliable minibus taxis on the roads, greater safety and the mode of transport will be attractive to many more people".

The minister said he believed the taxi industry could play a big role in the tourism sector as taxis could be used by tourists to get to various destinations.

He said although there were still problems of rivalry, violence within the industry had been reduced considerably, and added that he would like to see it "completely eliminated".

Efforts were also under way to eliminate violence at the country's railway stations and to revitalise them to ensure increased use of passenger trains.

The minister said his department would establish a task team which, together with assistance from law enforcement agencies and communities, would work to eliminate the violence.

Omar said commuters did not feel safe at stations and as a result relied less on trains for transport.

"We need to do whatever we can to ensure that passenger train transport becomes the favoured mode of transport".

He also pointed out that his department's Arrive Alive campaign had proved successful over the years and road deaths were reduced by about five percent over the past year, but added that this was inadequate.

"Far too many people die on the roads ... it is an economic loss to the country."

Omar said the campaign enjoyed priority in his department and he would ensure that there was a close relationship between the national department and transport MECs to strengthen it.

'Hell will break loose' if SAA's Sun Air deal fails

ST(BT)29/8/99

Majority Sun Air stakeholder Rethabile says SAA will bear the blame if the deal falls through, writes ROGER MAKINGS

$ (332)

ALL HELL will break loose if the Sun Air-SA Airways takeover is not sanctioned by the government, says Rethabile, the majority stakeholder in Sun Air.

The black empowerment consortium has laid the blame for what is rapidly appearing to be a botched deal squarely at the door of the national carrier. Sheiks Makhado, Sun Air's executive director, says that if the deal is not signed before August 31, SAA will withdraw its offer.

"If that eventuality takes place, we will be left without an airline, without a buyer and several hundred staff who are out of jobs.

"They and the board of Sun Air will probably take legal action for loss of earnings against SAA, which is 80%-owned by the government," he said.

Makhado said it was up to SAA to get government approval for the takeover. "Although the Competition Board agreed to the deal, it is not the Department of Public Enterprises, which is the only body empowered to ratify the deal," said Makhado.

He said Sun Air had not fired any staff. Shareholders merely signed the deal with SAA — the rest was done by the national carrier.

"The staff can argue that had SAA not precluded Sun Air from talks with other carriers who were interested in an equity stake, the airline might have remained viable and they would have kept their jobs," said Makhado.

He said the government was partly to blame for SAA's anti-competitive behaviour as it failed to create an anti-trust environment in which domestic airlines could operate.

"The Competition Board dragged its feet on the seat-dumping complaint brought by Sun Air, Nationwide and Comair against SAA earlier this year, but was quick to give the go-ahead for the sale of Sun Air.

"With these facts in mind the government should pressure SAA to pay retrenchment packages to members of staff who have not been employed by the national carrier," he said.

Makhado's anxieties could have much to do with the outstanding R20-million still owed the government by shareholders Rethabile (35.75%), BA/Comair (25%) and Co-ordinated Network Investments (19.25%).

If the deal is cancelled, Rethabile will have to fork out R9-million before the end of February next year and CNI R4.8-million. Comair owes R6-million — for which it has budgeted.

The shareholders will also be left without an airline although its assets could amount to about R30-million — one Sun Air DC9 (paid for and worth about R20-million) as well as R5-million in mostly maintenance infrastructure.

Sun Air was also within a year of paying off four other DC9s in its fleet, but most of this will have to go towards penalties to lessor Safair, with whom it broke its contract following the early return of five MD80s.

It is believed SAA offered about R25-million for Sun Air, but it is unclear whether this includes the nearly R14-million owed by CNI and Rethabile.

Dr Ian Phillips, special adviser to the Minister of Public Enterprises, said this week that a decision on the deal was not imminent.

"We still have to consult with the Ministers of Transport and Finance, and there are several legal interpretations that have to be taken into account," he said.

Labour's plan on Sun Air finds favour

DD 31/8/99

Proposal includes the creation of a new airline, with the sale of assets and licence

(332)

Robyn Chalmers

GOVERNMENT appears to favour a proposal by labour to rescue Sun Air's assets through the creation of a new airline, which will see two international airlines taking over the licence and assets of the failed airline.

Public enterprises ministry spokesman Zaid Nordien said government was seriously considering a proposal put forward by Sun Air staff which has the backing of labour..

"It is unlikely now that the airline will be revived as Sun Air, but government is considering a buy-out option which will see the airline restarted under a different name," he said.

Dennis George, the assistant general-secretary of Federation of Unions of SA (Fedusa), said two international airlines had come to the table with a proposal to buy out Sun Air's assets. "They are prepared to come up with the necessary funds," he said. Analysts have indicated that it could cost up to R100m for the airline to be fully operational again.

George declined to name the airlines, but industry sources say the two most likely are the UK's Virgin Atlantic and Dutch carrier KLM.

He said the new bid had a strong black economic empowerment element and a trust would be set up which would allow employees to sit on the board of the new airline.

The plan, submitted to government last week, proposed a new name and branding for the airline. It would focus strongly on capturing the southern African tourist market, rather than focusing solely on SA.

Should the plan gain government's approval, it will signal the end of a deal signed earlier this month between SA Airways (SAA), majority owned by government, and the Rethabile/Comair consortium.

SAA proposed buying 75% of Sun Air, excluding Comair's 25% stake. SAA and Comair undertook to honour all Sun Air tickets bought and paid for before August 12 and accommodated holders of Sun Air's frequent flyer programme. They also pledged to take on a portion of Sun Air's 400-strong staff complement.

However, government and SAA deadlocked over a proposal for the state to write off R20m due next year by Sun Air's existing shareholders as part payment for the collapsed airline's privatisation in 1999.

Public Enterprises Minister Jeff Radebe refused to ratify the deal as it would add a further burden to the fiscus. If no deal is concluded soon, shareholders will be liable for the R20m. Rethabile has 35,75% of the airline, Comair 25% and Co-ordinated Network Investments 19,25%.



Two international airlines are eyeing the assets of failed airline Sun Air, privatised by government in 1997.

Five die as smart-card system fans taxi rivalry

(332) DD 31/8/99

Stan Maphologela

PRETORIA — Taxi killings are far from over, with five people dying in shootings related to taxi feuds in Soshanguve since the beginning of the weekend.

Capt Joe Mtileni from Rietgat police station said two taxi drivers killed yesterday morning belonged to the Federation of Long Distance Taxi Associations (Feldta).

Two of the drivers killed over the weekend belonged to a rival taxi association, the SA Long Distance Taxi Association, and one to Feldta. No passengers were killed in any of the incidents. Several automatic rifle and pistol cartridges were found at the scene and no arrests had been made so far, he said.

Mtileni said police were still investigating and it was suspected the violence could stem from disagreement over the conversion to a smart card fare system in the region.

About 1 300 taxis from eight different ranks carrying 64 000 commuters converted to the new fare system a week ago.

The move was a joint venture between Net1 Applied Technology Holdings and the SA Local and Long Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation.

Spokesman for the organisation, Wesley Mpawu, said the killings were the culmination of threats posed by some members of taxi associations which were not using the smart card system.

"All these threats were made at a meeting of the community policing forum held on Saturday.

"Threats were made that there would be bloodshed if the smart card system continued.

"People are using smart cards as an excuse to continue killing innocent people," he said.

Mtileni said associations which had a problem with the smart card system should convene a meeting at which problems could be resolved.

Gauteng's transport and public works MEC, Khabisi Mosunkutu, said the department condemned the killings.

Rietgat taxi violence resumes

By McKeed Kotlolo

TWO more taxi drivers were killed in Soshanguve yesterday morning, bringing to seven the number of victims since taxi violence resurfaced in the area last week.

Inspector Gideon Thessner said the incidents took place in blocks JJ and AA near the Rietgat taxi rank. Both victims were members of the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta). He said AK-47 rifles were used in both attacks.

Rietgat police spokesman Captain Benjamin Chokwe said the first attack took place at Block JJ at about 6am. He said the victim apparently lost control of the minibus, which veered and hit a house before coming to a halt.

Shortly afterwards police received a report of the second attack. No passengers were involved in either incident.

Victim

The first victim of the renewed violence was a 28-year-old member of Felldta, who was shot in Block P on Thursday night. Then followed two more Felldta members on Saturday morning. A further two Felldta members were killed the same evening.

No arrests have been made.

Taxi violence, which resurfaced last week, previously claimed scores of lives and left many maimed.

According to Thessner it was still not clear what the two associations were fighting about. However, sources in the area believe that the introduction of the taxi card system could be responsible.

They claimed that many disgruntled taxi operators had stopped operating between Pretoria and Soshanguve and were now operating locally.

Gauteng transport MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu in a statement condemned the murders yesterday and called for calm in the area saying "those responsible for the recent spate of cold-blooded killings must know that the government will not tolerate hit squads who kill people with impunity".

End in sight to station taxi war

(332)

Pule Molebeledi

DURBAN — Two KwaZulu-Natal Long Distance Taxi Association factions have agreed to share the taxi rank at Durban station, it was announced yesterday.

This is the first step towards ending four years of violence at the taxi rank. KwaZulu-Natal Transport MEC S'bu Ndebele said the agreement was a "milestone" for the province.

He said initiatives by churches, cabinet and police had failed to bring peace at the rank, the nerve centre for long-distance taxi routes from Durban.

The details of the agreement, such as whether to keep 24-hour security guards at the rank, have not been worked out yet.

A cycle of violent attacks, including shoot-outs, started at the rank when Simon Gcaba, one of the association's leaders, was gunned down in February 1996.

"After so many people had died from both sides ... it takes great courage to say let bygones be bygones," Ndebele said.

BD 1/9/99

'Cards not to blame for taxi deaths'

By Mokgadi Pela (332)

TWO organisations behind the taxi industry's new smart card payment system have dismissed claims that the system could be the root cause of the latest killings on the lucrative Soshanguve-Pretoria route.

The allegations were made after the killing of at least nine drivers on the same route since last Thursday.

Those killed were said to belong to the Federated Long Distance Taxi Association (Feldta) and the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (Saldta).

Aplitec and the South African Long and Local Bus Organisation (Sallbo) told a media briefing in Rosebank, Johannesburg, yesterday that "the killings in the taxi industry, especially on the Soshanguve-Pretoria route predate the introduction of the smart card payment system".

"How do those who spread these unfounded rumours explain the killings on the Faraday-Johannesburg route where the system is not operational?" Sallbo asked.

The system involves commuters carrying cards rather than cash to pay for their fares. It came into operation in Soshanguve last week after 1 300 taxis were fitted with the technology.

Executive director of Aplitec Professor Hanoch Neishlos said: "We regret any loss of life and wish police investigations could help dispel any unfounded allegations."

Sallbo spokesman Mr Simon Sentle said: "We will proceed with the technology because of its proven benefits to owners, drivers and commuters. This technology is in line with our stated aim of preparing the taxi industry to face challenges of the new millennium.

"This is the industry's contribution to the African renaissance."

Meanwhile, a meeting between Sallbo and Feldta is to take place at the Gauteng MEC for transport's office at 4pm tomorrow.

In a message to the MEC, Sallbo said: "We are not interested in dealing with who did what to who, but how to solve the problem."

Sowetan 3/9/99

Law enforcement, taxis linked

Pamela Whitby

EFFECTIVE law enforcement was required if formalisation, regulation and recapitalisation of the taxi industry was to be successful, Transport Minister Dullah Omar said at the launch of Sub-Sahara Investments (SSI) yesterday.

Omar said investigations into recent taxi violence indicated that in at least one area, violence was caused by the introduction of a smart card system. "Although the use of the system is not illegal, operators not using the smart card are being forced off the road," he said. The system in question did not have the backing of national or provincial government.

The department is in the middle of a process which will see the registration of all taxis currently on the road. Although some way off, the implementation of technology "to ensure an efficient and accessible transport system is being investigated".

Omar was confident that with appropriate law enforcement measures the taxi industry would continue to contribute to true black economic empowerment. This industry had been a positive development which had led to the upliftment of SA citizens.

A key objective defined in the transport white paper is the development of an integrated transport system. Omar said: "The rail, bus and taxi industry must not exist in competition. A smart card system could play an important role in facilitating efficiency in this sector."

Omar commended 66% black-owned SSI, a venture with transaction-focused information technology group Prism, for its commitment to black economic empowerment. SA had two nations with respect to ownership of property and wealth. The company had made a significant contribution to the formation of one nation, he said.

(332) BD 6/9/99

Provinces discuss taxi funding plan

Linda Ensor BD 6/9/99 (332)

CAPE TOWN — Recapitalising the taxi industry will cost R3bn-R4bn over the next few years, says Transport Minister Dullah Omar.

Funding proposals will be presented to cabinet — which has already agreed to the project in principle — by Trade and Industry Minister Alec Erwin, and an interministerial committee is working on the details.

Omar, at a media briefing on Friday, after meeting the nine provincial transport MECs, said all had unanimously approved of the project which would go hand-in-hand with the legalisation and integration of the industry into the formal sector.

Although the taxi industry had not been subsidised like buses and rail, it played an important role in the economy.

Black economic empowerment would form a crucial element in the recapitalisation programme.

Initial suggestions are that the country's 120 000 16-seater taxis will be replaced with 35 and 18-seaters within the next five years.

KwaZulu-Natal transport MEC S'bu Ndebele denied any conflict between the province and national government over the recapitalisation plan.

The province had moved ahead and established 14 co-operatives and had reached an advanced stage of exploring the type of vehicle required, he said.

This meant it had the structures in place to implement the project.

It was reported earlier this year that Ndebele spearheaded the launch of a multimillion-rand investment company, Umthombo Investments, which was designing a 27-seat vehicle for the domestic market — a size that failed to meet the specifications of government's proposed tender.

The KwaZulu-Natal transport department capitalised Umthombo Investments to the tune of R8m at its inception.

North West transport MEC Star Vilakazi indicated that the project would include a replacement strategy. Taxi operators would have the option of handing over their licences and old stock for replacement by a new vehicle at a subsidised price.

He insisted that there would be no handouts.

Also under discussion was a one-stop shop for financing, products and maintenance arrangements.

-6 ×

Taxis start using card system

(332)

By Mokgadi Pela

THE recently introduced card payment system is set to revolutionise the taxi industry as hard cash for fares are gradually phased out.

The system's designers say its benefits include improved driver safety, better control in ensuring that owners get money due to them and improved social benefits for operators.

The system allows commuters to buy coupons for both short- and long-term use.

Owners receive bank reconciliation statements detailing the number of passengers transported and total of fares collected.

One of the organisations behind the system, the South African Long and Local Taxi and Bus Organisation (Sallbo), believes it will reduce passenger overload.

Initial complaints from commuters about the system ranged from long queues to the safety of cashiers at kiosks where coupons are obtained.

A snap survey by *Sowetan* at a busy taxi rank in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, gave the card payment system the thumbs up in spite of teething problems.

Mr Godfrey Mokotedi of Block L, Soshanguve, said: "I think this system will help us. The delays we presently experience happen with any new system. We are tired of reading about taxi drivers being attacked."

Miss Miriam Ramarumo said: "Although I never imagined such a system, I can safely say thanks to whoever initiated it. The delays in obtaining these cards are temporary and I think we will overcome them."

Miss Letta Motloung said: "I am just worried that the lives of those collecting cash at the kiosks could be in danger. It's important for us to see visible security.

"I wouldn't like to wake up one morning only to be sprayed with bullets by robbers simply because taxi bodies didn't anticipate the dangers."

A further controversy associated with the smart card technology was the recent outbreak of taxi violence in the Soshanguve area, which resulted in nine deaths.

Net 1 Applied Technology Holdings Limited, which fitted the technology in 1 300 taxis on the Soshanguve-Pretoria route a few weeks ago, dismissed the allegations as unfounded and said they were meant to create yet further havoc in the taxi industry.

The organisation said it would await results of police investigations before deciding on a future course of action.

Observers felt it remained to be seen whether other taxi bodies would decide to adopt the new technology or continue using cash.

The solution, they say, lies in getting all taxi organisations, through the involvement of the Government, to harmonise their views for the sake of peace and world-class professionalism in the industry.

ARG 9/9/99 (332)

Sedan taxi drivers want own law

NORMAN JOSEPH
STAFF REPORTER

About 200 sedan taxi drivers have signed a petition asking to be governed by legislation different from that which covers the minibus taxi industry.

The sedan taxi workers, all members of the Cape Metropolitan Sedan Metered Taxi Industry, also want to see transformation of their industry.

Disgruntled sedan drivers, who include permit holders and fleet owners, claimed their organisation was unable to negotiate new legislation with local authorities. But the provincial transport department said that if the drivers approached them, their concerns could be addressed.

The taxi drivers, who appointed a firm of attorneys to argue their case, said a 1977 Act which regulated the sedan taxi industry was outdated.

They also alleged that corruption and irregularities happened "right under the noses" of the Local Road Transportation Board.

Some of the allegations are that permit holders and fleet owners buy permits for about R25 and sell them again for up to R50 000.

This, drivers claimed, amounted to economic injustice because a permit holder earned about R7-million a year from his permits and a driver, after a 24-hour shift, took home only about R30.

Drivers also called for the disbandment of their taxi council.

They alleged the council's meetings with the Road Transportation Board, the Cape Metropolitan Council, City of Cape Town and provincial government came to nothing.

All such meetings, disgruntled drivers and permit holders claimed, had developed into "talk shops".

Petition signatories are demanding that the taxi council be removed and replaced by an interim committee appointed by the industry.

This interim committee should draw up a new constitution and work to form a statutory organisation, which would map out guidelines setting out "how we should be governed".

This new statutory body would be expected to campaign for legislation aimed at upgrading and transforming the sedan taxi industry.

Taxi drivers said they saw themselves as part of the tourism industry rather than the industry represented by minibus taxis, because most of their clients were tourists.

They said they should be allowed to sit on tourism boards and use tourism infrastructure.

The sedan taxi drivers also want to work in co-operation with hotels, guesthouses, shopping centres, tourist attractions and nightclubs.

Drivers said permit holders should have a maximum of three permits. These should be reviewed every year and only one type of document issued which should be applicable to all areas of the new unicity or megacity area.

Roy Petersen, deputy director-general of provincial transport, said he was prepared to receive a "comprehensive" memorandum from the industry to allow his directorates of public transport to examine the issues at stake.

Mr Petersen said that a meeting could be held to discuss the way forward for the sedan taxi industry "if so desired".

SOWETAN Tuesday September 21 1999

'More illegal taxis than legal ones'

Sowetan 21/9/99 (332)

THERE were more illegal taxis operating in Gauteng than legal ones, chairman of the Greater Johannesburg Taxi Council Mr Abel Petersen said yesterday.

Petersen accompanied MEC for transport and public works Mr Khabisi Mosunkutu on a visit to three Johannesburg taxi ranks to assess the general state of ranks in the province.

He said currently there were 120 000 taxis countrywide operating with legal permits. Of these, 34 000 operated in Gauteng.

"In the process to formalise the taxi industry it was determined that many taxis were operating illegally," he said.

Petersen said illegal taxis were a major contributor to the violence in the industry.

The process to formalise the industry and to legalise all taxis had been started about 18 months ago after recommendations by a national taxi task team.

Some 1 000 taxi inspectors were trained to assist in identifying illegal operators.

A spokesman for the department, Mr George Steeneveldt, said all taxi operators were obliged to register as part of the formalisation process. "We started identifying all operators and in this process a large number of illegal operators were also identified."

Steeneveldt said the process to legalise these operators had already been put into place.

Illegal operators in the industry prior to 1994 could apply for special legalisation, but recommendations in this regard had to be made by their respective taxi associations.

"The application for legalisation by those who started operating illegally after 1994 will be dealt with in the normal course of the formalisation process. Their applications must also be supported by associations," Steeneveldt said.

Yesterday's visit to three of the largest taxi ranks in Johannesburg formed part of efforts to improve public transport in the province.

Mosunkutu's tour included the Jack Mincer taxi rank in Klein Street, which handles about 2 000 taxis a day, and the Bree Street rank. – *Sapa*



TANELLE WELFF

Law and order: a motorist produces his licence during a roadblock in Delft yesterday after more taxi violence in the Peninsula

Taxi violence 'here to stay' – cop

(332) ARG 22/9/99

ROBERT BRAND
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

A senior policeman's candid admission that taxi violence was "here to stay" and that police were powerless to deal with it under the present legislative framework, led to angry exchanges in a meeting of Parliament's safety and security portfolio committee.

Senior Superintendent Vince Harris, who heads the South African Police Service's taxi desk, yesterday told the committee during a briefing on taxi violence that measures implemented to combat conflict in the industry had proved ineffective.

He said: "We must realise the taxi industry is here to stay and violence and conflict will always be part of the lives of every South African citizen, despite new measures that have been implemented."

His statement drew an angry response from committee chairman Mluleki George, who said the job of the police was to protect the public against crime.

"That sentence should not be part of your statement. We can never say our people will have to live with violence and conflict.

"That is not the kind of statement we want to hear from the police," said Mr George.

Delft taxi war spins out of police control

(332)

JUDY DAMON and ROBERT BRAND

IN the wake of the recent bloody taxi violence in Delft, senior police officers said yesterday that measures implemented to combat conflict in the industry had so far proved ineffective.

Over the past 48 hours, police have arrested 10 suspects allegedly involved in the recent spate of taxi violence — which left two drivers dead and several passengers injured — along the Delft route.

The eight passengers who suffered serious gunshot wounds have not yet been identified and are being treated at undisclosed hospitals for their own protection.

In anticipation of more violence in the run-up to the weekend, police say they are searching taxis for weapons and possible suspects at roadblocks in Delft. Heavily armed police are also patrolling the area.

Even after a full-scale police alert since the death of driver Elton Topley at the weekend, police could not stop the latest clashes between the two organisations.

Yesterday afternoon, a second driver was killed and four others injured. Also yesterday, a Cata taxi was petrol-bombed by occupants of another taxi.

Police spokesperson Riaan Pool said the latest attacks came after a dispute over a lucrative taxi route shared between Cata and Codeta on the Delft Highway.

Pool said that the endless wait for the approval of route permits has caused uncertainty as to who "owned" the route.

Vince Harris, who heads the SAPS's taxi desk, said: "We must realise that the taxi industry is here to stay and violence and conflict will always be part of the lives of every SA citizen, despite new measures to curb it."

CT 22/9/99

Police official describes forces behind taxi wars

BD 22/9/99 (332)

CAPE TOWN — Violence is and will remain a fact of everyday life for passengers in taxis until stiff measures are taken to stamp out the war between the nation's rival groups, says a police expert.

"We must realise that the taxi industry is here to stay and violence and conflict will always be part of the lives of every SA citizen," Supt Vince Harris told Parliament's safety and security committee yesterday

Harris said the violence had spiralled out of control between the owners and operators of the estimated 140 000 minibus taxis in the country since the industry was deregulated 25 years ago.

Competition for routes, licences and customers compounded by fleets of pirate taxis jamming the roads of the country's main cities had led to rampant corruption and the escalation of open war between the rival taxi associations.

In the first six months of this year there had been 373 violent incidents reported compared with 333 in the same period of last year.

Professional assassination squads were being hired by operators to attack rivals.

Passengers, witnesses and police were threatened and vital evidence tampered with.

These killer squads were hired from the large numbers of unemployed former members of the national army, police and liberation fighters who were well trained and prepared to do anything for money.

"The taxi associations recruit these persons as hit squads and reward them for hits done," Harris said. "These rewards vary from R5 000 to R150 000 depending on the targets they have to assassinate."

He said much work had been done to try to regulate the industry. These efforts aimed to reduce the numbers of often rickety and overloaded minibus taxis on the roads to make taxi rides less of a life-threatening experience.

However, key to the efforts to straighten out the taxis and end the attacks was the National Land Transport Bill, which is not due to go before Parliament until April next year.

Until then the taxi wars would go on and passengers would continue to be innocent victims, Harris said. — Reuter.

'New law needed to stamp out taxi wars'

Sowetan 22/9/99 (332)

VIOLENCE is and will remain a fact of everyday life for passengers in South African taxis until stiff measures are taken to stamp out the war between the nation's rival taxi groups, a police expert said yesterday.

"We must realise that the taxi industry is here to stay and violence and conflict will always be part of the lives of every South African citizen," Superintendent Vince Harris told Parliament's safety and security committee yesterday.

He said the violence had spiralled out of control between the owners and operators of the estimated 140 000 minibus taxis in the country since the industry was deregulated 25 years ago.

Competition for routes, licences and customers compounded by fleets of pirate taxis jamming the roads of the country's main cities had led to rampant corruption and the escalation of open war between the rival taxi associations.

In the first six months of this year there had been 373 violent incidents reported compared with 333 in the same period of 1998.

Professional assassination squads were being hired by operators to attack rivals, investigations revealed.

Passengers as well as witnesses and police were threatened, and vital evidence was tampered with.

These killer squads were hired from the hordes of unemployed former members of the national army, police and liberation fighters, who were well trained and prepared to do anything for money.

"The taxi associations recruit these persons as hit squad members and reward them for hits done," Harris said.

"These rewards vary from R5 000 to R150 000 depending on the targets they have to assassinate."

The violence was worst around Johannesburg, Cape Town and in the Eastern Cape, he said.

Harris said much work had been done to try to regulate the sprawling industry. Most of the work was aimed at reducing the number of often rickety and overloaded minibus taxis on the roads, thereby making a taxi ride less of a life-threatening experience.

The South African Taxi Council had been formed, designs for purpose-built 18- and 35-seater taxis were being drawn up and there were plans to recapitalise the underfunded industry.

However, key to the efforts to straighten out the taxi industry and end the attacks was the National Land Transport Bill, which is not due to go before Parliament until April.

Until that happened, the taxi wars would go on and passengers would continue to be innocent victims, Harris said.

"It is therefore imperative that the transformation process of the taxi industry, which includes the National Land Transport Bill, is finalised without delay," he concluded. - *Reuters*

Taxi drivers' strike will leave commuters stranded

(332)

Sowetan 23/9/99

THOUSANDS of taxi commuters in several parts of Johannesburg and on the East Rand will be left stranded if taxi drivers carry out their threat to strike today in protest against the bail applications of five taxi owners who are facing murder charges in the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court.

The National Taxi Drivers' Organisation (Natdo) announced yesterday that the action by about 600 drivers would be aimed at opposing the granting of bail to five Faraday Taxi Association members.

The five are facing charges related to the shooting in Johannesburg of 13 drivers, two of whom died last month in a violent clash between the taxi owners and their employees.

Natdo president Mr Themba Mgabhi, however, stressed that commuters travelling to work would be ferried as normal until the beginning of the strike at 8.30am.

Commuters who would be affected most were those travelling between Johannesburg's Faraday rank and Katlehong on the East Rand, Alberton, Turffontein, Southgate, Linmeyer and Mulbarton.

Mgabhi warned that the strike action could continue "indefinitely" should the five accused be granted bail, because the protesters would demand that they be locked up.

Failing which, he said, they would march to the offices of the departments of justice and of safety and security.

"We will continue the action for as long as the perpetrators are outside as we are convinced that their release will result in more of our members being killed," he said.

Mgabhi accused the police of dragging their feet in arresting all those suspected to have participated in the attacks.

"We were shocked to learn that only five were arrested despite more than 10 names being submitted. It is also surprising that up until now no statements have yet been taken from the victims and witnesses," he said.

Natdo was also not satisfied with the handling of the case, which it said was inexplicably referred from the Soweto police taxi violence unit to the Heidelberg unit.

Johannesburg police spokesman Captain Lungelo Dlamini disputed these claims.

He said there could not have been arrests without the witnesses' statements and added that the case was never investigated by the Soweto taxi violence unit. – *Sapa*

More taxi violence feared as talks end in deadlock

(332)

ARG 23/09/99

MYOLISI GOPHE
STAFF REPORTER

A meeting to sort out a dispute between rival taxi organisations battling over routes between Bellville and Delft ended in deadlock yesterday, sparking fears of more violence over the long weekend.

The clash, which erupted last Friday, has claimed the lives of two drivers. Five passengers were also injured and a number of vehicles have been destroyed.

Drivers from the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) said they had received phone calls just after yesterday's meeting, in which men threatened to "get them".

They said passengers should avoid taking taxis between Bellville and Delft until a solution was found.

Police said 10 people had already been arrested in connection with the violence.

A meeting of all the role players, including the taxi associations Cata, Convention of Democratic Association (Codeta), Delft Taxi Association and Belhar Taxi Association, at Bellville police station, failed to resolve serious problems surrounding who uses the Delft Road from Delft-South to the Bellville taxi-rank.

Representatives of the police and the municipal traffic department were also at the four-hour meeting, which was facilitated by the Urban Monitor Awareness Committee.

Police said the Delft and Belhar taxi associations were not happy with the fact that Cata was transporting people from Delft-South to the Bellville taxi rank, using Delft Road.

But Cata said Delft-South passengers wanted them to transport passengers to the ranks and back.

Codeta's spokesman Reggie Malimba, said: "We are confused about why Cata is killing us because we are not using routes in Belhar or Delft. We asked them that question in the meeting and they couldn't answer it."

Mr Malimba said his organisation was not scared to retaliate but wanted the provincial community and safety minister Mark Wiley to intervene and Cata to commit themselves to not attacking drivers.

Senior Superintendent Jan Solomons, the area head of crime prevention in the Office of the Area Commissioner, East Metropole, warned that if any more incidents of taxi violence occurred, the full force of the security forces would be used to clamp down on all the taxi associations using the route from Delft to Bellville.

In the meantime, police have deployed several units, including units from Operation Good Hope, on the different routes in Delft and Bellville, and on the Old Paarl Road.

The SA National Defence Force and the traffic department are also helping the police to monitor and patrol the different routes.

Meanwhile, street traders near the Bellville taxi rank said they were losing a lot of revenue because of the taxi violence. Traders had to abandon their stalls when shooting erupted, making them vulnerable to looters.

AB ARG 25/26/9/99 ~~(269)~~ (332)

Ambitious plan to upgrade taxis

ESTELLE RANDALL
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

South Africa's 2,5 million taxi passengers can look forward to safer, more comfortable journeys if ambitious plans by the government and taxi industry to replace minibuses with custom-built vehicles are implemented.

On Monday, local and international vehicle manufacturers will be invited to tender to set up an assembly plant in South Africa to build diesel-powered 18 and 35-seater taxis to take over from the ageing national fleet of about 126 000 minibuses, which transport about 65% of commuters.

The plan is a joint initiative by four government departments – Transport, Finance, Trade and Industry and Minerals and Energy – and the South African Taxi Council, the industry's umbrella organisation.

The number of jobs generated by the initiative and the site of the plant will depend on who is awarded the tender. But a deal – now on hold – between the North West Taxi Association and a Russian automobile manufacturer to establish a plant near Pretoria would have created about 6 800 jobs.

The new scheme aims to provide safer taxi transport, regulate the industry and eliminate much of the friction over routes.

It will also boost local vehicle assembly and components manufacture and enable the taxi industry to invest in itself.

The scheme will offer incentives to taxi owners to scrap their taxis and buy the new vehicles.

According to Karen Pearce of the Department of Transport, about 90% of the 126 000 registered minibus taxis are 10 years old and ready for scrapping.

The scheme will enable owners to get discounts of between 20% and 30% on the new vehicles if they are registered taxpayers, have permits to operate taxis and bring their existing vehicles to be scrapped.

Ms Pearce said about half the taxi operators owned only one vehicle.

"The current taxis are modelled on light commercial vehicles, but the new ones will be built specially for passenger transport."

There will be fixed maintenance for the lifespan of the vehicles – four years for the 18-seaters and seven for the 35-seaters. At the end of a vehicle's life, the owner will be able to take the taxi back to the manufacturer for refurbishment.

Each taxi will have a smart-card reader, a vehicle tracking system and a two-way radio.

The smart-card reader will eliminate the need for commuters to pay cash. Instead, they will buy smart cards at dispensers at taxi ranks and use them to pay for journeys. The new measure is expected to reduce the risk of theft.

The tracking system will ensure that drivers stick to their routes.

Basil Nagel, an executive member of the taxi council, said this would help eliminate a source of friction between taxi drivers and owners.

Tender conditions specify that the assembly of the taxis and the manufacture of their components must be in South Africa, but the level of production should also be internationally competitive so that the vehicles can be exported.

Servicing, maintenance and distribution of diesel are some of the areas where government is expecting established companies to form partnerships with the taxi council.

The closing date for tenders is November 29.

The government expects to announce the preferred manufacturers by April 1 and the first vehicles are expected to be on the road by October next year.

ST (BT) 26/9/99 (232)

Competition 'whistleblower' mooted

CORPORATE REGULATION
By AMANDA VERMEULEN

THE new Competition Commission is considering introducing a "whistleblower" provision in the Competition Act allowing SA businesses to expose cartel and anti-competitive behaviour in their industries.

Commissioner Alistair Ruiters said this week this type of provision had been successfully implemented in other world jurisdictions, including the US, Canada and the UK.

A "whistleblower" provision is designed to encourage organisations which themselves may be guilty of cartel or anti-competitive practices to reveal similar behaviour by other companies in the same industry.

In return, these organisations could be eligible for "corporate leniency" or even immunity from penalties if the commission takes action against offenders guilty of covert practices.

Ruiters said the move needed to be considered in terms of the new Act, which was signed into legislation last year. The commission wants to test the application of the Act before suggesting amendments.

"Such a provision is likely to be more effective once the commission's workings have been tested," Ruiters added.

The commission was launched on September 1, and has received 11 complaints in the past three weeks, mainly from small companies alleging anti-competitive practices by larger ones. Ruiters said an announcement would soon be made about an investigation.

The commission has identified about 17 announced transactions in the past three weeks which were not run past the authority for sanction. He said 12 of the companies involved were sent letters requiring an explanation for not seeking approval. He said an investigation could be announced shortly.

In terms of the new law, companies must inform the commission of the intention to merge or make an acquisition if the combined entity has turnover or assets of more than R50-million.

The commission received applications from some merging companies for pre-notification consultations to determine whether or not their proposed transactions fell within the ambit of the Act.

"However the Act does not contain pre-notification procedures, so adjudication may only occur post-notification. The commission cannot enter into any pre-notification consultations with any party."

The commission's policy and research arm plans to begin scrutinising various industry sectors to establish the incidence of anti-competitive behaviour. "We believe there are a number of significant contraventions of the new Act occurring," Ruiters said.

MEC (332) closes Pta taxi ranks

By Gershwin Chuenyane

TAXI ranks in Soshanguve and Rietgat areas were closed yesterday after recent taxi-related violence and a drive-by shooting which claimed the lives of two Soshanguve Long and Local Distance Taxi Association (Solldta) members.

Two other Solldta members were wounded in the attack. They were on their way to a meeting of the taxi task team that is investigating violence in the north of Pretoria, according to a statement from the office of transport and public works MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu.

He condemned the attack.

"The senseless killings of members of the taxi associations in Soshanguve must stop. Government must and will intervene. We must exert our authority and bring about peace and stability to this region," Mosunkutu said.

"My department is looking into providing alternative transport to alleviate the problems that will be experienced by taxi commuters," he said.

He appealed to Solldta members to remain calm and not take the law into their own hands. He also called on the public in the affected areas to support and cooperate with the police.

Sowetan 29/9/99

MEC bans taxi drivers' business in Soshanguve

(332)

TAXI operations in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, were expected to come to a complete stop yesterday afternoon, police and the Gauteng transport department said.

Capt Morne van Wyk said police and soldiers would cordon off the ranks with razor wire and patrol the area.

Eleven taxi operators have been killed in the township since August 26. Four of these deaths came after the signing of a peace deal between the two main rival taxi bodies on September 9.

In the latest incident, two members of the Soshanguve Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Solldta) were shot dead on Tuesday while on their way to a meeting in Pretoria to talk about the violence.

Van Wyk said no taxis would be allowed to operate in Soshanguve. "Any taxi found to be contravening the regulations will be confiscated and impounded." The driver of such a taxi could be fined a maximum of R10 000 or face up to six months imprisonment.

Gauteng transport department spokesman Priscilla Pietersen said extra buses had been arranged to ferry commuters to and from the township yesterday.

She said the ban on taxi operations would remain in place until the situation had calmed down.

The ban, which was announced by Gauteng Transport MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu on Tuesday, would be financially damaging to taxi organisations, she said. —Sapa

BD 30/9/99

ARG 30/9/99

Big clampdown on taxi warfare

(332)

20 drivers held, minibuses seized at roadblocks in security operations

NORMAN JOSEPH AND HELEN BAMFORD
STAFF REPORTERS

East Metropole police have adopted a no-nonsense attitude towards warring taxi associations battling over ranks and routes between Bellville and Delft.

Repeated clashes between the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) and the Belhar/Delft Taxi Association have claimed the lives of two drivers in the past two weeks.

Several passengers were injured and a number of vehicles destroyed in tit-for-tat attacks.

Yesterday, a Delft/Belhar Taxi Association driver, 30, was shot three times while driving on the R300 and is in critical condition.

Police spokesman Riaan Poole said the driver had stopped to pick up commuters when he was shot at point-blank range. Passengers rushed him to hospital.

Later, the police, traffic departments of Tygerberg and Oostenberg, the Tygerberg law enforcement unit and members of the SA National Defence Force were deployed in a full-scale crime prevention operation on all taxi routes between Bellville and Delft.

They arrested 20 drivers and impounded their vehicles after they were caught using routes without permits. The drivers will appear in the Bellville Magistrate's Court today.

Superintendent Poole said more than 100 taxis were stopped and searched, and fines in excess of R6 000 issued for various offences.

The crime prevention operation would continue for the next few days, until a formal agreement was reached between the taxi associations over the use of routes.

The police have also arrested 11 people and charged them with attempted murder and armed robbery in connection with last week's taxi violence. They will remain in custody until they appear in court.

Crime prevention head Jan Solomons said the joint security action would include roadblocks on various routes and increased policing in such areas as Bellville, Belhar, Delft and neighbouring areas.

Cata and the Belhar/Delft Taxi Association could not agree on routes at two recent meetings which ended in deadlock.

But last week an informal agreement was reached between the two associations that Cata could use five routes.

Then the Belhar/Delft Taxi Association said that all routes between Bellville and Delft would be used only by its own drivers.

Senior Superintendent Solomons said: "Our main aim will be to clamp down on unroadworthy taxis and those using certain routes without valid permits and documents.

"Regular searches will be carried out for illegal firearms and ammunition. Any taxi found unroadworthy will be impounded."

He said pamphlets would be handed out explaining to commuters the reason for the crime prevention action.

Lost: umbrella Found: faith in drivers

JEREMY LAWRENCE
STAFF REPORTER

A University of the Western Cape student has had his faith in the integrity of minibus taxi drivers bolstered.

When Mthetho Tshemese left his new umbrella on a taxi last week, he didn't for a moment believe he would be as lucky as a friend a week earlier, who got her cellphone returned in similar circumstances.

Not being able to remember what the taxi or its driver looked like, he gave up hope of ever seeing the umbrella again.

But to his surprise, a few days later he was flagged down by a taxi guard who returned his umbrella.

"We hear all these bad things about taxi drivers and all the violence out there but we also need to let people know that they do good things. That guy went out of his way to give me my umbrella back."

Soshanguve taxi ranks closed down

(332)

Sowetan 30/9/99

TAXI operations in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, came to a complete stop from yesterday afternoon, police and the Gauteng transport department said.

Taxi ranks will be cordoned off with razor wire and police and soldiers will patrol the area, according to police spokesman Captain Morne van Wyk.

Eleven taxi operators have been killed in the township since August 26 1999. Four of these deaths came after the signing of a peace deal between the two main rival taxi bodies on September 9 1999.

In the latest incident, two members of the Soshanguve Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Solldta) were shot dead on Tuesday while on their way to a meeting in Pretoria about the ongoing taxi violence.

"From 2pm today, no taxi will be allowed to operate in Soshanguve," Van Wyk said. "Any taxi found to be contravening the regulations will be confiscated and impounded."

The driver of such a taxi could be fined a maximum of R10 000 or face up to six months imprisonment.

Gauteng transport department spokeswoman Priscilla Pietersen said extra buses had been arranged to ferry commuters to and from the township.

She said the ban on taxi operations would remain in place until the situation had calmed down.

In the meantime, the department would continue discussions with the two taxi bodies – Solldta and the Soshanguve Taxi Owners Association (Sotoa) – in an attempt to find a peaceful solution.

The ban, which was announced by Gauteng Transport MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu on Tuesday, would be financially damaging to taxi organisations, Pietersen said.

"The time has come to stop just talking. They need to feel it in their pockets."

The recent outbreak of violence has been blamed on the introduction of a cash card payment system, which was adopted by Sotoa but not by Solldta.

Pietersen said the department has called on taxis using the card system to cease doing so.

● Security services yesterday embarked on a full-scale crime prevention operation in an effort to clamp down on unroadworthy taxis and those illegally operating on certain routes in Cape Town's Eastern Metropole, said police spokesman Jan Solomons. – *Sapa*

Taxi blockade halted

(332) Sowetan 11/10/99

By Gershwin Chuenyane and Mckeed Kotlolo

ABOUT 80 minibus taxis at Soshanguve in Pretoria were yesterday impounded by police for blocking roads and ignoring the barron all taxi operations and closure of ranks by the Gauteng government in an effort to stop the violence which has already claimed 13 lives since August.

The situation in Soshanguve was very tense yesterday with hundreds of protesting taxi operators having converged at the closed transfer rank while police kept an eye on things.

Most of the vehicles impounded belonged to members of the South African Long and Local Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation (Salldtbo).

The taxis had blockaded the main bus and taxi routes including those in Mabopane, protesting against Tuesday's announcement by transport and public works MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu's to ban all taxi operations in the violence-hit township and the closure of local ranks and pickup points.

The impounded vehicles were locked away at Soshanguve Police Station yesterday and the drivers were fined R1 000 each.

An executive member of the Soshanguve Community Policing Forum, Mr Lucas Phangiso, said yesterday the ban may be extended to March next year if the violence persisted.

He said Mosunkutu would address a rally on at Block H community hall at 10am on Sunday. "The community will unveil its plan of action regarding taxi operations and this time we will be telling the taxi owners what the people of Soshanguve, who are tired about the violence, want."

Thousands of commuters were stranded for hours without transport yesterday morning. Most used trains, some hitch-hiked along Mabopane Highway while others waited for hours hoping operations would resume.

Soshanguve police spokesman Inspector Pileji Sebola confirmed that at least 81 minibuses had been impounded by noon. Police patrols continued for the greater part of the day.

● East London police said yesterday a relatively tense situation still existed among taxi operators after violent clashes 10 days ago which left one person dead and scores injured, ECN reported.

Serious Violent Crimes unit commander Superintendent Andrew Middleton said there had been no reports of shooting incidents or taxi-related violence this week.

Meanwhile, the KwaZulu-Natal department of transport had worked hard to bring the warring taxi factions together in an effort to bring lasting peace in the industry, provincial department spokesman Mr Mlungisi Ndhlela said yesterday.

Western Cape has reconvened its Taxi Violence Task team to deal with the escalating conflict between rival taxi groups in the province, according to Mr David Frost, spokesman for the provincial safety and security MEC Alex Wylie.

Northern Province has enjoyed relative calm and peace in the taxi industry recently. The department of public transport said yesterday that this followed regular meetings between the department and role players in the industry.



Commuters in Soshanguve catch a bus to get to work. Local taxi ranks were closed on Tuesday by Gauteng transport and public works MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu. PHOTO: LEN KUMALO

Before bring home A

Taxis back on road after court lifts ban

ARG 4/10/99

STAFF REPORTER

(332)

Pretoria – Taxis resumed operations from Soshanguve this morning after the Pretoria High Court gave an interim order against the provincial government's banning of taxi operations from the area.

This comes shortly after Safety and Security Minister Steve Tshwete promised to unleash the Scorpions, an elite crime busting police unit, to investigate taxi-related violence.

Soshanguve was declared "an emergency area" last Tuesday by the Gauteng transport department, resulting in taxis being impounded, ranks closed and all operations stopped.

More than 11 people have died in the recent violence. Taxi feuding over the past five years has claimed 200 lives.

About 76 taxis were being released at the Soshanguve police station last night after the court decision.

Transport MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu's spokesman, Priscilla Petersen, said they lost the case on pure technicalities and they would be working very hard to close the "legal loopholes".

She said all law enforcement security measures, including road-blocks, would still be maintained.

Taxi war – MEC taking tough line

TAXI ranks and routes in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, could be closed once again, Gauteng transport MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu said yesterday.

Draft regulations to this effect were published in a provincial Government Gazette on Sunday, he told reporters in Pretoria.

The move follows a Pretoria High Court ruling on Sunday setting aside last week's decision by the Gauteng transport department to shut down taxi operations in Soshanguve.

The court ruled in favour of the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi and Bus Operators Organisation (Salltbo), saying the department's initial regulations were too vague.

This resulted in a resumption of taxi operations in Soshanguve on Monday morning.

The shutdown was prompted by the killing of 11 taxi operators in the township since August 26.

Four of these deaths came after the signing of a peace deal on September 9 between the two main rival taxi bodies — affiliates of Salltbo and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association.

Mosunkutu said the Soshanguve community and other interested parties had until 8pm tonight to respond in writing to the department's latest bid to bring taxi operations in the area to a standstill.

The MEC said he would study these contributions before deciding whether or not to go ahead with the planned ban.

The draft regulations, Mosunkutu said, were not fundamentally different from the ones published on Wednesday last week. They merely specified which ranks and routes would be closed, and for how long.

He would not give a date for the final decision, but said it would not be delayed. "We don't have to wait for more people to be killed before we make a final decision."

Mosunkutu described the mood in Soshanguve as tense, "which is usually the first sign that something is wrong somewhere".

Mosunkutu said taxi bodies had no grounds for a victory celebration after Sunday's court ruling.

The court upheld the department's declaration of Soshanguve as an area requiring special measures as a result of ongoing taxi violence, he said.

"It merely said our regulations were too vague, and we are now changing that."

The court also ruled that 114 taxis impounded during last week's ban be returned to their owners, and that R1 000 fines imposed on the drivers be refunded.

Mosunkutu said this process was under way, but many of the impounded taxis were illegal and unroadworthy.

"Quite a number of these vehicles are illegal and these are the same people who run to the courts claiming innocence and victimisation by the Government."

He reiterated his department's commitment to creating peace in the taxi industry.

"We will make sure that the individuals who terrorise our communities are neutralised and thrown into jail," Mosunkutu said.

The killers and their paymasters, he said, appeared to have a wide network, and it was important for all transport MECs to approach the problem in a coordinated manner.

In terms of the draft regulations, the Transfer, Rietgat and Soutpan Section MM taxi ranks would be closed. Routes to be closed were the link between the PWV9 and Soshanguve, Buitekant route, route M17, and the Soutpan route.

The ban on taxi operations would be effective for two months from the date of publication.

A driver transgressing the regulations could be fined R10 000 or face up to six months in jail.

Mosunkutu called on law-abiding taxi operators and residents to help the police identify the killers.

– *Sapa*

BD 6/10/99

Government gets heavy on taxi violence (332)

PRETORIA — The North West transport department intends closing taxi routes and ranks in several areas, including GaRankuwa and Mabopane, by Monday next week, Transport MEC Star Vilakazi said yesterday.

A notice will be published later today and interested parties have until 8pm tomorrow to comment in writing. A second notice, detailing the ranks and routes to be closed, will follow.

Vilakazi said the province hoped to phase in the measures at the weekend.

The move has been prompted by continuing violence between rival taxi organisations in the province's eastern region. Vilakazi said the situation was critical, and needed strong measures.

Affected areas include: Winterveld, Brits, Erasmus, Letlhabile, Klipgat and Hebron.

The routes and ranks would be closed for two months, with transgressors facing penalties of up to R10 000.

Gauteng announced similar measures on Monday, following the deaths of 11 taxi operators in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, since August 26. — Sapa.

Comment: Page 13

5

Shilowa supports closure of taxi ranks

(332)

Sowetan 7/10/99

By McKeed Kotlolo

GAUTENG Premier Mbhazima Shilowa yesterday supported his transport and public works MEC's intention to again close taxi ranks and routes in violence-hit Soshanguve, near Pretoria.

Shilowa was speaking at an executive council meeting of the provincial legislature after receiving feedback on developments in Soshanguve from transport MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu.

His spokesman Mr Thabo Masebe said the premier supported all the moves taken by Mosunkutu to deal with the Soshanguve taxi violence, which has already claimed 14 lives in the past two months.

Masebe said Shilowa encouraged the closure of the ranks and routes after Mosunkutu had collected submissions from the Soshanguve community and interested parties to support his actions. He also encouraged Mosunkutu to rectify the regulations to avoid having them overturned again by the court as being vague.

According to Masebe, Shilowa has left the final decision in the hands of the transport MEC on when and what action to take to stabilise the situation in Soshanguve.

A spokeswoman for Mosunkutu, Ms Priscilla Peterson, said the department had received many positive submissions from the Soshanguve community who believed that closing down the taxi ranks and operations would bring stability to the area.



A TAXI REVOLUTION

(332)

MAKE WAY FOR THE BUS

Government plans R3bn project to replace all minibus taxis

FM 8/10/99

SA's notorious 16-seater minibus taxis — ageing, overcrowded and poorly maintained — will be banned from the country's roads within five years, under legislation being prepared by the Department of Transport (DoT) that is bound to spark national debate.

From next year, they are to be gradually replaced by new 18-seater and 35-seater buses in a mass scrapping programme that will cost the taxpayer R3bn-R5bn.

Taxi operators who hand in their existing vehicles will be entitled to a once-off "scrapping" payment from government equal to as much as R40 000 a minibus. Owners can either walk away from the industry or use the cash as a down-payment on a new bus.

At the same time, government will step up its efforts to regulate what has become a violent industry characterised by gun warfare between rival operators.

It also hopes to bring into the formal economy — and the national tax system — an industry that earns an estimated R12bn/year in fares.

Under the Land Transport Transition Bill, due to come into effect in the first half of next year, the number of buses will be limited to meet transport needs and restricted to specific routes. The DoT is asking for an extra R170m/year to employ roving inspectors who would ensure vehicles stuck to their routes. Microchip technology would also record routes, speeds and driving behaviour.

Karin Pearce, the department's implementation GM, says the changes are necessary to rein in an industry that has grown in a spontaneous and deregulated manner.

"If you don't try to enforce regulations and change, the environment will never improve. As things stand, people speed, they drive like maniacs, they fill their vehicles as many times as they can — and nothing is done about it," she says.

Not that she blames the taxi operators for all the problems besetting the industry. The decrepit condition of many taxis, and the overcrowding, are the result of cash limitations. Rejected by insurance companies and financial institutions because of the industry's poor safety record and low margins, operators are forced to hold on to their vehicles.

One in two operators owns only one taxi. The competition to make as many trips as possible, as fast as possible, and overloaded, is irresistible.

The design lifespan of a minibus taxi is about 10 years. The average age of the vehicles in SA is already close to that. Many are 20 years old, or more. About 90% of taxis are second-hand. There are an estimated 126 000 minibus taxis plying SA's roads, yet fewer than 5 000 new vehicles are bought each year. Toyota, with its Hiace minibus, is the only local producer; other manufacturers dropped out because of falling demand.

Government's response to this inability to afford new vehicles is the Taxi Recapitalisation Project, a joint venture between the Ministries of Transport, Trade & Industry, Mineral & Energy Affairs and Finance. It aims to enable operators to replace their vehicles and to reduce the number to a level the market requires. Over-abundance leads to intense competition, one of the prime reasons for taxi-related violence.

Government wants to replace the 126 000 16-seater taxis with an estimated 85 000 18-seaters and 35-seaters. The DoT last week circulated tender documents inviting bids to assemble the vehicles.

Bidders must meet stringent qualifying criteria. In effect, the department is asking them to take responsibility for the whole administrative process.

In addition to meeting low-price and design requirements, proposals must provide service and full maintenance plans, and even financing and insurance packages. They must also include plans for administering the "scrapping" allowance, driver training, vehicle licensing and taxi permits, guaranteed resale values, and a timetable for remanufacturing vehicles once they reach their "age limit" — four years or 300 000 km for 18-seaters, and eight years or 500 000 km for 35-seaters.

Bidders must show socio-economic benefits in the shape of job creation, maximum local content, exports and black economic empowerment.

Pearce estimates there are more than 20 foreign bus companies whose products meet the basic design criteria, and the tender documents have been distributed through nearly 50 SA embassies abroad. However, the cost of setting up a custom-made bus plant in SA is thought likely to persuade these companies to seek a local partner. The most practical consortium would be a foreign bus producer and an existing local vehicle manufacturer — plus, of course, a black empowerment element.

Pearce, who is overseeing the project, says the winning bidders will probably be allowed to import the first vehicles until the local assembly operation is running. In the long term, the DoT wants the bus construction to be a maximum 80% local content. She adds that government may grant up to three assembly licences for 18-seaters and two for 35-seaters. "We don't want to create a monopoly."

The proposed timetable for the new vehicles is:

- ❑ November 29 1999 — deadline for submitting proposals;
- ❑ January 7 2000 — announcement of shortlisted candidates;
- ❑ April 1 2000 — winning bidders to be notified;
- ❑ October 1 2000 — first imported vehicles to be delivered;
- ❑ October 1 2001 — testing, tooling-up to begin for local assembly;
- ❑ October 1 2002 — deadline for start of local assembly; and
- ❑ October 1 2004 — taxi fleet renewal and scrapping allowance end; deadline for maximum local content; refurbishment and rebuilding process begins for 18-seaters.

Despite the latest taxi violence in response to smart-card technology eliminating the need for passengers to carry cash, the tender documents specify retention of the technology — plus a variety of other hi-tech requirements.

Passenger cards, containing prepaid credit, will be of the same style as Telkom prepaid phone cards. Electronic management systems in each vehicle must be able to transmit location of a vehicle, to prevent it moving when overloaded, to record when it's due for inspection and maintenance, to manage the automatic cashless collection of fares, and to transmit that information to a central database.

Some of the other basic design specifications include diesel engines, automatic doors, and engines of 2,5*l*-4*l* on the 18-seater and 4,5*l*-6*l* on the 35-seater. The DoT will allow, but discourage, standing room for passengers.

One specification may raise comment, in view of SA's high death rate in bus and taxi accidents: passenger seatbelts behind the driver are not compulsory. Manufacturers have only to fit the mounting points in case the bus operator wants to fit belts later.

The fitting of diesel engines is expected to increase SA diesel consumption by 67% — and make a dent in the huge diesel oversupply. Taxi operators are expected to receive a price incentive at the pumps.

Trade & Industry has budgeted about R3bn for the minibus taxi scrapping allowance. Independent estimates suggest the eventual cost could rise to R5bn.

Minibus-taxi operators will only be able to benefit from the scheme if their current vehicle is registered and they have a taxi permit. They will then receive a scrapping allowance equivalent to 20%-30% of the price of a new 18-seater. If they want to operate a 35-seater, they must hand in two minibus taxis and two permits.

Prices evidently will depend on tenders, but government officials hope the 18-seater will retail for about the same as a current 16-seater — about R120 000. One local bus manufacturer estimates the 35-seater could cost about R160 000.

By automatically registering the new taxis, the DoT hopes to create a complete register of SA taxis that will make law enforcement easier. The new owners will also be registered — as taxpayers. Minibus taxis carry about 65% of SA's commuters. But because the industry is unregulated, the fiscus receives little in the way of tax.

None of this will work, of course, if the taxi industry doesn't co-operate. Pearce says the SA Taxi Council (Sataco), said to represent 90% of SA's taxis, is a partner in the recapitalisation process and will be part of the decision-making process to choose the bus assemblers.

More important, the council and its members will be fully involved in the day-to-day running of the newly regulated industry. Sataco regional co-operatives will manage customer services such as service and maintenance, spares, tyres and food outlets. Co-ops have already been granted 36 fuel licences to sell diesel.

The intention is that jobs created by all the ventures should be offered first to taxi drivers who lose their jobs. From the existing 126 000 minibus taxis to the suggested 85 000 new vehicles, 41 000 drivers could lose their jobs. Pearce says the tender document carries a provision that laid-off drivers be retrained either to work in the Sataco-managed outlets, or to take new jobs created at the assembly plants.

Sataco executive member Basil Nagel says the taxi industry provides 126 000 direct jobs for drivers and another 300 000 indirectly through support services. "It's a situation where everyone benefits," he says of the proposed legislation.

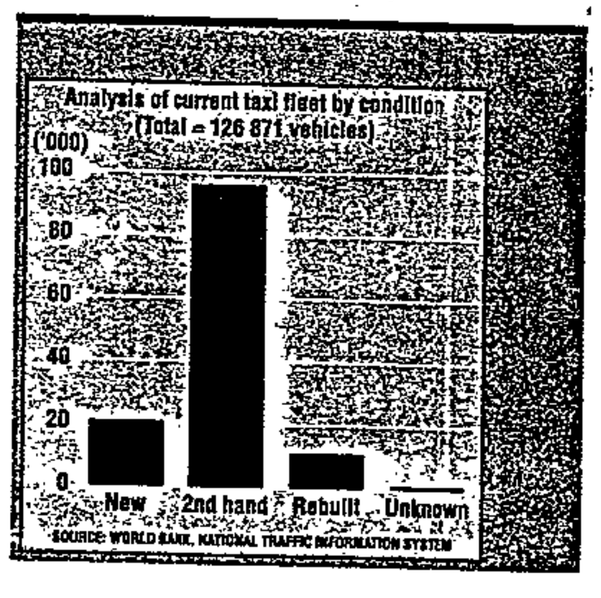
Not everyone agrees. "Such a regulation is doomed to a failure just like the SA Railways & Harbours, which monopolised all means of transport and failed," says Nafcoc deputy president A R Napo. "Is government aware that each possible accident of these 32-seater (sic) buses, which is a reality of life, means 32 claims against the Road Accident Fund? Does government have the money to meet the said claims? Obviously not. We are inclined to say this is a fatal move."

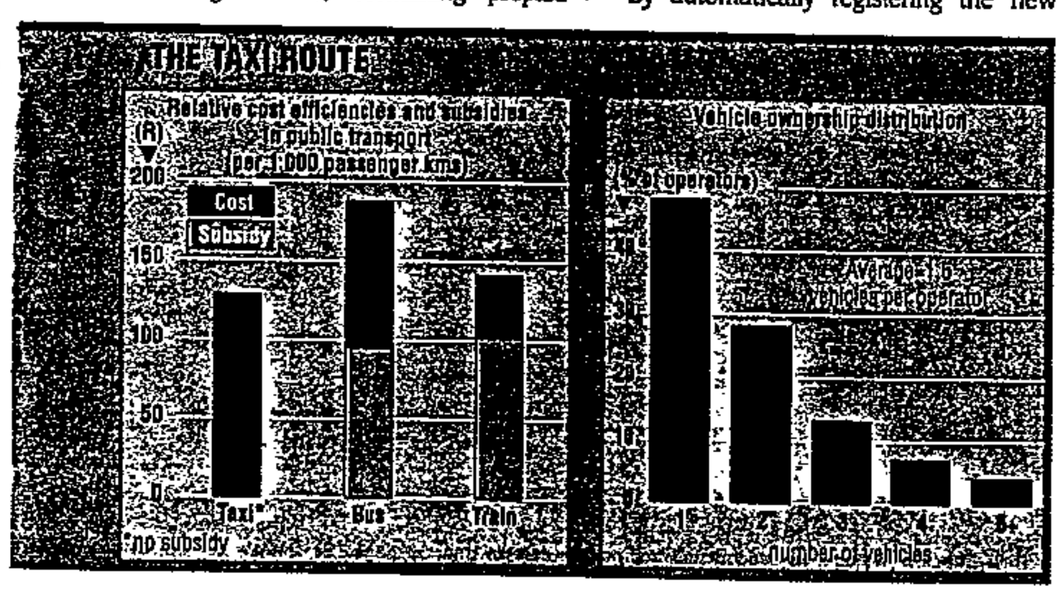
It's a sentiment echoed by many other outsiders, who say any attempt to regulate will be resisted by the taxi industry and is doomed to fail.

Pearce, however, says government can't afford *not* to regulate.

"Without recapitalisation and enforcement, the industry will continue as it always has. It needs regulation. It needs enforcement. Without it, newcomers to the industry see no advantage in sticking to the rules. If we don't do something, who will?"

David Furlonger





Bosses seek peace in W Cape taxi war

ARG 8/10/99 (332)

GCINIKHAYA MBESI AND NORMAN JOSEPH
STAFF REPORTERS

The Congress for Democratic Taxi Association wants to see the minibus taxi industry properly managed and regulated.

Codeta said the taxi industry at present was chaotic and out of control and that proper legislation and management was needed to regulate it.

Spokesman Michael Kupiso said: "So many people have been killed in taxi wars between Codeta and Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) here in the Western Cape.

"But Codeta has changed its perceptions of fighting."

Codeta's newly-elected executive committee yesterday appealed to members not to retaliate if attacked by members of other taxi organisations.

The executive committee has a mandate from the membership to create and develop a new vision for the growth and development of the association.

Codeta spokesman Michael Kupiso said that members were aware that the taxi industry in the Western Cape had a poor image with commuters, the media and the public in general.

Yesterday, about 400 drivers, including those from branches in Kraaifontein and Stellenbosch, attended a meeting held in Site C, Khayelitsha.

Drivers expressed concern at the killing of two of their members 13 days ago, allegedly by Cata.

Tolo Mapatiyana was shot dead while changing his vehicle's tyre near Cape Town International Airport, and Jack Xelelo was gunned down on the R300 freeway near Delft.

Mr Kupiso said Codeta had paid more than R50 000 for the funerals of the two men.

Codeta chairman Victor Ntshoko said they were capable of defending themselves when attacked.

But, he said, Codeta used to fight and had now ceased to do so. "We see things differently now. We want to be responsible citizens of the country.

"We are going to take legal action, lay criminal charges, seek court interdicts and follow the lawful procedures if attacked by Cata or any other rival group.

"It is not necessary for us to kill them. From now we will regularly liaise and meet with the police, traffic, justice and government departments."

Codeta consultant Jenny Harris echoed Mr Ntshoko's sentiments saying that the organisation would start a "peaceful strategy".

Mr Ntshoko said that Codeta had laid two murder and several other charges with the police.

Agreement was reached yesterday that Codeta would seek a meeting with provincial transport Minister Piet Meyer soon.

Mr Meyer's spokesman, Danny Abrahams, said that the transport department would welcome attempts from any organisation to bring about peace in the industry.

But while the Codeta top brass was firm about its new stance, some drivers voiced misgivings. One said: "We do not know how to defend ourselves, since we do not want to retaliate."

Asked to comment, Cata chairman Steven Williams said: "We also have problems about Codeta, so they must not jump into press conferences without sitting down with us and solving our mutual problems."

Codeta members praised the firm stand on taxi violence taken in Gauteng, where unroadworthy vehicles were seized, some taxi ranks in Soshanguve, near Pretoria, were closed, and routes were suspended.

Mr Kupiso said: "We are impressed by what the Government has done in Soshanguve and we fear it might happen to us as well. This is why we are taking this positive approach."

CAPE ARGUS, TUESDAY, OCTOBE

ARCT 12/10/99

Taxi peace pact signing

(332)

STAFF REPORTER

Feuding taxi organisations in Bellville and Delft have agreed to sign a peace deal today at the Delft police station after a month of uncertainty over taxi routes and a series of revenge killings.

The conflict, which has claimed the lives of two drivers and injured scores of passengers, revolved around who should operate on the taxi route between Delft south and Bellville.

The taxi rivals and representatives of the police and the municipal traffic department were brought together by Malibongwe Sophangisa and Themba Mbane of an urban conflict management committee. It has been agreed that seven Cata taxi operators will join the Delft-Bellville Taxi Association and operate on the Delft route.

The Cata taxi drivers will each pay a R400 affiliation fee and operate under Delft-Bellville banners.

Cata spokesman Alfred Pupu said his organisation regretted the loss of life and property, was satisfied with the agreement and would honour it.

Ntsebeza to head taxi task team (332)

ACTING judge and former Truth and Reconciliation Commission chief investigator Advocate Dumisa Ntsebeza has been appointed to facilitate negotiations between taxi associations in Pretoria, Gauteng transport MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu said yesterday.

He said officials were putting the final touches together and taxi owners were expected to park their taxis after midnight.

On Sunday, Mosunkutu announced that taxi ranks north of Pretoria, including Soshanguve, Rietgat, Mabopane, Soutpan and surrounding areas, would be closed for two months.

The closure of the ranks should not be seen as punishment but as a solution to normalise the area because of violence in the taxi industry and to ensure passenger safety, he said.

"This was a sign that the government cannot tolerate murder, attempted murder and violence," he said.

More buses would be available to transport commuters.

"I am confident an agreement will be reached before the end of two months," he said. – *Sapa*

13/10/99 Beeld Johannesburg

(332) BD 13/10/99

More taxi ranks face closure, MEC warns

Stephané Bothma, Pamela Whitby and Pearl Sebolao

PRETORIA — More Gauteng taxi ranks would face closure if operators failed to solve their problems, provincial transport MEC Khabisi Monunkutu warned yesterday.

The warning came as 400 soldiers and policemen flooded taxi ranks and routes in Soshanguve, Rietgat, Mabopane and Soutpan, north of Pretoria, to enforce government's closure of ranks there for at least two months in a bid to crack down on violence.

A court application by Net1Applied Technology (Aplitec) — which supplies smart-card technology to the taxi industry in the area — to have the closure overturned, failed to materialise yesterday. Sources close to the company said the application was likely to be brought today. Police have said they suspect taxi violence could stem from disagreements over the conversion to a smart-card fare system in the region.

Several hundred taxis are affected by the closures. Seven ignored it. Their vehicles were impounded and each driver was fined R5 000.

Gauteng premier Mbhazima Shilowa said the findings of a commission of inquiry into taxi violence in the province would not be released in their current form because this would jeopardise investigations and endanger the lives of witnesses. He said the report, which should by law have been tabled in the legislature within 30 days of its completion, would be sent back for redrafting.

Meanwhile, Aplitec and a wholly owned subsidiary of Paradigm Interactive Media, TaxiLink, which competes with Aplitec for taxi smart-card business, appear to be involved in a small war of their own. Ten Taxilink employees and contractors have left the company. Eight joined Aplitec.

Reasons cited for leaving included late payment of contractual fees, inadequate funding and lack of communication with management. However, TaxiLink GM Gary Down said the contractors had failed to meet their obligations.

Aplitec's card system is operational in 2 000 taxis, while Paradigm's is in 83.

Taxi ban keeps kids out of school

(332)

Sowetan 13/10/99

By McKeed Kotlolo

SCORES of Soshanguve, Pretoria, children attending school in the city missed classes yesterday because their minibuses were confiscated at roadblocks enforcing the taxi ban in the violence-hit township.

Yesterday's confiscation of eight school buses, including one transporting teachers from four schools to a course at head office yesterday afternoon, followed the suspension of taxi operations in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, by Gauteng transport and public works MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu at midnight on Monday in an effort to curb local taxi violence.

The affected children included those from Capital Park Pre-School and the Jopie Fourie, Haakdoorn, Rachel de Beer, Robert Hicks and Akasia primary schools. The vehicles were impounded at roadblocks at entrances to the township. They were kept at the local police station where the owners were each fined R1 000.

At the time of going to press only one minibus that transported pupils and employees of the Department of Home Affairs had been released after the driver had paid a R1 000 fine.

Angry drivers of the impounded vehicles said they produced permits endorsed by local police and school principals of the children they were transporting as proof, "but police and traffic officers at the roadblocks ignored the letters and confiscated our minibuses". Drivers interviewed alleged that some of the drivers who produced "the same letters as ours were allowed to proceed".

The children spent the whole day playing on the police station premises.

During a media briefing after visiting the roadblocks, Mosunkutu said his department had placed a blanket ban on minibus taxis. "We will look into the matter of the schoolchildren because it is examination time and we do not want to cause any disruption," he said.

Before the implementation of the ban his counterpart in North West, Mr Frans Vilakazi, had called on all minibus operators transporting schoolchildren to obtain letters from school principals and police stations exempting them from the ban.

Mosunkutu commended the taxi operators in the area for heeding the ban but unfortunately the same could not be said about the situation in North West where operators defied the ban.

Mr Killer Mahlangu in the office of Mr Vilakazi said police could not enforce the ban "because they had not received the *Government Gazette* empowering them to act against the taxis that continued to operate yesterday".

"I have faxed them the copy of the gazette and they will start with the enforcement of the ban tomorrow at 5am."

Shilowa's damage control

GAUTENG Premier Mbhazima Shilowa said yesterday it would have been irresponsible of him to release a final report of a commission of inquiry into the causes of taxi violence in the province because it contained potentially damaging information.

At a media briefing in Johannesburg, Shilowa said the report mentioned the names of the perpetrators and also of police stations involved in the unresolved violence.

He said opposition parties in the Gauteng legislature understood and agreed yesterday afternoon that the findings would endanger the process of bringing the culprits to book.

It had been agreed that the report would be sent back to the commission of inquiry, which would be requested to draft it in a manner that would not endanger anybody's life.

Shilowa said the recommendations of the report were already being implemented. Seven people had been arrested.

Shilowa said he had received the report on September 15 and in terms of Section 8 of the Provincial Commission Act, the report was supposed to be submitted to the speaker within 30 days.

He said that after studying the report very carefully, he had related the findings with incidents that had occurred when the commission was still investigating.

Two witnesses were killed during the hearings of the commission and one witness was killed after testifying.

"One was killed before he could testify," he said. "The ongoing and potential investigations into taxi violence will be prejudiced if the identities of actual and potential witnesses are revealed."

Shilowa said he had consulted the speaker and the national director of public prosecutions, Mr Bulelani Ngcuka, to seek guidance on how to deal with the report.

It was agreed that he meet the opposition parties and discuss the contents of the report.

Shilowa said: "I wish to record that I acknowledge that the Provincial Act requires all reports to be tabled before the legislature. However, on the basis of legal opinion, I still believe that the dictates of public policy allow me to ensure that the objectives of transparency do not unduly undermine the critical objectives of promoting public safety and the prevention of taxi violence in our communities." – *Sapa*

Taxi Association and Bus Organisation. Police impounded 77 taxis and their owners were fined.

PHOTO: LEN KUMALO

Taxi ban reinstated

Sowetan 11/10/99 (332)

By McKeed Kotlolo

TAXI ranks and routes in parts of the North West and Gauteng will be closed for two months in an attempt to end the violence that has claimed more than a dozen lives in the past two months.

The decision, which was announced in Pretoria yesterday, comes into effect at midnight tonight. The move will affect thousands of commuters, especially in Mabopane and Soshanguve where many people rely on taxis to travel to work. Commuters will be provided with buses.

Gauteng MEC for transport and public works Mr Khabisi Mosunkutu told a media conference yesterday that the ranks and routes would be closed from tomorrow until December 10.

North West MEC for transport and public works Mr Frans Vilakazi introduced the same measures which he announced at a Pretoria hotel yesterday morning.

The suspension of taxi operations and closure of the ranks in Mabopane, Garankuwa, Winterveldt, Brits, Erasmus, Letlhabile, Klipgat and Hebron became effective yesterday.

Vilakazi said taxis that transport children to school have been exempted but owners should get letters with school stamps from principals and local police stations.

Mosunkutu said all taxis should stop operation by midnight today and those found operating after midnight would have their taxis impounded and be fined R1 000.

The two-month ban on taxi operations in terms of Section 49 (1) of Act 11 of 1977 and promulgated regulations was welcomed by the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta). Their rivals, the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi Association, did not attend the MEC's meeting. Instead Salldta called its own meeting at the Odi Stadium in Mabopane early yesterday.

Felldta president Mr Vuyo Manganyi said: "We have hope in the new MEC that the killings will stop. His decision to close the ranks and routes, we believe, will force the other parties to come to the negotiation table."

Mosunkutu's initial decision to stop the taxi operations in the area on September 29 was overturned by a Pretoria High Court on October 3 because the regulation was vague. He said the regulations had now been tightened up and that he had also considered the submissions by both the community and the taxi associations before reaching his latest decision.

Among the reasons to suspend taxi business was that during consultations, the major associations attempted to downplay the seriousness of the situation.

"To my mind one murder is one too many. This industry seems to regard murder as part of the business," Mosunkutu said.

However, he said the tough measures would be lifted if the parties successfully negotiated because proper consultation and disciplinary structures were in place.

He has suggested former Truth and Reconciliation Commission head of investigations Mr Dumisa Ntsebeza and Pretoria High Court Judge Ishmael Semenya as possible mediators in the negotiations between the warring parties.

Mosunkutu also announced that to stabilise the situation, there would be increased policing and that arrangements had been made to reduce inconvenience to the public by providing adequate alternative transport.

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State proposes speed limit in bid to curb taxi accidents

(332) Sowetan 11/10/99

By Noxolo Nxusani

THE Government intends implementing the 100 kilometres an hour speed limit on taxis following the weekend accident that left seven people dead and eight others injured in the North West.

Minister of Transport spokesman Mr Mike Mabaso said the minister will consult with taxi associations and put the proposal on the table for discussion.

However, Mabaso was unable to say when this would take place because the industry needs to be regulated and formalised first.

He said the recent project of reducing the speed for public transport was directed at trucks, busses and minibus taxis.

The proposal comes after a minibus taxi carrying 15 passengers from Randfontein to Klerksdorp overturned 20km from Potchefstroom on Saturday afternoon.

Seven people, including a one-year-old child and two women, were killed instantly. Eight other people – five women and three men – were taken to Potchefstroom Hospital in a stable condition.

Police spokesman Captain Louis Jacobs said the 'jaws of life' had to be used to free the driver who was trapped inside the taxi.

More than 50 people have been killed in road accidents throughout the country in the past three weeks.

Transport Minister Dullah Omar has produced new regulations governing busses, trucks and taxis.

● Sapa reports that the National Taxi Alliance (NTA) has appealed to President Thabo Mbeki to postpone the implementation of any programme to change the taxi industry until the NTA has been consulted.

In a statement at the weekend the NTA said they did not recognise the South African Taxi Council, which the Government has been consulting on the matter.

It said unless the Government gave a written undertaking to listen to both sides of the story, it would instruct lawyers to take "appropriate legal action" to force them to do so.

The NTA claimed to represent the majority of the taxi industry and said it had serious problems with the transformation programme that compounded problems in the industry.

"These plans and actions are directly responsible for the present chaos and violence," the statement said.

Minister of Transport spokesman Mr Mike Mabasa denied this saying the Government had always been willing to listen to other organisations and incorporate them in discussions.

100 taxi hitmen named

(332) Sowetan 15/10/99

Several senior police officials on damning list, says premier

Jimmy Seepe
Political Correspondent

ONE HUNDRED taxi hitmen operating in Gauteng have been identified in a commission report dealing with taxi violence. The report was withheld this week by Gauteng Premier Mbhazima Shilowa.

Shilowa disclosed this to *Sowetan* at a breakfast meeting yesterday, confirming the long-held suspicion that elements operating behind the scenes were fanning the flames of the taxi conflict.

The 100 hitmen have been implicated by witnesses in many of the killings in both the Johannesburg and Pretoria area. Their names were listed in the sensitive report, which was held back this week in order to ensure that current investigations were not jeopardised.

The newly launched police investigative unit the Scorpions – under the directorship of the national director for public prosecution Mr Bulelani Ngcuka has been given the report and has started investigating the suspects.

On the list are the names of several senior members of the South African Police Service, including some in high office, who are alleged not only to be involved in the taxi industry but of taking part in the planning of hit squad activities.

Shilowa said the report mentioned the names of the perpetrators and police stations involved in the unresolved violence.

The Scorpions had their first success since their formation a month ago last week, when they arrested a taxi operator alleged to have been involved in taxi violence in the Eastern Cape township of Mdantsane.

The Scorpions are headed by former KwaZulu-Natal investigation task unit chief Frank Dutton. They operate along multi-disciplinary lines that include intelligence, investigation and prosecution.

They are tasked with investigating selected priority crimes such as organised crime, violent crime, political violence, terrorism and crimes against the state, serious economic crime and corruption in the police, criminal justice system and the security forces.

The commission was established on February 9 by former Gauteng premier Mathole Motshekga. The report was given to Shilowa on September 15.

He later met Gauteng opposition parties to explain why he had taken the decision not to release the report's findings. He said opposition parties in the Gauteng Legislature understood and agreed that the findings would endanger the process of bringing the culprits to book.

It had been agreed that the report would be sent back to the commission of inquiry, which would be asked to draft it in a manner that would not endanger anybody's life.

Shilowa said the recommendations of the report were already being implemented. Seven people had been arrested.

Two witnesses were killed during the hearings of the commission and one witness was killed after testifying.

"One was killed before he could testify," he said.

Early in the week Gauteng provincial transport MEC Kgabisi Mosunkutu and his North West counterpart closed several taxi ranks north of Pretoria for two months in a bid to control taxi violence in the area.

Taxi ranks that were closed included Soutpan, Mabopane, Rietgat and Soshanguve. The Gauteng department of transport made alternative arrangements to transport commuters.

Beloved country cries out for safer taxis

(332) BD 15/10/99

One in two survey respondents says operators' standards have dropped over the past few years, writes **Jethro Goko**

WITH government clamping down on bus operators following a recent spate of fatal accidents, commuters say they also want special safety measures implemented in the minibus taxi industry.

This is one of the findings of a survey conducted for Business Day by market research house AC Nielsen Market Research Africa.

The survey was conducted with an area-stratified probability sample of 2 502 households spanning all races and income groups and representing 13,7-million people.

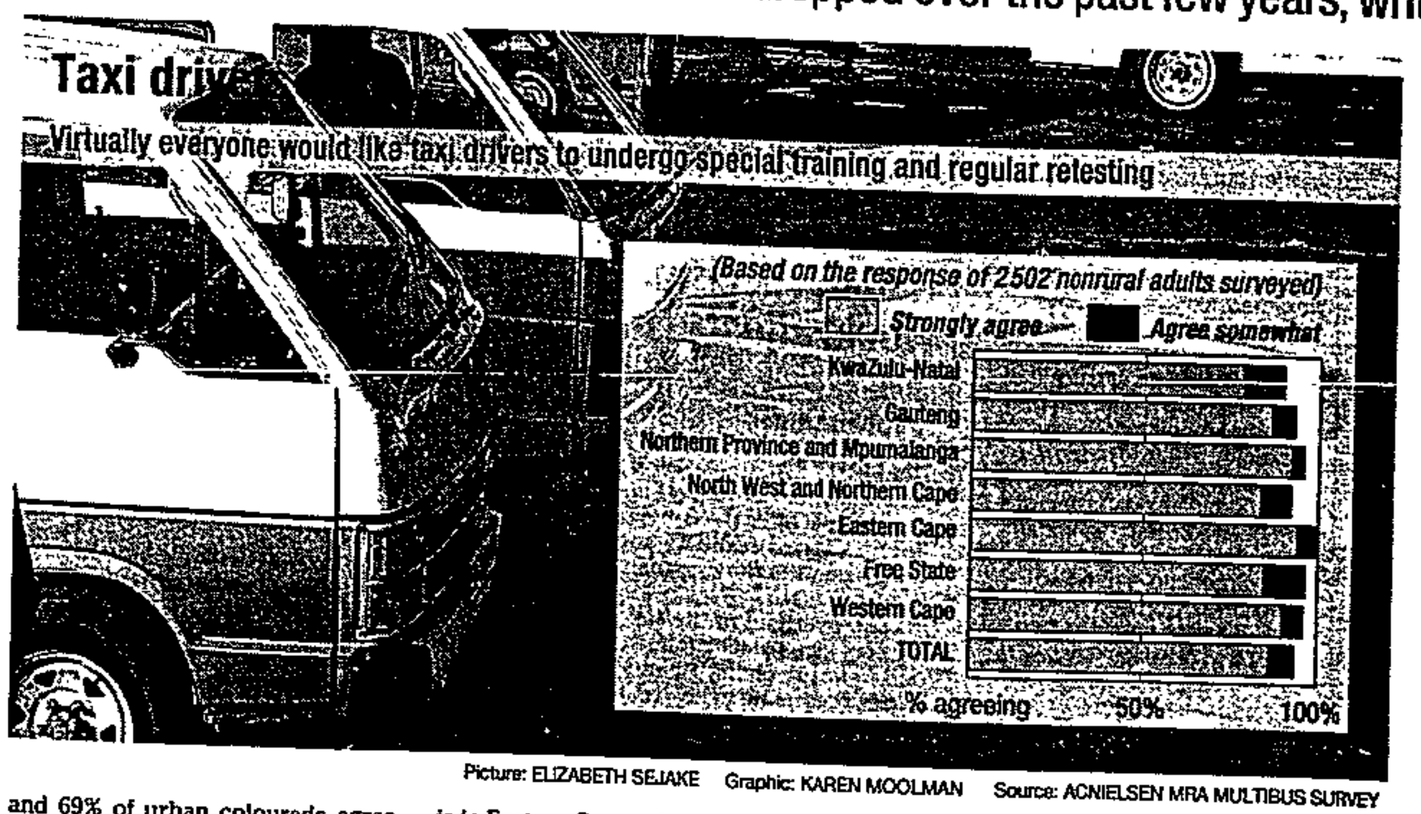
Ninety-four percent of survey respondents feel that taxi drivers should undergo special training and should be tested at regular intervals before being allowed to operate vehicles on the roads.

Almost 100% of respondents in Eastern Cape want to see drivers enrolled in special training courses. People in other provinces have similar views: 90% in KwaZulu-Natal and 96% in Western Cape, Free State, Northern Province and Mpumalanga.

One in two respondents sees a deterioration in taxi driving standards over the past two to three years and 55% believe that, in relation to other drivers on the road, taxi drivers' standards of driving are worse.

The perception that standards have deteriorated seems more prevalent in Western Cape, with 56% of people agreeing. KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng follow close behind with 54%. Seventy-nine percent of Indians and 89% of whites perceive that drivers' standards have dropped, while 39% of black urban adults feel the same way.

About 89% of urban whites feel that standards of taxi driving are worse in comparison to other drivers, with 79% of urban Indians and 69% of urban coloureds agreeing. The degree of support for this statement is markedly lower — 38% —among blacks.



Picture: ELIZABETH SEJAKE Graphic: KAREN MOOLMAN Source: ACNIELSEN MRA MULTIBUS SURVEY

Nearly 50% of taxi passengers feel unsafe when travelling in a taxi. Those in KwaZulu-Natal feel the least safe at 65%. Western Cape follows with 62%, Eastern Cape with 48% and Gauteng with 47%.

It would also seem that the safest places to be in a taxi are Northern Province and Mpumalanga, where only 30% feel unsafe. About 68% of taxi users are concerned about getting involved in taxi violence.

The highest fear of such violence is in Eastern Cape, where 86% of passengers are afraid, followed by KwaZulu-Natal (78%) and Western Cape (67%). The least concerned are Gautengers, but this is little cause for celebration: 60% of passengers there are worried.

Blacks top the scale of those fearing taxi violence (69%), followed by Indians at 66%, coloureds at 61% and the small number of white passengers coming in at the bottom end.

The unpleasant aspects of taxi travel do not end there. Only 58% found taxi drivers helpful, 39% thought taxis were mostly clean and comfortable and only 45% found taxis good value for money.

Passengers have mixed feelings about the onboard mix of music and advertising — 55% of those aged 16-24 enjoy the mix, whereas only 25% of those over 50 feel the same way.

Commenting on the results, AC-Nielsen Market Research Africa MD Anina Maree said the survey indicated deep-seated passenger dissatisfaction with the taxi industry.

"This must be of particular concern to the taxi industry, as well as to the government, whose inability to provide alternative, safe public transport sees 20% of all urban adults having to use combi-type taxis on a daily basis, and a further 30% one or more times a week."

Thomas Masase, marketing director of the SA Local and Long Distance Taxi Bus Organisation (Salltbo), said he agreed that drivers should undergo rigorous training to allay the fears still associated with taxi travel.

"Salltbo, in partnership with its vehicle suppliers, has already put such a driver-training programme in place," Masase said.

An estimated 2,3-million blacks, 250 000 coloureds, 63 000 Indians and 17 000 whites use taxis every day. Of the taxi users who catch taxis at least once a month, 63% earn between R800 and R3 999 a month. The user profile is evenly split between males and females, as well as across the age groups, although there are fewer users above the age of 50.

Respondents to the survey were asked how often they used a combi-type taxi, their opinions on taxi drivers' relative standards of driving and whether these had improved or deteriorated over the past two to three years.

A list of statements relating to passengers' taxi experiences was shown for comment and, finally, respondents were asked to signify their relative agreement or disagreement with a statement on testing and training of taxi drivers.

Taxi ban might end

Soweton 18/10/99 (332)

Warring taxi organisations agree to work towards peace

Sowetan Reporters and Sapa

EFFORTS to end taxi violence at Soshanguve in Pretoria have resulted in the arrest of three men yesterday who were found with an arms cache in the minibus in which they were travelling.

At the same time, peace moves within the industry may compel Gauteng transport MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu to reverse the ban on taxi operations in the area.

The three were arrested at a roadblock on the Mabopane highway about 9am.

Inspector Piletji Sebola said the suspects were found with two AK-47 assault rifles, an R5 rifle, four magazines, 101 rounds of ammunition, a hammer, a crowbar, a pair of gloves and balaclavas hidden behind the driver's seat.

A fourth occupant escaped at the roadblock and fled towards Dunuza informal settlement.

Sebola said police were able to establish that the minibus was a taxi registered in Benoni on the East Rand.

Meanwhile, Mosunkutu announced at the weekend that the ban on taxi operations in Soshanguve could be lifted soon.

Acting spokeswoman for Mosunkutu Ms Rita Tladi said that in the light of the withdrawal of a High Court case against the department by the two warring factions – the SA Local and Long-Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation (Salltbo) and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta) – the MEC may reverse his decision on taxi operations.

After a meeting on Saturday, Salltbo and Felldta agreed to work towards peace in the area. A mediation process would start on Thursday to assist the parties achieve a workable solution.

"They want to go back to operating again and have expressed their commitment to peace," Tladi said.

Another departmental official, who did not want to be named, said police had impounded 48 taxis in Soshanguve since a ban on taxi operations in areas north of Pretoria came into effect.

"They were all transporting children, many of whom missed school as a result.

The spokesman urged parents not to allow their children to board taxis to school.

"If any taxi is caught operating illegally, the driver will be arrested, and the children will be stranded."

Meanwhile, North West police spokeswoman Sergeant Erica Roos said police were experiencing no problems in the Mabopane-Garankuwa area, where the ban also applied. "Taxi drivers are taking heed," she said.

Police in the province had so far confiscated 20 taxis operating illegally.

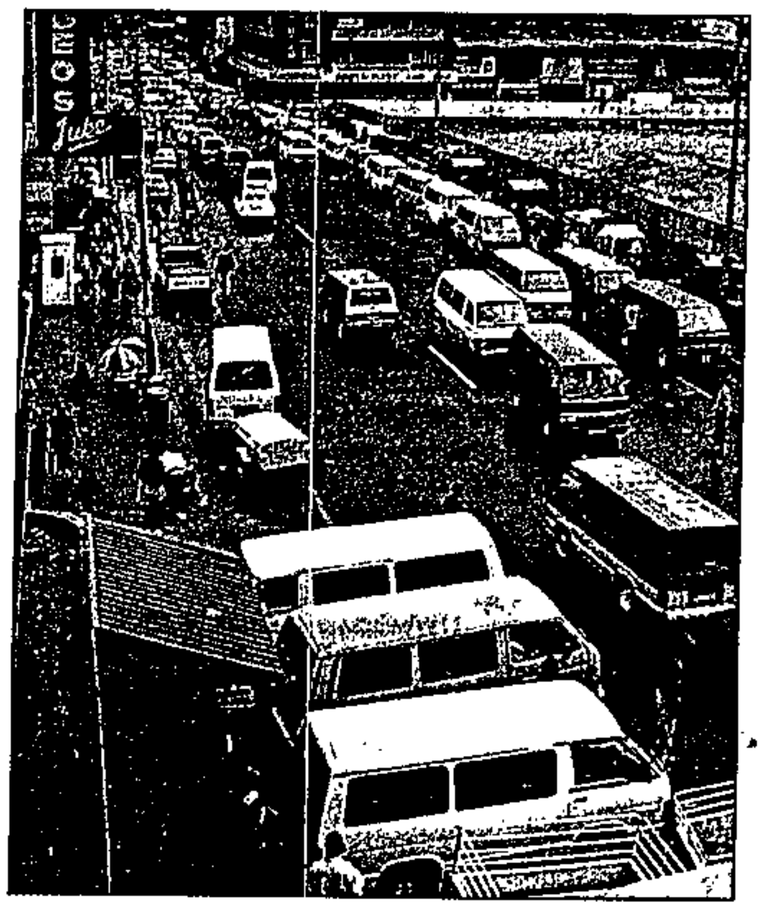
Of these, 13 were returned to their owners after they paid R1 000 fines.

One taxi owner was arrested on charges of theft after his taxi was found to have been stolen. Six vehicles were still in police custody.

MAIL & GUARDIAN
October 15 to 21 1999

Massive revamp of taxi industry (332)

A new plan has been designed to deal with the problems that have rendered South Africa's taxi industry uncontrollable.
Scotch Tagwireyi *reports*



Death traps: Moves are afoot to restructure South Africa's taxi industry, which was responsible for the deaths of 2 679 people last year. PHOTOGRAPH: NADINE HUTTON

As taxi violence and road deaths reach epidemic proportions, the government is preparing sweeping plans to revamp South Africa's deadliest industry.

The plan includes taking the country's present fleet of 120 000 minibus taxis off the road and replacing them with bigger, stronger, safer vehicles equipped with smart cards to ensure they stick to registered routes.

Under a recapitalisation plan, jointly developed by the departments of transport, trade and industry, minerals and energy and finance, the government will subsidise owners to help them buy the new 18- to 35-seat taxis.

At the same time the South African Taxi Council (Sataco) is working on a plan to establish its own bank in partnership with trade unions, church and youth organisations to control the industry's floating capital and help taxi owners with financing which they cannot get from existing institutions.

Tenders to supply vehicles have already been called for, and Lawrence Venkile, project manager of taxi operations in the Department of Transport, says the first of the new taxis will be on the road next year. All of the current fleet will be gone within four years.

Taxi violence is scaling new heights. It caused 291 deaths in 1998, 281 in 1997 and 394 last year. This year's figure is going to be even higher: there have been 373 violent incidents in the first seven months compared with 333 during the same period last year. In all, more than 1 000 people have been killed in the taxi violence in the past four years.

Even more are dying in taxi accidents. Taxis constitute only 2% to 3% of vehicles on South African roads, but are involved in 17% of accidents. Last year taxis were involved in 70 000 accidents in which 900 passengers and 1 385 drivers were killed.

Reasons for this appalling record range from bad driving to poor funding, the wrong kind of vehicles and poor maintenance.

"The current taxis were never manufactured to carry so many passengers every day, or to make so many trips over so many years," says a Sataco representative. "That is why they are so battered. They are actually death traps."

Most have gone through four to five engines. Their average age is 10 years.

Travelling in one of these death traps is a hair-raising experience. From inside the vehicle, passengers can see the road whizz by beneath them. Doors are held together with pieces of rusty wire.

Yet this is an industry that provides transport for five million to 10-million people every day, and has a daily turnover of R15-million.

Insurance companies and financial institutions shun the industry, which they regard as too risky. Financial institutions demand a 60% deposit, which means minibuses are effectively bought for cash, with owners buying the oldest and cheapest vehicles.

This puts pressure on drivers to carry more passengers and drive faster. "It becomes a vicious circle," the Sataco representative explains, "in which the risks continue to grow, making insurers and bankers distance themselves still further from the industry and making operators fight ever harder for survival."

He says taxis often travel at 160kph, and about 20 passengers are packed into the 16-seaters.

Financial margins are fine. The weekly return on a 16-seater is about R1 500, from which the driver's salary, petrol, tyres and other maintenance costs have to come, leaving little profit. Most drivers earn R400 a week. They have no life insurance, pension, medical aid or unemployment insurance.

The heart of the problem, Venkile explains, is that the taxi industry arose spontaneously during the 1980s and the old apartheid regime made no attempt to regulate it. No proper taxi ranks were established to control routes, which led to open warfare over more lucrative routes.

While the new elite police unit, the Scorpions, has been wheeled in to try to quell the taxi violence, particularly in the Eastern Cape where the problem is more concentrated, the recapitalisation programme is designed to deal with the deeper-rooted problems that have rendered the industry uncontrollable.

The new taxis will have diesel engines, which are stronger and longer-lasting than petrol engines. They will be required to have regular roadworthy tests, and the successful bidder for their manufacturing will also be responsible for maintaining the vehicles.

A critical innovation is that the new taxis will be fitted with tracking devices and smart cards, so they can be spotted and penalised if they take unregistered routes. This, the planners believe, will greatly reduce the taxi wars over routes.

The smart cards will also keep track of the daily income of the taxis. Sataco's idea is that the owners should pool their income to build the new bank, to be called Motu, to keep their floating capital within the industry and help the operators with new purchases.

Pirate taxi owners warned

(332)

By McKeed Kotlolo

PIRATE taxi operators who took advantage of the taxi ban in Soshanguve, Pretoria, have been warned to stop their illegal operations or else have their vehicles impounded.

The warning followed a number of private sedan vehicles, including bakkies, found by police and traffic officials picking and off-loading commuters along the main taxi routes and the closed Rietgat rank yesterday.

Spokesman for Soshanguve police Inspector Piletji Sebola told *Sowetan* yesterday that such vehicles were ticketed and if found pirating again, "they would be impounded because they are breaching the two month taxi ban by transport and public works MEC, Mr Khabisi Mosunkutu".

The ban is aimed at finding a solution to the taxi violence which has already claimed at least a dozen lives in the area since August.

Sebola also said there were unconfirmed allegations that taxi owners continued their businesses by using private vehicles to transport commuters. "We have not found such a case yet but we are investigating," he said.

Meanwhile, Acting Judge Dumisa Ntsebeza, who has been appointed to mediate in negotiations to seek a solution in the violence-riddled taxi industry in both Gauteng and North West, is optimistic that there would be a long-lasting solution at the end of the process.

He admitted, however, that his job would not be easy.

Ntsebeza said his intention was to include all interested parties, including taxi drivers, who were opposed to the taxi violence and wanted to give comments and contribute towards a solution to the problem.

He urged parties involved in the talks to commit themselves to reaching an acceptable solution and not to break the agreements.

Sowetan 21/10/94

Commuters lend support to taxi ban in North West

(332)

Sowetan 25/10/99

By McKeed Kotlolo

THE community and taxi operators in North West are fully behind the Government's two-month ban on taxi operations despite experiencing serious inconveniences.

This sentiment was revealed at an emotionally-charged meeting in Mabopane yesterday.

Some taxi operators wept openly as they expressed fear for their lives in the violence-riddled industry.

They also showed their support for the emergency measures imposed by transport and public works MEC Mr Frans Vilakazi about two weeks ago in an attempt to bring peace and stability to the area.

His Gauteng counterpart, Mr Khabisi Mosunkutu, introduced the same measures in Soshanguve and surrounding areas.

Other operators at the meeting said they strongly believed that stickers belonging to taxi federations and the smart cards were the cause of problems in the industry.

They claimed that the taxi business was run "Mafia style" and those opposed to the bosses got killed.

Some of the operators met Vilakazi on Friday to discuss the effect of the measures and their fears that banks might repossess their minibuses.

At yesterday's feedback meeting in the packed Dr Moreosele High School hall in Mabopane, Vilakazi hit out at the leadership of the taxi industry whom he said "think they are equal to the government" and were untouchable.

The MEC, who received rousing applause each time he condemned the taxi bosses, said 233 people had been killed in the taxi violence between 1996 and 1999.

"As a result we took the decision to make the taxi leaders start listening to the communities and government," he said.

Vilakazi said the government would do everything in its power to bring stability to the country.

"We are going to pursue the warlords in the industry. We have already arrested some and as government we will fight to keep them from society," he said.

Taxi violence 'exported'

Sowetan 26/10/99

(332)

By Sowetan Reporters

THE SIGHTING of taxi operators from Soshanguve, outside Pretoria, who are believed to have relocated to KwaZulu-Natal after their operations were banned by the Gauteng provincial government, has sparked off fears that violence could be exported to that province.

This follows the violence at a long-distance taxi rank in downtown Durban at the weekend.

At least four people, including three taxi drivers and a bystander, sustained gunshot wounds when a mob of people in a cavalcade of taxis wielding firearms descended on the Warwick Avenue taxi rank on Saturday morning.

The mob began shooting indiscriminately at taxis parked at the rank.

One of the affected taxi operators, Mr Thula Sithole, who came to *Sowetan* offices yesterday, said they had learnt that some taxi operators from Soshanguve had relocated to KwaZulu-Natal. The rival taxi association is led by Mr Mandla Gcaba.

"We have proof that some of these people from Soshanguve have been enlisted by the Durban station taxi operators with a view to eliminating us and we will not take this lying down," said Sithole.

"The world should now know the double standards of the Durban City Police, who had the temerity to accompany people who had come to attack our drivers in a bid to close down that (Warwick Avenue) taxi rank," he said .

The Sithole and the Gcaba factions have been at each other's throats for the past four years and in the ongoing conflict, scores of taxi operators, drivers and innocent people have been killed after being caught in the crossfire.

Police spokesman Captain Vishnu Naidoo said police were not aware that Soshanguve taxi operators had moved to KwaZulu-Natal.

"The issue of rank permits for long-distance taxis is usually handled by the local councils," said Naidoo. "We would not be in a position to know which operator is from which rank, as it is the Durban City Police who monitor whether council by-laws and regulations are adhered to with regard to taxi rank permits."

Sithole also accused members of the Durban City Police of conniving with Saturday's attackers as they were present and had done nothing when innocent people were shot at.

Durban City Police spokesman Chief Inspector Alex Wright denied that they were in cahoots with the attackers. He said the police had gone there to close down an "illegal rank". He would not comment on allegations that they did nothing to stop the wild shootout.

Meanwhile, both the offices of Gauteng transport and public works MEC Mr Khabisi Mosunkutu and that the Acting Judge Dumisa Ntsebeza, who are facilitating negotiations in the Gauteng and North West taxi violence, are unaware of any taxi operators from Soshanguve having relocated to other provinces.

Mr Sam Sekhu, who is responsible for communication and the administration of the process, said they had not received any complaints.

Members of the newly created police elite unit, the Scorpions, are set to move into KwaZulu-Natal to probe the latest incident.

Taxi calls on state to help stop industry feud

Sowetan 26/10/99

(332)

By Mokgadi Pela

LEKANG ka Thata Taxi Association has called for government intervention to defuse tension with its business rival, Imizamoyethu Taxi Association in Orange Farm, south of Johannesburg.

The association has accused Imizamoyethu of flouting the peace agreement signed on September 16 by "assaulting our drivers and blocking our routes".

Mr Isaac Hlaole was allegedly assaulted while another driver, Mr Mxolisi Luhabe, has gone missing.

The organisation has warned of unspecified reprisals should the Government not act soon.

The agreement between Lekang ka Thata and Imizamoyethu states, among other things, that a task team to monitor and oversee the process will be set up consisting of two members from each body and an official from Gauteng transport department.

Responding to the accusations, Imizamoyethu spokesman Mr Joseph Shai said: "Allegations against us are devoid of any shred of truth. These are attempts by our detractors to blackmail us. We are committed to the peace process and the Gauteng transport department can attest to this."

Chairman of the conflict resolution committee in the area Mr Jabulani Mtshali said he had referred Lekang ka Thata to the registrar's office for determination of their route. Once the registrar has done the necessary route verification, the foundation for proper negotiations will be in place, Mtshali added.

Taxi industry wants to be model of peace and stability

By MOIPONE KOMANE

THE recently-formed organisation that officially represents the minibus taxi industry, the SA Taxi Council (Sataco), is reaching out to the business community to raise funds.

The aim is to reposition the taxi industry as a key player in the SA economy, as well as to become a role model for peace and stability.

Sataco was launched in 1998 and has received official recognition from government as the only legitimate taxi body.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed between government and Sataco commits both parties towards implementing a programme of empowerment and refinement in the industry.

Government has undertaken to pave the way to replace the industry's ageing fleet and to oversee its absorption into South Africa's formal economy.

This will be done in conjunction with the departments of transport, trade and industry, minerals and energy, and finance.

Union Alliance Holdings (UAH), which represents more than2,5 million trade union members, will be part of this venture.

According to Sataco chairman Joe Mabaso, the initiative is one of the most powerful to take place in South Africa.

"We are committed to building a safe and stable environment for us all. We identified the taxi industry as a key player in this process because of its vast size and influence, and are busy turning the tables to profit us all."

Sataco has established Ubunye Advertising as its business arm.

According to Basil Nagel, chairman of Sataco Ltd, the taxi industry generates more than R12 billion a year and has the potential to be the greatest example of black economic empowerment.

Nagel said that through Ubunye Advertising, the official advertising, marketing and communications arm of the taxi industry, Sataco was opening its doors to mass marketers who wanted to be associated with it as founding partners. They would enjoy founding partner status.

He said Ubunye would require partners in the fields of property, technology, insurance, fuel and oil, vehicles, spares, security, tyres, financial services and other related taxi industry ventures.

Nagel explained that the founding partners would enjoy numerous benefits and a market-related range of rights. These would include an association with Sataco's brand exposure, and participation in promotional and media campaigns on taxis and at ranks.

Rietgat becomes a ghost taxi rank

Minibus taxi operators in areas north of Pretoria may be forced by a government ban to wake up to the futility of their violent ways, writes **Phalane Motale**

(332) CP 31/10/99

IT IS 5 am at the Rietgat taxi rank near Mabopane station, north of Pretoria.

The bus terminus is a beehive of activity, with some people literally jumping from moving buses towards the stairs of the railway station.

In the background you can hear the echo of the station announcer saying there will be a train to Pretoria every 20 minutes for the next two hours.

As at most busy stations, the platforms are thronged with workers. Hawkers are displaying their wares, but, oddly, no taxi operators are announcing their destinations.

The taxi rank is deserted.

Suddenly the deafening sound of the roaring buses is silenced by what sounds like gunfire.

People of all age groups dive for cover; those who are fit run for dear life.

But as the frightening sound is repeated, relieved commuters discover that it was just a car's engine backfiring.

The reaction of the commuters is not unusual in an area where the battle between feuding taxi groups has claimed the lives of nearly 250 commuters, drivers and taxi bosses in just two years.

Now, after weeks of bloody feuding between rival taxi groups – the SA Long and Local Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation and the Federated Long and Local Distance Taxi Association – turned the area into a hotbed of suspicion and betrayal, the State has intervened.

With the cycle of violence threatening to spill over to surrounding areas, the Gauteng and North West governments banned all taxi operations in the Soshanguve, Mabopane, Ga-Rankuwa and surrounding areas for at least two months – ending in December.

The authorities found the crackdown necessary after all peace initiatives ended in failure, and renewed violence claimed more than 10 lives within a week.

Taxi ranks in the areas were cordoned off.

However, on the Mabopane side of the station, next to the Central City Shopping Centre, things are the same day and night.

Car and bakkie owners, some in unroadworthy vehicles, have openly taken over the taxi operations from the local rank.

Rumours abound that these operators are actually sanctioned by corrupt traffic and police officers who have an interest in the industry.

Meanwhile, security measures have been stepped up at taxi association offices.

Some taxi bosses now wear bullet-proof vests and are followed around by heavily-armed bodyguards, because violence has become a way of life for several executive members of the associations.

One elderly taxi owner, himself facing murder and attempted murder charges from last year's incidents, described how difficult it was to escape the spiral of violence.

"It is a living hell. I got involved by trying to defend myself from a rival association which wanted to kill me. Now they have hired hit men to kill me and possibly my family.

"I just want to get out. But with the spectre of death hanging over me, I know it will be impossible.

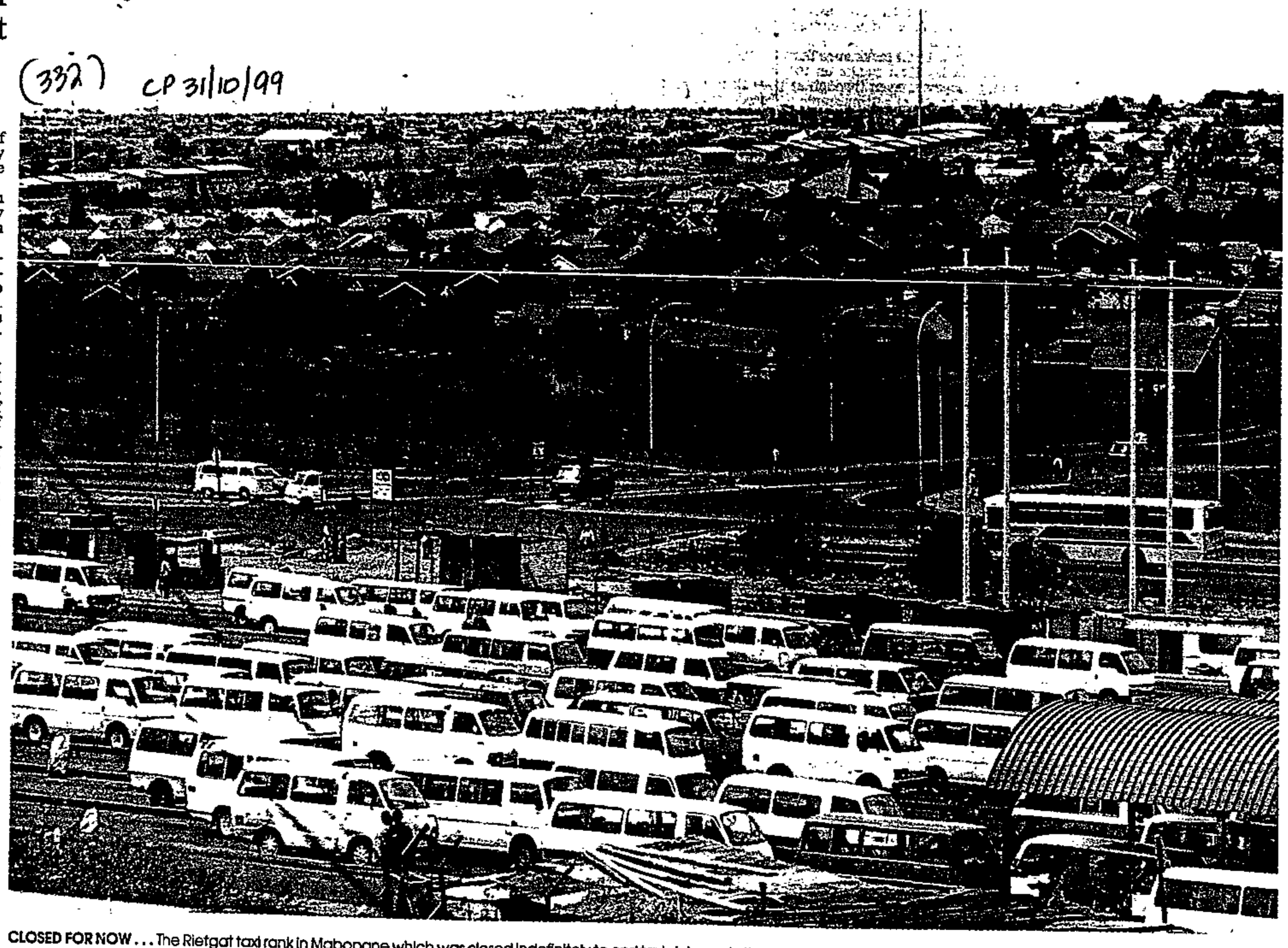
"Maybe the only answer will be to take them out before they get me because at the moment I'm a walking dead man," he said.

For Sarah Mbonani (not her real name), misfortune in the industry has apparently become a way of life. Eight months after losing her taxi-owner husband in the violence, her eldest son was mowed down by three AK47-wielding "war machines" in their driveway.

He lay slumped in the driver's seat, much like his father did when the killers got him.

Mbonani then sold six vehicles from their fleet of seven; the remaining one now operates as a school bus.

Mbonani has been forced to go into hiding after receiving death threats from the "brutes" who want her to withdraw the minibus.



CLOSED FOR NOW ... The Rietgat taxi rank in Mabopane which was closed indefinitely to end taxi violence in the area

Picture: Sipho Maluka

doned off by the police and army, and operators ignoring the ban were fined R1 000 and had their vehicles impounded.

It seems no one could stop the violence because the assassins clearly did not fear anybody, not even the police.

On more than one occasion, security personnel at the Rietgat police station – about 100 m from the rank – had to run for cover when members of the taxi organisations allegedly started shooting at the station.

Rietgat station commissioner Senior Superintendent Jerry Malesela confirms that, before the clampdown, his staff came "under regular fire" from the feuding taxi groups.

Despite police being accused of complicity in the taxi war, they made significant breakthroughs in recent weeks with the arrest of several suspects by the elite Scorpions special investigations unit.

But while the authorities' iron fist has turned the lives of thousands of residents upside down, life seems to be continuing for most.

In a desperate bid to get to work on time, residents resort to alternative transport such as the extra buses and trains provided, or to begging for lifts from strangers.

In keeping with the expression that one man's death is another's bread, private vehicle owners have taken advantage of the situation by running lift clubs to and from work.

"With the ever-increasing cost of running my vehicle due to petrol hikes and other economic indicators, the extra money I make daily could not have come at a better time," said a motorist who did not want to be identified.

"I know it is illegal and that my vehicle can be impounded by the authorities, but I think God always protects and helps the man who is trying to help himself."

Despite random roadblocks by the authorities, it seems most unemployed motorists have taken advantage of the situation by operating illegally in their private vehicles and bakkies.

The situation is under control during the day, but as soon as the traffic officials move out of the township, the traditional hooting begins.

To the advantage of commuters, the new operators seem to be more friendly and patient, and operate until late at night.

"Considering that taxis are not operating, except as school buses, I fear that my only son could become the next victim of his father and brother's assassins," she said.

Mbonani now hates sunset – that was when the killers of her husband and son struck.

"I sometimes wish for the sun not to set because I know once it gets dark, terror can strike.

"But considering that my only son is still in the taxi business, I'm planning to sell my only means of income, for his life's sake," said the sobbing widow.

Mbonani is not the only person whose business has been affected by the taxi ban.

Car washers, filling stations, second-hand tyre outlets, chicken outlets, vendors, hair salons, doctors, the local motel, shebeens, the local cops and traffic officials, and even the petty crooks have either suffered or benefitted.

"Considering that my only son is still in the taxi business, I'm planning to sell my only means of income, for his life's sake"

Fearful residents do not want to speak to journalists and none will give their names, apparently because of the violent nature of the taxi industry.

Unemployed youngsters who have invested their life's savings in the car-wash businesses that have sprung up on nearly every busy street corner, have been most affected because their target market was the taxi industry.

One group of youths invested thousands of rands in a below-ground car-wash facility in Block F, next to the Falala shopping centre, but the project is virtually dead because of the absence of business.

A welder across the road in Zone G complains that he has no business.

He said taxi operators used to keep their operating costs down by repairing their vehicles' exhaust systems instead of replacing them.

But with the ban on taxi operations, his business has dried up.

"While I used to earn up to R400 on a good day, the figure has dropped to an average of R50," he said.

He said unless the situation returned to normal, he would have to close shop because he would be unable to pay even for the gas bottles he has hired.

A filling station manager said that while he supported the government's move to curb the ongoing violence in the taxi industry, his petrol sales had dropped to such an extent that he had to lay off two of his petrol attendants.

"However, I have promised to reinstate them as soon as the taxi operations return.

"It is most unfortunate that business decisions have to be taken at times," he said.

In Zone H of the township we came across a secondhand tyre dealer who enjoyed good support from local taxi operators, most of whom could only "afford" retreads or re-grooved tyres.

"My business depends 90 percent on the taxi industry and 10 percent on the general public.

"You can just imagine how one is supposed to survive with the same staff complement of six family men but with only five percent of your usual revenue," he said.

However, the businessman said he supported the taxi ban.

He said peace in the industry was expected to bring prosperity to all stakeholders, including service providers like him.

The local fried chicken franchise outlets at Transfer taxi rank and at Mashamaite rank are no longer thriving businesses since the introduction of the smart-card in the taxi industry and the banning of taxi operations.

Workers at these outlets told City Press that taxi drivers were among their best customers.

"I personally think that because they were dealing with cash and were always on the road, they found the fried chickens very convenient," said one cashier.

She added that the drivers were always with girlfriends, usually schoolgirls, during the day. As a result, "stopping over for a few pieces of chicken and a cold drink was the order of the day".

Another cashier at a different outlet said that without the taxi drivers, some staff faced retrenchment.

She said the taxi drivers not only bought food for their girlfriends and wives, but also brought in many customers from different parts of the sprawling township.

The local motel, however, has a different story to tell. They were busier than before, said an assistant.

"I'm under the impression that the drivers who have been saving money are only now getting a chance to relax with their girlfriends.

"Business is really up, day and night," she said.

Despite these ups and downs, it seems that communities north of Pretoria have moved closer to playing an active role in ending the taxi violence. Such a move could help to knock some sense into the heads of the taxi bosses.

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Transport industry shake up

By Joshua Raboroko (332)

THE Gauteng transport authority has vowed to continue using its iron fist to stem the ongoing violence that has claimed the lives of hundreds of people on the roads and during taxi clashes.

The provincial government has said that the clampdown will include bus companies who allow the transport industry to become the seed-bed of strife.

Gauteng MEC for transport Khabisi Mosunkutu, who used the police and army to close taxi operations in Soshanguve, Pretoria, recently, told a news conference yesterday that his department will be relentless in bringing order to the transport industry. Speaking after the launch of a new Metropolitan bus service – between the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, the Lekoa Vaal Council and Wits Metro Rail – Mosunkutu said there was an urgent need to curb the carnage on the country's roads.

"The road accident toll costs the country more than R12 billion a year and this state of affairs is intolerable. Defective buses and taxis that overloaded commuters – in townships as well as national roads – will be impounded," he said. The measures included de-registering the vehicles and prosecuting the owners. He added that there was no special date when these steps would be implemented, but it was going to be soon.

Mayor of Johannesburg Isaac Mogase said the inauguration of the bus services would herald a new era in the transport industry for the council, which was trying to revamp its entire bus service.

The new service will link up transport between areas of the Vaal Triangle and the city through buses as well as by rail.

Mogase said the changes came into effect in preparation for the Igoli 2002 corporatisation plans – designed to save the council from financial crisis – and human resource changes in the bus service.

Taxi drivers locked up in big blitz

ARG 3/11/99

(332)

Province gets tough

MURRAY WILLIAMS
STAFF REPORTER

Fifty-six Mitchell's Plain taxi drivers spent last night behind bars after the provincial traffic department's oft-claimed "zero tolerance" policy was finally given teeth.

The blitz on alleged illegal operators in the past two days followed Monday's warning of an imminent crackdown by provincial transport minister Piet Meyer.

The tough stance was taken to end rumours that the deadline for illegal operators to register would be extended.

Law enforcement agencies acted immediately and by last night 56 allegedly illegal taxis had been impounded. The taxis are under guard at Manenberg police station and the drivers were this morning still locked up in Mitchell's Plain police cells.

They were expected to appear in court today on charges of illegal transportation. Many drivers were found to have warrants out for their arrest over unpaid traffic fines, for which they will now also be charged.

The head of Cape Town traffic's taxi unit, Alex Lawrence, said one driver had nine double warrants against his name – meaning he had failed to appear in court nine times after not paying traffic fines.

The taxi owners later demanded their vehicles back but the authorities are refusing to release them at least until the drivers have appeared in court.

Mr Meyer said illegal operators had been given two years to legalise their position and had been "shown a measure of leniency" by being allowed to operate until last December's deadline. This deadline was first extended to January and later to April.

The deadline had been set to "prevent the further flooding of taxi routes by illegal operators", as had happened in other provinces.

"I am not about to open the floodgates of permits on to already-saturated routes," he

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56 taxi drivers arrested in big city crackdown

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warned. Already, he said, routes were flooded by taxis being driven "at reckless speeds in order to maximise profits from a shrinking market".

The drivers were arrested at roadblocks throughout Mitchell's Plain, manned by 20 Cape Town traffic taxi unit officers and 20 SA police. A total of 45 was arrested on Monday and 11 yesterday.

Mr Lawrence said the drivers did not belong to recognised taxi organisations. But a spokesman for the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association, Steven Williams, disputed this, saying that "all the taxi organisations have been affected".

Provincial African National Congress chief whip Leonard Ramatlakane said the drivers should not be treated as criminals.

"They are not outlaws," he said. "They must be treated as people who applied for licences, but failed to meet the criteria.

"The impounding of vehicles only increases unemployment and could turn drivers into beggars or criminals.

"He (Mr Meyer) has got all the powers to legalise the illegal operators. The solution is to amend the criteria for licences and then to license them," Mr Ramatlakane said.

Taxi smart card machines dumped

(332)

Sowetan 3/11/99

By Gershwin Chuenyane

ABOUT 100 members of the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation (Sallditbo) marched to Rietgat police sation in Soshanguve, Pretoria, yesterday and handed over 15 smart card machines and a pile of taxi stickers.

Rietgat police spokesman Inspector Piletji Sebola said the marchers, who included taxi owners and drivers, presented a memorandum which was accepted by Captain Billy Mongwe.

Sebola said the group converged on the deserted Rietgat taxi rank in their minibuses at about 9am before marching to the police station.

The disbanding of Sallditbo and of the rival Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association and the formation of a single association in Soshanguve within the next 14 days, were among the issues mentioned in the memorandum, Sebola said.

Other issues referred to were the closure of the offices of the local branch of Sallditbo, the Soshanguve Taxi Owners Association, the suspension of the collection of money from members and the removal of all long distance taxis from the township.

They also indicated their desire to withdraw from "the so-called mother body", he said.

Gauteng Department of Transport principal inspector Mr Jeffrey Kgoroeadira told *Sowetan* that the transport department was very concerned about the group's action, because it could result in a splinter group that would create additional problems in the area.

Sallditbo has distanced itself from the marchers and blamed a "mysterious" government official for organising the march.

Taxi operators feel pinch of ban

sowetan 4/11/99 (332)

By Mokgadi Pela

TAXI operators on the Pretoria-Soshanguve route have appealed to the Gauteng government to allow them to ferry commuters again as they are beginning to feel the pinch.

"Our vehicles are about to be repossessed as we are running behind in installments. We have not paid accounts and our families are complaining," said taxi operator Mr Thomas Ngwenya yesterday.

Ngwenya said it was the general feeling among operators that the government could continue investigating the causes of violence in the industry while taxis operated.

"It's unfair for drivers and commuters to suffer because of a few rotten apples in the industry. If I'm one of the culprits implicated in the violence, then I should be arrested. But this should not jeopardise the rest of the business."

'Taxis should accept that competition is healthy'

Taxi driver Mr Abel Mokoena urged the government to speed up unity talks between South African Long and Local Taxi and Bus Organisation and Federated Long Distance Taxi Association.

Mokoena said unless that was done, "we will bleed to death".

A taxi owner who spoke on condition of anonymity said transport MEC Mr Khabisi Mosonkutu should urge taxi owners in Soshanguve to declare the number of vehicles they have at the rank.

"I know there are many vehicles that operate illegally. I also know of people who are breaking the ban by redirecting their vehicles to the Pretoria-Johannesburg route and Prinsloo-Marapyane route. Many own the popular Iveco 35-seater busses," he said.

Joining taxi drivers and owners in the call were a number of hawkers and traders, who said their business had already suffered enough.

Ms Lina Msiza, a fruit seller at the Bloed Street taxi rank for seven years, said business "has slowed down since the ban came into effect a month ago. Could the government please lift the ban?"

"At the same time, taxi associations should learn to accept that competition is healthy and we don't need these costly fights," she said.

Empangeni tense after taxi war

STAFF REPORTERS AND SAPA (332) ARG 5/11/99

Durban – Empangeni resembled a ghost town early today when it woke to an uneasy calm in the wake of a gun battle in the town centre over taxi routes, which left nine taxi association members dead and at least 16 injured.

Thirteen suspects had been arrested and 24 firearms confiscated, police said today.

Taxi ranks in the town were deserted early today, following provincial transport minister S'bu Ndebele's blanket ban on taxi operations from the sprawling township of Esikhawini to the Zululand town of Empangeni.

But chaos ensued in the outer residential areas when thousands of commuters looking for transport were left stranded.

Security forces today blocked the Esikhawini exit points, stopping taxis which were trying to defy the ban on taxi operations.

Commuters battled early today as they tried to get transport to work and it was feared that the ban on taxis could also affect thousands of students who are writing their final matric exams.

The situation in Esikhaweni was today described as "tense but under control".

"So far the situation is under control because of the heavy police presence. What could cause problems is the lack of transport because other forms of transport are battling to cope with the number of stranded passengers," co-chairman of the KwaZulu-Natal Peace Committee and provincial MPP Blessed Gwala said today.

He said top priority now was to seek a solution to the conflict.

In central Empangeni there was little evidence of the chaos that erupted yesterday during the 30-minute battle other than spray-painted circles on the tarmac where guns and spent cartridges had been found.

The many minibus taxis which had been left abandoned after the shooting had all been removed by their owners.

Thousands of local residents converged on the scene of the attack late yesterday, with men, women and children staring in horror at the bodies on the tarmac and in a bullet-riddled vehicle while police conducted their investigations.

Surprisingly, there was no police presence in the centre of Empangeni today, although large numbers of police were reported to be deployed in key areas in case of a flare-up of the violence.

Not a single taxi could be seen on Empangeni's roads and commuters were making use of the Richards Bay-based public transport company Ikhwezi Transport which had been geared to cater for the extra demand today. The effect on industry in Richards Bay was not immediately known but an Ikhwezi spokesman said the company was "able to cope".

Principal provincial traffic inspector in Empangeni John Ngema said there was "just not a single taxi" operating, describing the situation as tense.

Taxi massacre in state of emergency

(332)

DURBAN: "Some people were hanging from trees, others were dead over their steering wheels ... It was terrible," KwZulu-Natal transport MEC S'Bu Ndebele said yesterday describing the massacre at the Empangeni taxi rank yesterday in which 11 people were killed and over 24 injured.

"We have decided to stop all taxi operations in the area tomorrow as a mourning. No business venture can justify the killing. Among the dead was a councillor and someone who was to get married on Saturday ... Many among the dead were innocent. Their only crime was to be at the taxi rank," he said.

He added that there was a large number of AK-47 rifles, pistols, Uzis, R1 rifles, shotguns and other assorted weapons used in the attack. Captain Anthony Singer said police had taken 17 people in for questioning. – Sapa

CT 5/11/99

34 held in blitz on taxis

ARG 5/11/99 (332)

MURRAY WILLIAMS
STAFF REPORTER

Cape Town's traffic authorities have continued their blitz on illegal taxi drivers, putting another 34 behind bars yesterday.

This brings the total number of arrests to 90 drivers in just three days.

Cape Town traffic taxi unit head Alex Lawrence said 42 drivers, who spent Tuesday night in police cells, had paid admission of guilt fines of R1 500 each and had been released.

Their taxis, which had been impounded at Manenberg police station, were released. If they are caught for a second and then third time, the traffic department will apply for their taxis to be forfeited to the state.

But proceedings against the 48 remaining drivers are going ahead. Court dates had been set for next week.

An estimated half of Cape Town's taxis remain illegal. Many of these applied to be registered before the December, February and April deadlines, but were turned down.

Western Cape ANC chief whip Leonard Ramatlakane warned that charging drivers was not a long term solution – but provincial transport minister Piet Meyer is adamant not to allow already clogged taxi routes to be flooded further.

Sowetan 8/11/99

Plans to set up rules for motorists

By Waghied Misbach
Political Correspondent

THE Government is stepping up plans to ensure the nation's roads are safer by introducing a number of stringent regulations for motorists, in particular the minibus taxi industry.

Transport Minister Dullah Omar confirmed in Parliament recently that the newly formed Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) – the national coordinating road safety enforcement body – will soon start its operations nationwide.

The new body, formed in April this year, will enable the Government to coordinate the fragmented traffic enforcement authorities nationwide. There are about 800 separate provincial and local traffic authorities with largely uncoordinated systems, rules and operational norms.

For instance, there is not a consistent traffic enforcement approach to the more than 24 000 illegal taxi operators in the country.

"Because provinces administer the relevant legislation, there is no national standard in relation to fines and penalties for illegal operation," said Omar.

However, some provinces had put in place regulatory mechanisms to impose fines varying from R1 000 to R10 000 coupled with the impoundment of vehicles undertaking illegal operations, Omar said.

"The establishment of the RTMC is specifically intended to redefine and strengthen the structures and mechanism for cooperation between the national, provincial and local spheres of government in support of their responsibilities for road traffic strategic planning, regulation, facilitation and enforcement."

Omar said the RTMC would also create the conditions that will allow the private sector to get involved in providing road traffic services.

"The RTMC will in effect create a structure in which a pooling of resources nationwide can take place under a single umbrella and will bring all traffic management and quality assurance functions under one roof."

This will apply to functions including vehicle and driver testing and licensing, standards monitoring, centralised statistical research and professional career development of traffic officers.

It will allow the authorities to carry forward the focussed and targeted enforcement efforts begun by Arrive Alive. Omar estimated that an extra 8 000 officers would be needed for the enhanced traffic enforcement.

The ministry was also planning to close down all vehicle testing stations that are not properly registered.

Omar commends swift action on taxi violence

BD 9/11/99 (332)

Nicola Jenvey

DURBAN — National and provincial transport ministers yesterday used the opening of the new southern gateway intersection in Durban as an opportunity to condemn taxi violence.

Minister of Transport Dullah Omar congratulated KwaZulu-Natal transport MEC S'bu Ndebele for his swift action in the wake of last week's violence in Empangeni, which left at least 11 dead and another 13 injured.

Ndebele banned taxi operations from the township of Esikhawini to Empangeni immediately after the 15-minute gun battle, while police arrested 13 people on Friday.

Omar said the national government supported "all steps taken" to deal with the violence. Omar acknowledged that most taxi operators were interested in working together to change the conflict-ridden industry.

Ndebele said that before Thursday's massacre, the region was one of SA's most stable. The episode was "a terrible blow to all of us".

"No stone will remain unturned to ensure that the perpetrators who committed this dastardly act are caught, brought to justice and sentenced," he said.

KwaZulu-Natal premier Lionel Mtshali and Jeffares & Green MD Dave Johnston joined Ndebele and Omar in offering condolences to the families of those killed.

Wanted: half city's taximen

ART 10/11/99 (332)

Thousands face arrest

MURRAY WILLIAMS
STAFF REPORTER

Almost half the drivers of Cape Town's estimated 6 000 minibus taxis have warrants out for their arrest.

This means they could be arrested on the spot and hauled off to the nearest police station if stopped on Cape Town's roads for fresh traffic violations.

The figure is for the City of Cape Town area alone, which stretches between Camps Bay, Claremont, Mitchell's Plain and Goodwood.

Cape Town minibus taxi drivers face a total of 5 800 outstanding warrants of arrest and in the past 10 days alone, 145 have been arrested.

The total number of drivers cannot be accurately ascertained, but is believed to be slightly higher than the number of taxis.

Alex Lawrence, head of Cape Town Traffic's taxi unit, told the Cape Argus that the fines had been issued for the full spectrum of traffic offences, but particularly for speeding, ignoring red robots, overtaking on the shoulder and overloading.

Some individual drivers had accumulated up to 30 warrants of arrest for unpaid fines and had ended up paying up to R4 000 once they were eventually tracked down.

Working closely with police, traffic authorities began a series of roadblocks in Mitchell's Plain last week.

More than 90 "illegal" drivers were arrested and paid R35 000 in admission-of-guilt fines at Mitchell's Plain Magistrate's Court for illegal transportation.

In addition, 22 drivers, against whom warrants were outstanding, were arrested at their homes during a night operation. They had to settle R22 050 in outstanding fines before they could be released.

These drivers are out on bail and are still to appear in court.

This week, in Mowbray, 33 drivers were

To page 3

Half city's taximen face instant arrest

From page 1 (332) ART 10/11/99

arrested, five of whom paid a total of R7 000 in outstanding fines ranging between R200 and R1 160.

Mr Lawrence said more and more drivers were being fined thanks to the city's traffic video unit, which monitored "hotspots" during peak hours.

Less than two years ago, before the taxi unit was established, traffic authorities were faced with virtual anarchy, with 15 000 outstanding warrants of arrest for taxi drivers.

Through a process of negotiations with taxi associations and subsequent registration of drivers, this figure has slowly been chipped away.

"We appeal for commuters to be patient, and for employers to be understanding if their employees arrive late for work because taxi drivers have been arrested," Mr Lawrence said.

As part of the traffic department's tough new stance, offending drivers (illegal drivers or those with outstanding warrants for their arrest) are taken straight to the nearest police station and charged.

"But as soon as we have an enforcement drive in an area, our office is flooded by taxi drivers wanting to find out if there are warrants out for their arrest," Mr Lawrence said.

Traffic authorities were continuing their clampdown on taxis this morning.

But African National Congress transport spokesman Leonard Ramatlakane said today that "without condemning the traffic authorities' work", the system of payment for fines was deficient.

Instead of traffic police stopping taxi drivers on the roadside, which caused delays and traffic disruptions, taxi owners should be compelled to settle outstanding fines for their vehicles before they could renew their annual licences.

Secondly, Mr Ramatlakane said, traffic offences should be decriminalised and new methods for easy payment established as had been done with electricity bills.

"Make the environment for payment for all motorists accessible, instead of ending up having to set up roadblocks," he said.

Mr Ramatlakane said a summit would be convened next week during which taxis, traffic and safety matters would be thrashed out by all involved in the local industry.

Bigger and safer taxis on SA roads 'by October next year'

(332) ANC 11/11/99

PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

The new bigger and safer midi-buses that will be used to run South Africa's taxi industry are expected to be on the country's streets from October next year.

This was revealed during a briefing to the parliamentary committee on transport yesterday by the departments of transport and trade and industry on progress in Government's project of recapitalising the minibus taxi industry.

The new vehicles, which would come in 18- and 35-seaters, were aimed at safer and more reliable transportation.

Department of Transport programming general manager Karin Pearce said the age of the current fleet was a problem. Tenders had been put out for assembly of the new vehicles. The winning bidder would be announced at the beginning of April.

To qualify for the new scheme, operators would first have to agree to remove their old minibus taxis from the roads. Among the safety features of the new taxis would be a lower centre of gravity to ensure vehicles did not easily overturn, Ms Pearce said.

Project proposals submitted by 40 groups

Taxi industry facelift gains momentum

(372) ET (MR) 15/11/99

LYNDA LOXTON
PARLIAMENTARY CORRESPONDENT

Cape Town – The long-awaited R3 billion recapitalisation of the nation's ageing minibus taxi fleet was gaining momentum, the national assembly's transport committee heard last week.

The committee was told that 40 manufacturers, including 16 international groups, had expressed interest in submitting project proposals

Karen Pearce, the general manager in charge of the department of transport's implementation division, told the committee that most of the international groups had "no notion" of the often fractious history of the industry but appeared impressed by plans in hand to regulate and update it.

Interested parties had until November 29 to submit their proposals to supply the new 18 and 35 seater passenger vehicles to replace the existing fleet of 126 000 14 seater vehicles, most of which were nearing the end of their useful lives.

A shortlist would be published on January 7 after which a second round of evaluations would be held, including an exhibition of the proposed vehicles so that interested parties could view them. The winners would be announced in April, and the first new vehicles would be on the road in October next year.

Key to the project would be a strong empowerment element which involved the establishment of taxi co-operatives to liaise with financiers, distribute the new vehicles and provide the facilities for a compulsory maintenance programme. The co-operatives would be set up after extensive consultations with local taxi associations.

In a break with tradition, the vehicles would be fuelled by diesel, which was cheaper than petrol and which would also be distributed by the co-operatives.

The aim was to ensure that the new vehicles were manufactured locally and tapped into South Africa's highly diversified components manufacturing sector.

Suren Singh, the department of trade and industry's director of special projects, said the switch to diesel was not only motivated by the fact that this would reduce transport costs. The department hoped it would act as a spur for the development of South Africa as one of the world's leading manufacturers of catalytic converters to cut back on noxious exhaust emissions. A large foreign investment had already been lined up and was due to be announced at the end of the month.

Pearce said that to ensure that all the old vehicles were pulled off the road, the department of transport had devised a plan to encourage existing taxi owners to give up their old vehicles.

They would be able to trade in the vehicles and receive a "scrapping allowance" of between 20 and 45 percent of the price of a new vehicle, depending on the age and condition of their old vehicle.

The vehicles would have to be registered and undergo regular maintenance check-ups for four years before they could be sold.

Singh said the vehicles would contain unique features such as an "overloading chip" that would stall the engine if the taxi was overloaded and "smart-card" payment systems, possibly linked to other national payments systems so that consumer would only have to carry one card.

Operators who had licences but no vehicles could "exit" the industry by handing in their licences. They would receive an allowance aimed at compensating them for the loss of sub-leasing their permits for a period of four years.

New permits would only be obtained under new,stricter rules devised under the department of transport's Be Legal campaign to ensure that all taxi operators were registered and that their vehicles were properly maintained.

Taxi violence blamed on cops who take sides

Sowetan 16/11/99

(332)

By Mbongeni Hlophe

KWAZULU-NATAL transport MEC Mr S'busiso Ndebele yesterday accused policemen who had a share in the taxi industry of taking sides in the war plaguing the industry.

He said this when he announced the lifting of the ban on the two remaining associations that had been identified as being responsible for the violence which left 11 people dead and 15 injured two weeks ago.

He said his assessment of the violence in the taxi industry was that police officers who had a share in the industry were taking sides.

"They (the police) are not supposed to have taxis. If they do have them, they must declare them," said Ndebele.

Initially Ndebele had banned operations of all 18 taxi associations when the fighting broke out at the Empangeni taxi rank.

He added that his department's prime duty was to protect passengers and ensure their safety.

"The lifting of the ban on taxi operations at Empangeni is not without tension which is why we have beefed up security in the area," said Ndebele.

"We have secured an undertaking from the Esikhawini Taxi Association that they will not resume the war as they are not the legitimate permit holders," he said.

"There is no way we can allow the death of these people to go uninvestigated."

He said the provincial cabinet had also decided that a judicial commission should be instituted to probe taxi violence not only in KwaZulu-Natal but nationwide.

"We want to ensure that, whatever kind on information the investigators pick up, we act on it urgently and swiftly," said Ndebele.

Meanwhile, Sapa reports that taxi ranks in Soshanguve, northwest of Pretoria, will remain closed, according to a judge investigating taxi violence in the area.

Judge Dumisa Ntsebeza said yesterday that although some progress was made at the weekend in Soshanguve, the two main taxi associations remained at loggerheads.

"Taxi ranks will remain closed for the time being," said Ntsebeza.

Community members and stakeholders made submissions to the Gauteng department of transport in October and expressed their grievances with rival taxi associations.

Both taxi associations also made submissions and Ntsebeza said the violence would only end if they reached consensus. He called on the Government to ensure the safety of commuters.

100KM/H FOR MINIBUSES

New speed limit for taxis

CT 17/11/99 (332)

PHINDILE NGUBANE
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

IN a bid to end road carnage, the government is to impose a special speed limit on minibus taxis.

Transport Minister Dullah Omar yesterday told the national assembly committee on transport that the government — after consultations with the South African Taxi Council (Sataco) and other groups — had taken a decision to impose a 100km/h speed limit on minibus taxis.

The decision comes soon after the department brought down the bus speed limit to 100km/h following the recent spate of bus accidents in various parts of the country.

Speeding, poor vehicle maintenance and driver negligence were among the factors known to contribute to minibus taxi fatalities, which escalated during peak holiday seasons.

Omar said the department was waiting for four of the nine provinces to concur in writing before promulgating, which is expected by next week.

Omar said the government's road safety campaign, Arrive Alive, would be "vigorously strengthened" during the festive season.



VISIBLE: Transport Minister Dullah Omar takes a hard line on safety.

"Our priorities for the next two months will be to ensure a sharp drop in road accidents."

In 1998, there were over 7 000 recorded fatal crashes on the country's roads, costing the government about R2m.

According to the department of transport's statistics, the impact of Arrive Alive saw road fatalities dropping from 9 691 in 1997 to 9 068 in 1998, a "saving of 623 lives".

Manager for Road Traffic Operation Policy and Information Management Lisa Mangcu said detailed data, gathered during the campaign, has helped provinces identify high fatality areas and strengthen enforcement.

Last week a truck driver was fined R8 000 and his licence suspended for six months for speeding at over 130km/h near Beaufort West.

In the Eastern Cape, traffic officers have been deployed to deal with faulty vehicles and last week pulled off 19 buses, including a luxury tour bus, from a main Umtata road.

"We are confident that law enforcement will be seen on the country's roads. Our resources are limited, but we will do our best to make sure we are visible," Mangcu said.

Responding to a recent argument that road accidents could be avoided if government filled the 8 000 vacancies for traffic officers, he said increasing the number of officers would not necessarily solve the problem.

While the government recognised that there has been an increasing backlog in the numbers of officers on the country's roads, "there are both provincial and local budgetary issues to be addressed in conjunction with the re-organisation of traffic management functions nationwide".

Mangcu pointed out that past failures to adequately train traffic officers meant a significant number were incapable of reporting crash incidents and preparing acceptable evidence.

Only 40% of the officers were found to be available for enforcement duties, with the rest doing other work, such as administration. Mangcu said the department was working at solving this problem and also considering extending the current training period for officers from five months to one year.

Taxi bosses back speed limit

ARG 17/11/99 (332)

PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

The South African Taxi Council (Sataco) has welcomed the government's decision to put a special 100km/h speed limit on minibus taxis on national roads.

Speaking after yesterday's announcement by Transport Minister Dullah Omar of the speed limit, Sataco president Joe Mabaso said by reducing speed, taxi drivers would be saving lives of the thousands of innocent people who rely on taxis for everyday travel.

Mr Omar told the transport portfolio committee that the decision was part of the government's ongoing efforts to fight the carnage which, though decreasing, still remained high.

The decision was taken after consultations with stakeholders including Sataco, he said.

The minister said the department was waiting for four of the nine provinces to concur in writing before promulgating the new regulation, as was required by law.

Promulgation was expected be done by next week, he said.

About 65% of South Africans used minibus taxis.

Taxi owners confiscate liquor at rank

By Noxolo Nxusani

SOWETO taxi owners went on the rampage at the Baragwanath taxi rank yesterday, confiscating liquor from some of their drivers in a bid to support the Government's "Arrive Alive" road safety campaign.

Taxi owner Mr Solly Sefako, who spoke on behalf of the owners, said they had taken the step after they realised that some of their drivers drank while on duty.

"We don't want drivers to consume alcohol before or while driving passengers because an accident could easily happen," Sefako said.

He said owners were not fighting with the hawkers who sold the liquor, but instead were trying to curb the escalating accidents involving minibus taxis and their drivers.

"We have no problem with people (hawkers) selling their alcohol away from the taxi rank. We just don't want them to sell to drivers or even passengers because drivers might be tempted," Sefako said.

He said this was the second time they had seized liquor at the Bara taxi rank.

"Early last year, we took cases of beer and cartons of sorghum beer from the hawkers and we thought they would stop selling at the rank. However, they didn't get the message," Sefako said.

Other taxi ranks

Taxi owners would not rest until their message was heard and understood, he said.

"We are going to visit taxi ranks in other areas and do the same. However, we won't specify the dates and times because we don't want to alert hawkers.

"It's a shame when we read in newspapers that so many people are being killed in accidents involving taxis.

"We are trying to help where we can," Sefako said.

He said a driver caught drinking or drunk on duty could be suspended from driving for at least six months. In other instances he could be fired.

Passengers who had problems with drivers should approach queue marshals or rank managers at their ranks and report the incidents, Sefako said.

CAPE TIMES
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1999 ★

Taxi curb comes into force

JILLIAN GREEN

DURBAN: The 100km/h speed limit in 120km/h zones for buses and taxis will come into force on Friday, Minister of Transport Dullah Omar has announced.

Speaking at the launch of the Arrive Alive road safety campaign in Pinetown yesterday, he said the bus and taxi industries had agreed to the speed limit, enabling him to promulgate the new measure.

The speed limit for trucks will remain at 80km/h.

Omar said efforts to enhance road safety would be intensified across the country under the Arrive Alive campaign. Overloading would not be tolerated and his ministry was declaring war on drunk drivers. "There is no place for them on the road."

Ten sponsored cars were handed over to Omar for the Arrive Alive campaign. They are to be used for 24-hour traffic enforcement along the most dangerous stretches of road from December 1 to January 15. Two will be assigned to Western Cape traffic authorities to patrol the N1 between Laingsburg and Beaufort West.

● Speeds recorded by laser testing apparatus, an innovation that is considered to be more accurate, are to be submitted as evidence in court cases in the Western Cape. This follows negotiations between the Western Cape's traffic and transport authorities.

The MEC for Transport, Piet Meyer, has also given traffic officers the go-ahead to impose heavy fines on motorists who do not display their number plates on their vehicles.

Public happy with taxi crackdown

COMMUTERS were happy that government had cracked down on taxi conflict and as a result were looking forward to a violence-free festive season, according to a public survey conducted in the embattled eastern district of North West.

The survey revealed that commuters anticipated government would prolong the two-month-long suspension on taxi operations beyond the festive season.

The survey was conducted jointly by the members of the North West legislature, the SA Police Service and the transitional local councils.

Chairman for the standing committee on transport in the North West legislature, Percy Dyonase, said that commuters who were interviewed at taxi ranks and railway stations in the affected areas north of Pretoria were happy with the government's stance on suspending taxi operations.

He said commuters had also called on government to prolong the suspension so that they could enjoy a violence-free festive season. "They are afraid violence may re-erupt once the suspension has been lifted," he said.

A report on the findings of the survey would be tabled to a joint sitting of the Gauteng and North West working committee on taxi violence, headed by Judge Dumisa Ntsebeza, Dyonase said.

Gauteng and North West police officials announced that a total of 412 vehicles were impounded since October 12 for operating illegally. Of the total, 107 private cars were impounded in the North West and 68 in Gauteng for operating illegally.

Police said transgressors who were found operating illegally in Gauteng would face a R10 000 fine, while in the North West they would be liable to pay a R1 000 fine which would multiply in relation to the number of arrests made in connection with each vehicle.

The provincial governments closed taxi ranks in the areas last month following a spate of taxi-related killings.

In Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, alone, 11 taxi operators were killed within the space of a month. —Sapa.

(332) BD 24/11/99

New taxi speed limit welcomed

(332) Sowetan 25/11/99

By Eddie Mokoena

PEOPLE in the taxi industry yesterday welcomed Transport Minister Dullah Omar's proposed speed limit for public transport saying it should have been implemented a long time ago.

In welcoming Omar's call Katlehong People's Taxi Association spokesman Mr Nelson Ngonyama said: "We welcome the minister's call as long as it serves to curb accidents on our roads."

He said his organisation viewed the announcement as a precautionary measure to curb the carnage on South African roads.

Pledging his organisation's support, Ngonyama said: "We are aware that most accidents on our roads involve minibus taxis and buses. Therefore the proposed plan is long overdue. The death toll on our roads is intolerable."

Omar this week imposed a reduced speed limit on all public transport to 100km an hour in all 120km an hour zones. This speed limit comes into effect tomorrow.

Speaking at the launch of the Arrive Alive road safety campaign Omar said, however, that the speed limit for trucks would remain unchanged at 80km an hour.

Taxi drivers Mr Lindelani Mazibuko, Mr David Nkabinde and Mr Shadrack Moloi also welcomed the proposed speed limit. However, Nkabinde expressed concern that the issue of overloading had not been properly addressed.

"I think they should consider the fact that during peak periods passengers force themselves into our kombis. Therefore, during peak hours law enforcement officers should not penalise us," he said.

Commenting on the implementation of the proposed regulation Transport Department spokesman Mr Mike Mabasa said: "We are going to rely on law enforcement to make sure that those targeted (taxis and buses) adhere to the new speed limit."

He said they planned to set up roadblocks at taxi routes and other major roads.

"This is specifically to clamp down on both taxis and buses driving above the proposed speed limit."

Labour groups



Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson shares a

Taxi protest blocks streets

ARG (332)

NORMAN JOSEPH
STAFF REPORTER

About 30 taxi drivers parked their minibuses across Adderley and Strand streets today, bringing traffic to a standstill.

Traffic officers cordoned off the streets while about five vehicles were towed away.

The drivers, all belonging to Pitstop, protested because their operator, Walied Baker, had been suspended from the Peninsula Taxi Association. This means his taxis may not operate.

The association has alleged Mr Baker failed to pay the association its subscription fees.

It also alleged that Mr Baker failed to appear before a disciplinary committee recently.

But Mr Baker said he had formally requested a financial statement for October and had not received one yet.

James Taylor, speaking for the protesting drivers today, said the association's members prevented them from working yesterday and today.

Association spokesman Andrew Joseph said his organisation called the traffic department today regarding the presence of Pitstop drivers "because they were suspended in accordance with our constitution".

He said their constitution was given a thumbs-up by the Department of Transport recently.

Angry Pitstop drivers also protested outside the traffic department office at Gallows Hill.



LEON MULLER

Blockade: about 30 taxis affected by a taxi association dispute blocked Adderley and Strand streets

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1999

Traffic officials want no part of taxi dispute

(332) AR 26/11/99

NORMAN JOSEPH
STAFF REPORTER

The Cape Town traffic department has distanced itself from an internal conflict in the Peninsula Taxi Association.

The department's registrar officials held separate meetings with the association's leadership and prominent taxi owner Walied Baker yesterday.

Mr Baker, one of the Western Cape's biggest minibus taxi fleet owners, has been suspended from the association, with the effect that he has had to take his 26 vehicles off the road this week.

According to registrar officials, Mr Baker may appeal against the suspension, and his objections must go to the association.

Officials did not want to interfere with the association's conflict with Mr Baker.

Mr Baker was suspended after failing to appear at a disciplinary hearing about his association dues.

(332)

R4bn taxi industry overhaul

Tenders are due tomorrow for a package to reshape the industry, writes DON ROBERTSON

ST(BT) 28/11/99

THE Department of Transport is pushing ahead with plans to restructure the minibus taxi industry, setting deadlines for the replacement of 16-seater taxis with 18- and 35-seater midibuses.

Tomorrow, an estimated 30 local and international groups will respond to a global "tender" document and submit proposals for a total industry package including the manufacture of midibuses, finance, insurance, maintenance and information technology solutions as well as smart cards for fares.

The "electronically" controlled buses will have a system to transmit the location of the vehicle and its passage, and to prevent it from moving if it is overloaded.

Applicants will have to submit proposals for a scheme to allow existing taxi owners, with valid permits, to "cash in" their current vehicles for a payment which can be used as a deposit on a new midibus or for other purposes.

It is estimated that in a five-year period during which the project will be implemented, the Departments of Transport and Trade and Industry will have to pay out as much as R4-billion to "repurchase" existing taxis over a five-year period.

The call for proposals from interested parties is a "clever and smart" move by the authorities, according to Rob Drake, a director of one of the bidders, AMC Commercial Vehicles.

"Had they undertaken this themselves, it would have cost them millions of rands," he says.

A shortlist of bidders, perhaps three manufacturers for an 18-seater bus plus two for a 35-seater, will be announced by January.

By October, the full package must be in place with successful applicants able to "swop" midibuses for existing taxis. Most of these buses will probably be imported in the early stages. By October 2002, local production must begin, with an eventual 80% local content. The entire scheme must be concluded within five years.

The plan to restructure the notorious taxi industry was introduced by the previous Minister of Transport, Mac Maharaj. The lack of a centralised taxi organisation representing the 130 000 drivers and owners has been a problem, but the recently established SA Taxi Council (Sataco), which supposedly represents 90% of the taxi industry, will be fully involved in the recapitalisation process.

Drake says that although final details have not been announced, it is expected that the current 130 000 licensed taxis will be replaced by about 80 000 registered midibuses.

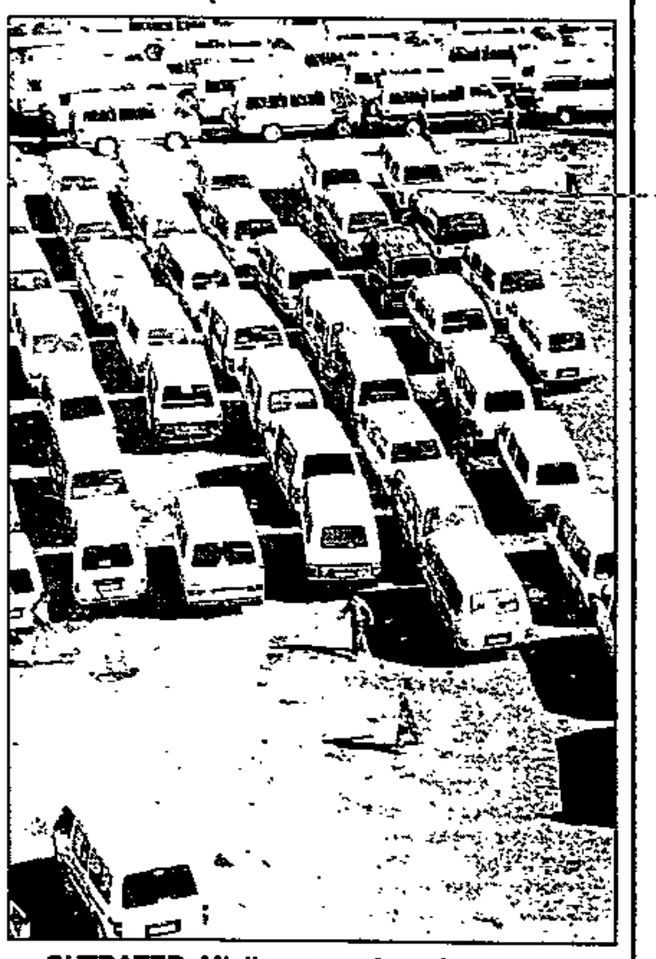
"Those not wishing to continue in the industry after the scrapping payout can use the money for whatever purpose, although it is possible that many might be employed by Sataco to assist with the smooth operation of the taxi industry, which generates about R15-million a day in fares."

He expects that taxi owners claiming repayments could be paid as much as R40 000 per vehicle, even though most are on average nine years old.

AMC recently won an order worth R60-million to supply 60-seater buses for black-owned Soweto Bus Services, which won a R80-million government contract to operate between Johannesburg and the Lekoa-Vaal area.

It will also supply 22 buses to another black-owned transport group, Amogelang Transport Services, which will operate between the Ennerdale-Poortjie area and Johannesburg in a R21-million contract.

"With these contracts under our belt, we should be able to supply our buses by October next year, never mind by October the following year," says Drake.



OUTDATED: Minibuses such as these will be replaced by 18- and 35-seater midibuses

ARGT 30/11/99

Unanswered questions on new taxi scheme

(332)

CAPE BUSINESS



Ed West

Yesterday some 30 local and foreign motor manufacturers are believed to have submitted tenders to the Government to build 18- and 35-seat taxis as part of a R3,1-billion scheme to replace 126 000 minibus taxis.

But on Sunday two national newspapers voiced concerns about the feasibility of the project. One concern relates to whether the taxi industry can be forced to buy double the number of new taxis than they usually do in a year.

The need to improve safety standards and to formalise what is still seen as an informal industry is indisputable.

There are many taxis operating without permits, in unroadworthy vehicles, and without licences. At the start of this month, for instance, nearly half the 6 000 taxi drivers in the Cape had warrants out for their arrest, mostly for driving-related transgressions.

Nevertheless, efforts to formalise the trade over the years have borne some fruit – even the Receiver of Revenue says with satisfaction that many operators now pay tax.

On the face of it then, the scheme to introduce safer, more comfortable taxis seems a good one. But there are grumblings in the Cape about the legitimacy of the South African Taxi Council, the organisation representing the taxi industry in the scheme, which will have only elected members on its board next year.

There are fears the additional 6 000 permits the Government wants to impose on the Western Cape to make the scheme viable, will result in more competition on routes which are already congested.

Owners are concerned about having to buy a vehicle they might not like. They fear the four-year vehicle replacement cycle will result in their remaining in debt. Currently owners earn a meagre living for the first five years, as they have to pay off loans to finance their vehicles.

From another perspective, the project appears at odds with the free market.

Requests for measures to protect or create jobs in sectors like the clothing industry, agriculture and other industrial sectors have been denied, ostensibly because subsidisation places a burden on government finances and contradicts an international trend towards trade liberalisation.

Yet the motor industry, still protected by high, but slowly declining import tariffs, is being subsidised to build taxis. There are also plans to recapitalise the bus industry.

Government planners appear to have forgotten the experience of the Industrial Development Corporation-owned company that used to make diesel engines on the West Coast – Atlantis Diesel Engines (ADE).

Conceived by the previous government, the idea was to become self-sufficient in the manufacture of diesel engines, using technology from Perkins in England and Mercedes in Germany.

ADE was forced to stop making engines some time ago because of increased competition locally and an inability to export competitively. It is still only in business because it has managed to secure export markets for certain engine parts. Many jobs were lost as it restructured to operate in a free market.

Which begs some questions about the taxi project.

Once the four-year contract to assemble taxis is over, and the assembler is no longer paid by the Government to build taxis, what guarantee is there the market will continue buying the taxis?

Will the assembler still be able to build the taxis at a price that owners can afford?

Will the assembler need to be protected by high import tariffs, so that taxpayers can continue supporting the motor industry by paying a higher vehicle price?

Already there are plans to import vehicles to the Cape which will compete in the taxi market.

It has been well documented that the cause of most minibus-related accidents is driver negligence and/or poor maintenance. How is the creation of a new state-funded industry going to solve these problems?

Another accident waiting to happen?

It seems the 10 000 taxi commuters who use the multimillion rand taxi rank built by the city council on top of Cape Town station every day have to "maar knyp toe" until they get to the station's ablution facilities downstairs.

There are only two toilets at the rank, one for men and one for women.

The toilet for disabled people was locked yesterday.

There did not appear to be any fire-fighting equipment. There is only one road into the rank and one road out. The inconvenience caused by a minibus breaking down in one of the access roads must be great.

Taxi operators complain the rank also represents a fire hazard. It seems worthwhile for a fire chief to go and inspect the premises.

Both eyes open

The bomb at the St Elmo's pizza restaurant in Camps Bay was a deplorable act of terrorism.

The impact on the anticipated surge in tourism to the Cape over the holiday season cannot be accurately quantified, but impact there will be.

Hopefully the need will not arise again for businesses to beef up security to the extent to that which characterised the early 80s, when body searches and electronic access to buildings were commonplace.

However, existing security personnel, and people dealing directly with the public, like waitresses, tellers and managers, should be briefed to keep an eye out for strange devices and unattended parcels.

SOWETAN Tuesday November 30 1999

Taximen opt for interim committee

(332) Sowetan 30/11/99

By McKeed Kotlolo

TAXI operators in Atteridgeville, Pretoria, yesterday passed a vote of no confidence in the current executive committee of the Atteridgeville/Saulsville Taxi Owners Association (Astoa) and formed a 10-member interim committee to discuss their grievances with transport authorities.

The decision was taken at a meeting convened by a group of concerned local taxi operators, attended by the Gauteng department of transport (GauTrans) officials and the police at the Atteridgeville Community Hall.

The GauTrans delegation, led by Mr Paul Mnisi of the conflict resolution division, reported back on grievances submitted by the disgruntled taxi operators last Monday.

The grievances included the removal of long distance stickers, the election of Astoa's new executive committee and community participation in the running of the local taxi association.

Mnisi said the grievances were submitted to both Astoa and the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation (Salldtbo) officials last Monday, who promised to respond by Wednesday last week but apparently failed to do so.

Astoa chairman Mr Jeff Masemola allegedly promised Mnisi and the police that he would attend yesterday's meeting but did not.

Mnisi said he would contact both associations to ensure that an amicable solution was reached.

The 10-member interim committee, comprising six male and four female volunteers, will compile a memorandum to be submitted to the office of MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu to start the replacement process of the current executive committee.

The memo will include, among other things, a demand that the present executive should immediately stop collecting money from members and to submit an audited financial statement.

The operators, comprising drivers and owners, also voted unanimously in favour of the removal of Salldtbo stickers from their minibuses with immediate effect.

(332) Sowetan 24/11/99

Atteridgeville taxi drivers up in arms

By McKeed Kotlolo

DISGRUNTLED taxi drivers in Atteridgeville, Pretoria, stopped operations this week demanding the removal of stickers from minibuses and the suspension of the local executive committee.

A group of drivers parked their minibuses at the Atteridgeville Community Hall opposite the local police station on Monday and demanded a meeting with officials.

Atteridgeville police spokesman Sergeant Thinovhudzulu Mufamadi said some drivers continued to ferry commuters to and from town while others gathered at the hall.

"A meeting of the Atteridgeville-Saulsville Taxi Owners Association (Astoa), some drivers, police and provincial transport officials was held. Drivers submitted their grievances," Mufamadi said.

He said the drivers demanded, among other things, the removal of stickers of the South African Long and Local Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation (Salldtbo) from their vehicles, the suspension of the current executive committee of Astoa and the holding of new elections.

Astoa official Mr Jeff Masemola said a meeting of taxi owners would be held today to discuss the demands.

"We can't discuss the issue of Salldtbo stickers with the drivers," Masemola said.

"It's the owners who must take a decision because this will allow outside taxis to operate freely on our routes," he said.

Masemola said they had already found a number of Mabopane taxis operating in Atteridgeville after the closure of the North West and Soshanguve taxi operations by the Gauteng and North West governments two months ago.

He said these taxis were ordered out of Atteridgeville to avoid the "importation of violence from those area into our township".

Masemola said the meeting with owners would be held at Salldtbo's head office in Centurion at 9am today.

Taxi speed limit rejected

BD 2/12/99

(332)

THE National Taxi Drivers' Organisation (Natdo) said yesterday it was against the new speed limits for taxis and its members would consider driving at 40km/h for a day if concerns were not addressed.

Natdo president Themba Mgabhi said the 100km/h limit for taxis would make drivers' jobs difficult and affect long distance customers.

"How long will it take from Johannesburg to Cape Town at 100km/h?" he asked.

He said the lower limit would cause more accidents because long distance drivers would fall asleep or stop for the night.

He suggested taxis adhere to the speed limit of 120km/h.

Mgabhi said Natdo understood government was trying to save lives but it did not believe most taxi accidents occurred because of high speed. They occurred because of unroadworthy taxis and overloading.

"We have been talking about the corrupt licence departments issuing fitness certificates without even seeing the vehicles, and individual officers who enrich themselves by taking bribes from overloaded taxis." — Sapa.

State's R3bn taxi plan pulls in 14 bidders

(330)

ROY COKAYNE

BD 2/12/99

Pretoria - Fourteen proposals had been submitted by consortiums bidding for the state's taxi recapitalisation project, which was estimated to cost R3 billion, the trade and industry ministry said yesterday.

Bidders for the tender included local vehicle manufacturing companies DaimlerChrysler and Delta Motor; Iveco SA; Tata Automobile, the Indian vehicle manufacturer; and Kwoon Chung Bus Holdings, a multinational consortium consisting of Chinese, Hong Kong and local investors.

Other bidders were Malandela Motor Assemblers, Gaz Joint Stock Company, Atlas Vehicle Distributors, QLS Autobus, Truck and Bus Components, Stimela, Sempres, SA Mini Bus and M Tam International.

The ministry said each bid was required to incorporate proposals on the local assembly of 18- and 35-seater commuter transport diesel vehicles, cashless fare transaction technology, electronic tracking, finance and insurance, and maintenance of the vehicles.

A shortlist of proposers would be finalised by January 7 after the first round of evaluations and bidders would be required to bring their vehicles to an exhibition on January 24 to 28 before the final round of evaluations. The winning bidders would be announced by April next year.

The ministry said up to three assemblers could be approved for the 18-seater vehicles and up to two for the 35-seater vehicles.

"The intention of awarding more than one tender is to retain competition in the market and to avoid creating a monopoly."

(332)

Firms submit plans to build new taxi fleet

BD 2/12/99

Stan Maphologela

FOURTEEN companies and consortiums have submitted proposals to build passenger vehicles as part of the R3bn recapitalisation of the country's ageing minibus taxi fleet.

The list, released by the trade and industry department, includes proposals from Delta Motor Corporation and DaimlerChrysler. A notable absentee is Toyota SA, which is currently the major supplier of minibus taxis to the local industry.

Toyota SA marketing MD Johan van Zyl said: "We have investigated all the options, but unfortunately Toyota does not have a suitable product to meet the tender requirements for replacing the current minibus taxis."

"Should a suitable product become available in the future ... we will reconsider our participation."

The proposals were to supply the new 18- and 35-seater passenger vehicles to replace the existing fleet of more than 130 000 14-seater vehicles, most of which are nearing the end of their useful lives.

Besides Delta and DaimlerChrysler, other proposals came from Malandela Motor Assemblers, Gaz Joint Stock Company, Atlas Vehicle Industries, QLS Autobus, Iveco SA, Tata Automobile Corporation, Truck & Bus Components, Kwoon Chung Bus Holdings, Stimela, Sempres, SA Mini Bus and M Tam International.

The department says a short list of proposals will be finalised by January 7, after the first round of evaluation.

The department will announce the winners in April.

The adjudication process will be carried out by officials from the departments of trade and industry, transport, finance, and minerals and energy together with the SA Bureau of Standards and the SA Taxi Council.

Flats taxi war over, claim operators

(332) ET 3/12/99

ERIC NTABAZALILA

THE war between Western Cape taxi organisations, which left several people dead over the past few months, has come to an end, according to the organisations involved.

At least six drivers have been shot dead during the violence and several commuters were wounded.

The war between the two taxi organisations, the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (Cata) and the Congress of the Democratic Taxi Associations (Codeta) has been simmering since the opening of the taxi rank in Delft about three months ago.

Police say they are taking no chances and are maintaining a strong presence at the Delft taxi rank. They have also set up several road-blocks in Nyanga, Philippi and other areas and claim to have made arrests for stolen firearms and vehicles.

Several meetings have been held to curb the violence but the "ownership" of routes remained contentious. The rival groups held talks again on Tuesday, a day after two people were shot dead and a third wounded when men opened fire with automatic rifles at stationary taxis in Delft.

Codeta spokesperson Reggie Malimba said the solution to the crisis came after government intervention.

But Cata spokesperson Steven Williams said the peace came after Codeta members were asked not to transport commuters from Nyanga back to the Delft taxi rank.

New taxi speed limit stands

Sowetan 3/12/99

By McKeed Kotlolo (332)

TRANSPORT Minister Dullah Omar is going ahead with the regulation to limit the maximum speed for taxis to 100km per hour despite threats by drivers to embark on a "go-slow" protest or to go to the Constitutional Court.

Members of the National Taxi Drivers Organisation (Natdo) have threatened to embark on a "go-slow" during the festive season by reducing their speed to 40km/h in protest against the 100km/h speed limit. The organisation has also threatened to challenge the regulation in the Constitutional Court.

Omar's spokesman Mr Mike Mabasa said yesterday: "The Minister is going ahead with the regulation and those who will not observe the new speed limit will be prosecuted."

However, two national taxi organisations, the SA Local and Long Taxi and Bus Organisation (Salldtbo) and the Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta) have come out in support of Minister Omar.

Salldtbo's Mr Charles Mole dismissed the threats as "absolute nonsense" and said "we must help the Government to solve the problem of fatal road accidents".

"There is no guarantee that the speed limit will solve the problem of fatal accidents on our roads, but it will minimise the death toll."

Felldta's general secretary Mr Bennie Diale said that they supported the efforts of the minister together with their drivers.



Recapitalisation of the taxi industry gains momentum

Graphic: KUBEN DAVID Source: MALANDELA MOTOR ASSEMBLERS

14 companies submitted tenders to replace SA's ageing 16-seater minibuses with the new 18-and 35-seater taxis

1. Malandela Motor Assemblers	8. M TAM International
2. Tata Automobile Corporation	9. SA Mini Bus (MBV)
3. Truck and Bus Components	10. Sempres (Pty) Ltd
4. Kwoon Chung Bus Holdings	11. Stimela (Pty) Ltd
5. Gaz Joint Stock Company	12. DaimlerChrysler
6. Delta Motor Corporation	13. QLS Autobus
7. Atlas Vehicle Industries	14. Iveco SA Ltd

Ubiquitous taxis at end of road

BD 3/12/99 (332)

Toyota's failure to submit proposal may herald dispute, writes Stan Mapholegela

SA's notorious minibus taxis — known as "death machines" in certain quarters because they are ageing, overcrowded and poorly maintained — will be replaced over the next five years.

This move, proposed in legislation prepared by the transport department, is bound to be met with resistance from some vehicle assemblers that have benefited from the taxi industry.

The trade and industry department announced on Wednesday that 14 companies and consortiums had submitted proposals to build passenger vehicles as part of the R3bn recapitalisation of the country's minibus taxi fleet.

Companies are placing tenders to provide diesel-powered transport vehicles, cashless fare transaction technology, electronic tracking, finance, insurance and maintenance.

Good news for passengers and the country is that the system will make public transport affordable, safer and more efficient. Purpose-built vehicles for taxi operators will be legally registered to operate and be subject to taxation.

Industry sources say although the project will transform the national transport system, it has the potential to hurt assemblers like Toyota, which has been supplying the taxi industry with vehicles since its inception. Almost 80% of taxis are manufactured by the company, including the 14-seater and 16-seater Hi-Ace vehicles.

The deadline for submission of proposals passed early this week — and Toyota SA was not among the bidders.

This raises eyebrows in the industry. The company had nearly monopolised production of taxis and invested in plants, marketing and manpower.

Toyota had investigated "all the options" and does not have suitable products to meet tender requirements. "Should a suitable product become available in the future we will reconsider our participation," it said.

Toyota will continue to produce the Hi-Ace. During an upcoming plant shutdown, the Hi-Ace assembly line will be moved from Toyota's passenger plant to its truck plant in Prospecton, Durban.

Toyota's decision to apparently ignore government's initiative seems to suggest that a dispute is in the offing.

An analyst says Toyota's attitude is influenced by the cost implications of the new project — especially because vehicles have to be sourced and manufactured locally — and considering new capital investments and competition.

On January 7 the department will announce a final short list of five companies — three assemblers of 18-seater vehicles and two assemblers of 35-seater vehicles — to replace the existing fleet of more than 130 000 14-seater vehicles.

Government intends to award more than one tender to boost competition and prevent creation of a monopoly.

The short list will be finalised following an adjudication process that started on Wednesday. Four departments — trade and industry, transport, finance, and minerals and energy — along with the SA Bureau of Standards and SA Taxi Council (Sataco) are participating in the process.

Paul Elliot, CEO of Malandela Motor Assemblers, one of the bidders, says his company expects to get one third of the 18-seater contract. Ed Emmett, Delta's corporate communications manager, said it would be premature to comment.

Central to the awarding of the tender will be an empowerment element. This will be built into financing arrangements, distribution of vehicles and compulsory maintenance programmes. Co-operatives in these areas will be set up after consultation with local taxi associations.

Operators that have licences but no vehicles can "exit" the industry by handing in their licences. They would receive an allowance aimed at compensating them for loss of subleasing their permits for a period of four years. New permits will be obtained under strict new rules.

Taxis make up 65% of the 2,5-billion annual passenger trips in urban areas and a high percentage of rural and intercity transport. More than a third of the vehicles operate in Gauteng.

The vehicles are on average 9,8 years old, meaning at least 85% of the fleet's estimated maximum life span is over. The age and condition of the fleet is a safety hazard and affects operator returns significantly.

A 'senseless lunatic'

By DAN RADINKU

GAUTENG transport and public works MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu yesterday dismissed the president of the National Taxi Drivers' Organisation, Themba Mgabhi, as a "senseless lunatic".

Mgabhi this week shocked the public when he said his organisation's members would defy the 100 km/h speed limit and engage in a go-slow by driving at 40 km/h on freeways.

He was reacting to transport minister Dullah Omar's contingency plans to curb road deaths by reducing the freeway speed limit from 120 km/h to 100 km/h for minibus taxis.

Many taxi owners yesterday dissociated themselves from Mgabhi's statement when they met at the Braamfontein civic centre for a taxi conference.

The owners said their drivers had vowed to abide by the lower speed limit.

Mosunkutu said 10 000 people lost their lives through reckless driving every year and many others were permanently disabled because of accidents caused by speeding.

The economy lost close to R12 billion a year through insurance payouts and medical expenses, he said.

"We are working closely with all the taxi bodies, but Mgabhi's organisation is not an affiliate of the newly-established South African Taxi Council (Sataco)," Mosunkutu said.

The MEC questioned whether Mgabhi actually had a following among taxi drivers. If Mgabhi was a legitimate leader, he would have brought some of his committee members along to discuss the issue of speed.

Mosunkutu said Mgabhi's remarks were intended to sow confusion in the minibus taxi industry.

Taxis to 'ignore' speed limit

THE National Taxi Driver's Organisation (Natdo) will take the Department of Transport to the Constitutional Court next week to challenge the new speed limit of 100km/h for minibus taxis.

The organisation also vowed yesterday to embark on a "go slow" to protest the regulation.

Briefing the media in Johannesburg, Natdo president Mr Themba Mgabhi said the organisation had given Transport Minister Dullah Omar until next Monday to respond to their demand that the speed limit revert to 120km/h.

"As from Tuesday until the end of the festive season, all our members will embark on a go slow of 40 to 60km/h on all national roads, especially the long distance taxis. Our legal division will be submitting our application to the Constitutional Court on the issue," he said.

Mgabhi said Natdo had decided to approach the court because Omar had failed to meet the organisation after introducing the new limit.

The regulations were published in the *Government Gazette* on November 26. They require buses and taxis to travel 20km/h slower than other vehicles on national roads.

"Omar flies to Cape Town. He does not drive there ... He does not understand what he is doing to commuters and drivers. There will be more accidents because of the limit," Mgabhi said.

He said Natdo would ignore the new speed limit until Omar discussed the matter with the drivers and explained why he had implemented it and who he had consulted.

Yesterday Omar's office appealed to taxi drivers to comply with the 100km/h speed limit.

Omar's spokesman, Mr Mike Mabasa, said the Minister hoped to arrange a meeting with Natdo next week to discuss the issue. – *Sapa*

Taxi drivers' body threatens court action

THE National Taxi Drivers' Organisation (Natdo) has threatened to take the transport department to the Constitutional Court to challenge the new speed limit of 100km/h on minibus taxis.

The organisation also vowed yesterday to embark on a "go slow" to protest against the regulation.

Natdo president Themba Mgabhi said the organisation had given Transport Minister Dullah Omar until Monday to respond to its demand that the speed limit for taxis revert to 120km/h.

"As from Tuesday until the end of the festive season, all our members will embark on a go-slow of 40km/h to 60km/h speeds on all national roads, especially the long-distance taxis.

"Our legal division will be submitting our application to the Constitutional Court on the issue," he said.

"With this slow speed, we will not drive in the slow lane. We are hoping to block the traffic. We will be driving parallel to each other, occupying all the three lanes," he said.

Mgabhi said Natdo had decided to approach the court after Omar declined to meet the organisation after introducing the new limit.

The regulations were published in the Government Gazette on November 26. — Sapa.

BD 9/12/99 (332)

Taxis, buses top crash list

Sowetan 10/12/99 (332)

ONE in every four buses and minibus taxis are involved in road accidents annually, a recent study on the spate of bus crashes in September and October revealed yesterday.

Furthermore, 64 people or 65,3 percent of those killed and 64 people or 59,3 percent of those seriously injured were involved in accidents where speed played a major role.

The draft report, drawn up by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), says speed is the major contributing factor in 50 percent the accidents.

The findings were contained in a media statement released by Transport Minister Dullah Omar. He said the CSIR was asked to investigate 10 major bus crashes which had occurred during those two months.

The report says 424 people were involved in the crashes, in which 98 (23 percent) were killed, 108 (26 percent) seriously injured and 218 (51 percent) slightly injured.

Fifty one people died and 72 were seriously injured as a result of poor bus mechanical maintenance.

The report reveals that 70 percent of accidents could be attributed to driver error, 22 percent to vehicle defects and 8 percent to the road environment.

Driver errors included five cases of speeding, two of reckless overtaking, two of driving under the influence of alcohol, at least six cases of inconsiderate driver behaviour and one of ignoring a stop sign.

The major vehicle defects identified were inadequate brakes (a bus was found to have brakes on only one rear wheel), a burst tyre, defective lights and overloading.

The road environment played a role in two of the accidents – one in which cattle were on the road and the other in fog.

Only two of the 10 accidents happened during a weekend. Three happened in broad daylight, five at night and one under poor light conditions.

Another study found that the accident rate for minibuses is 900 per 100 million vehicle kilometres travelled. – *Sapa*

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MEC, taxi drivers clash

(332) Sowetan 10/12/99

By Noxolo Nxusani

A HEATED argument ensued between several taxi drivers and Gauteng MEC for safety and liaison Ms Nomvula Mokonyane yesterday about a new Act protecting women and children.

Mokonyane was distributing pamphlets during a brief visit to Chris Hani Baragwanath taxi rank about the new Domestic Violence Act, which will come into effect on December 15.

The Act protects women and children against abuse and sends abusers for counselling or to prison for up to five years if they are convicted.

However, most men, especially those in the taxi industry, still believe abusing a woman, whether physically or sexually, is the best way to solve marital problems.

One driver said: "I was alone when I married this woman. I feed her, clothe her and do everything for her. So if she is not listening and respecting me, I will beat her. *Induku iyazilungisa izinto*." (A whip solves problems in the house.)

Another driver said he could do whatever he liked with his wife and nobody would tell him what to do in his house.

Mokonyane advised these men to seek professional help from social workers or marriage counsellors whenever there was a problem at home.

"I spend most of my time at the taxi rank and I don't have time to go to social workers. What should I do then?" asked another driver.

Several women accepted the pamphlets and praised the MEC for a job well done.

Use of smart cards in Soshanguve on hold

(332) BD 10/12/99

Agreement to be signed today between Gauteng authorities and taxi associations

Pearl Sebolao

GAUTENG authorities and warring taxi associations in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, will sign an agreement today to suspend the use of taxi smart cards until a referendum is held to determine whether stakeholders want the technology.

Taxi ranks and routes in the area will be prised away from the associations and brought under the control of greater Pretoria metropolitan council, which will determine conditions and issue contracts for their use.

The agreement is the result of two months of negotiations mediated by Judge Dumisa Ntsebeza following the Gauteng government's suspension of taxi operations in the area after the violent death of 11 operators.

The agreement, which involves the Pretoria council, Soshanguve taxi associations and federal taxi associations, seeks to impose tough new controls on the local taxi industry.

Gauteng transport MEC Kgabisi Mosonkutu said yesterday the agreement improved the chances for the resumption of taxi operations in the area.

A final decision would however, be taken after a public meeting at the weekend which will be addressed by both Mosonkutu and Gauteng Premier Mbhazima Shilowa.

The agreement also provides for a referendum to determine whether local associations and operators want to belong to federal associations. Individual operators can make their own decisions about whether or not to belong to a local association.

The federal bodies operating in the Soshanguve area — long distance taxi and bus associations Salltbo and Feldta — will be asked to stop collecting affiliation fees and smart card payments from local associations until the results of the referendum are known. This includes collecting money from drivers "on the street or at ranks".

Ntsebeza's report said the use of smart cards was cited as a factor that contributed to Soshanguve's taxi strife.

The introduction of the cards by Salltbo was seen by rival associations as an attempt to marginalise them.

Government saw Salltbo's move as an attempt to undermine its recapitalisation programme, which includes the use of smart cards.

Pretoria police spokesman Roy Govender said a breach of any part of the agreement would carry penalties. Other issues like whether commuters would be allowed to take part in the referendum, would be sorted out at a later stage, he said.

Govender was "fairly optimistic" that associations would sign the agreement.

Joy & relief at taxi peace agreement

(332)

CP 12/12/99

By STEVE DLAMINI

ALTHOUGH the government has ended its ban on taxi operations in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria, offenders who were behind the township's bloodshed are being investigated and will be prosecuted.

This was told exclusively to City Press by Khabisi Mosunkutu, Gauteng MEC for Transport and Public Works after the signing of a peace agreement between the local government and four rival taxi bodies in the township.

The agreement, which was signed at the old Pretoria city hall on Friday, stated that the banning of taxi operations in Soshanguve was officially ended at midnight on Friday, but operators could only start operating tomorrow as they have to inform their community members of the agreement.

The agreement was signed by four rival taxi bodies — Soshanguve Local and Long Distance Taxi Association; Soshanguve Taxi Owners Association; South African Local and Long Distance Taxi and Bus Operators; and Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association.

The hall was packed to capacity as taxi owners and operators were eager to sign the peace agreement amid high police presence.

After the signing, the mood was high and there was much embracing and hand-shaking between operators and their bosses.

Addressing the crowd, Mosunkutu said: "In August, a situation of total lawlessness developed within the taxi industry in Soshanguve, negatively affecting the lives of the ordinary law-abiding citizens of Soshanguve. The senseless killings left the government with no option but to take firm action to prevent further loss of life by imposing a ban on taxi operations. The ban was never intended to harm anyone, it was for the general good."

Ntsebenza thanked all stakeholders including taxi operators and owners who contributed to bringing peace and stability to Soshanguve.

Paul Molefe, the newly elected chairman of the Soshanguve Local and Long Distance Taxi Associations, said the problem had been sorted out at the right time — before Christmas.

The queue marshalls previously employed by taxi bodies will now be government officials, reporting to the council on happenings in the taxi industry.

Another factor which has been agreed upon is that long distance operations will be seperated from local operations and that seperate ranking facilities for long distance operations will be provided by the council. The agreement also made provision that any operator wishing to join the association of his choice, may do so without any intimidation.

Taxis roll again

(332) Soweton 13/12/99

Probe into taxi violence intensified

By Gershwin Chuenyane

TAXIS in Soshanguve, Pretoria, resumed operations at midday yesterday after a two-month ban and closure of ranks imposed by the Gauteng provincial government.

The North West provincial government also announced that it had given the go-ahead for taxis in Ga-Rankuwa, Winterveld, Klipgat, Mabopane and Hebron to resume operations at midnight yesterday.

However, Gauteng MEC for transport and public works Mr Khabisi Mosunkutu warned taxi associations that he would not hesitate to act if the peace process, being implemented after Friday's signing of an agreement between the provincial government and four rival taxi associations, was being undermined.

He said investigations into taxi hit squads, paymasters of hit squads and extortionists in Soshanguve had been intensified and more arrests would be made soon.

Addressing the Soshanguve community about undertakings by the taxi drivers and owners organisations in the area, Mosunkutu said: "The government is wide awake to the fact that there are criminals, kingpins, paymasters and hit-men out there waiting to wreak havoc."

He added that lessons learned and solutions arrived at in Soshanguve would be used as a model for the whole of Gauteng.

The army, police and Gauteng transport officials would remain in the area to monitor operations and look for violations of the peace agreement between rival operators.

His words were reiterated by Gauteng Premier Mbhazima Shilowa, who promised that anyone who undermined the peace process "will be charged with conspiracy and murder". He said members of the police who owned taxis and helped foment taxi violence would be hunted, investigated, arrested and dismissed.

He said a number of police stations were being investigated.

The taxi ban was officially lifted at midnight on Friday, but Mosunkutu had asked taxi association not to resume operations until after yesterday's meeting with the Soshanguve community.

See pages 4 and 9

Soshanguve's taxi rank reopens after ban is lifted

Pearl Sebolao and Sapa

GAUTENG transport MEC Kgabisi Mosonkutu yesterday officially reopened the Soshanguve taxi rank north of Pretoria, following Friday's lifting of a two-month ban on taxi operations in the area.

Taxis that were impounded for illegally operating during the ban would be returned to their owners.

Addressing the Soshanguve community about the conflict resolution agreement between taxi associations and provincial authorities, Mosonkutu said a police and army presence would be maintained in the area, until it was certain that the situation had normalised.

The government is wide awake to the fact that there are criminals, kingpins, paymasters, hit men and all the forces of darkness hovering out there and waiting for us to hand over the route and ranks so that they can wreak havoc," he said.

He assured the community that investigations into taxi hit squads and extortionists in Soshanguve had been intensified and more arrests would be made soon.

He said government was aware of "smart alecks" who during the ban of taxi operations took their vehicles to operate in other areas.

These people were breaking the law and transferring the conflict and possible violence to other areas." He said government would "crush" such forces.

New-look taxis of 'Millennium Fleet' introduced

(332)

STAFF WRITER

A NEW look for the region's metered-taxi fleet was launched at the weekend, with the unveiling of the "Millennium Fleet" initiative to improve the standard of road transport.

The fleet, a joint initiative by the provincial and local government tourism and transport authorities, will run throughout the year 2000.

Accredited vehicles carry Millennium Fleet stickers and all drivers have completed a training programme.

Speaking at the launch, MEC for Tourism and Business Development, Hennie Bester, said the initiative was intended to upgrade the standard of road-based specialty transport services for tourists and residents.

"While tour operators and other specialty transport services will be eligible for membership of the fleet, initial emphasis is being placed on the metro's metered-taxi services," Bester said.

More than 35 drivers have successfully completed the metered-taxi training programme.

A further 140 drivers are enrolled in the training programme.

CT 13/12/99

(3327)

Promises follow lifting of taxi ban

ET 13/12/99

PRETORIA: The investigation into taxi hit-squads, paymasters and extortionists in Soshanguve had been intensified and more arrests would be made soon, Gauteng's MEC for Transport, Khabisi Mosunkutu, said yesterday.

Addressing the Soshanguve community here about undertakings given by taxi drivers' organisations in the area, Mosunkutu said: "The government is wide awake to the fact that there are criminals, kingpins, paymasters, hit men and all the forces of darkness hovering out there and waiting for us to hand over the route and ranks so that they can wreak havoc."

Gauteng premier Mbhazima Shilowa also attended yesterday's meeting, which followed the lifting on Friday of a two-month-long ban on taxi operations in the area.

Earlier on Friday, rival taxi organisations signed an agreement, pledging to maintain peace.

Mosunkutu said the government was aware of "smart alecks" who, while the ban was in force, moved their taxi operations to other areas.

"These people were breaking the law and transferring the conflict and possible violence to other areas."

The government would crush such forces, Mosunkutu said.

"There will be no place for them to go and there will be no place for them to hide."

Mosunkutu urged the community to help monitor the area while peace was being restored.

Ranks north of Pretoria were closed on October 11 following clashes between rival taxi operators that left 11 people dead. — Sapa

Taxi go-slow aborted

Drivers back down from planned speed limit protest

By Gershwin Chuenyane

Taxi drivers yesterday backed down from their threat to embark on a go-slow today, as the Government reiterated its determination to prosecute those who disrupt the free flow of traffic on the roads.

The Government also warned that it would not back down from the implementation of the 100-km/h speed limit for taxis and buses. It warned that taxi and bus drivers found exceeding the limit would be prosecuted.

The decision to suspend the go-slow was taken after a meeting lasting more than two hours between the National Taxi Drivers Organisation (Natdo) and Transport Minister Dullah Omar in Pretoria yesterday.

The parties released a statement announcing the suspension of the go-slow action.

Omar said: "We have given our reasons why we imposed the speed limit and we have not given an indication that the law will change."

Omar said the immediate aim is to stop the carnage on our roads in the holiday period.

He said the Government understood some of the taxi drivers' problems, such as pressure to make profits, long hours, poor working conditions and the poor state of vehicles.

He further said that some of the matters could be addressed by the government, while others were for collective bargaining.

Natdo president Mr Themba Mgabhi, who urged taxi drivers countrywide to comply with the law and observe the 100km/h rule, said his organisation decided to comply with the speed limit until after a scheduled meeting with Omar next month.

Mgabhi said Natdo fully supports the Government's programme of action to reduce accidents and fatalities on our roads.

He said his organisation particularly supported the call to comply with the six road safety guidelines of Arrive Alive.

These are: don't speed, don't drink and drive, don't overload, vehicle and driver's fitness, wearing of seat belts and promotion of pedestrian safety.

He added that if taxi drivers felt discriminated against they might resort to the Constitutional Court later, but only after next month's meeting with the minister.

● Gauteng MEC for transport and public works Mr Khabisi Mosunkutu met with road inspectors and traffic officers who told him that the majority of taxi drivers were complying with the speed limit.

Taxi action suspended until January 2000

Stan Maphologela

A PLANNED taxi go-slow during the festive season has been suspended until January next year, but the new 100km/h speed limit for public transport will remain in force.

This follows yesterday's meeting between transport ministry officials and the National Taxi Drivers' Organisation (Natdo) to discuss problems in the industry and a seven-day ultimatum issued to government.

Natdo initially threatened a go-slow to protest against government's decision to reduce the speed limit from 120km/h to 100km/h for public transport.

Natdo president Themba Mgabhi said his organisation would consult the transport department and would follow proper channels in resolving its grievances.

A document outlining Natdo's concerns was presented to Transport Minister Dullah Omar.

Natdo said it complied with the speed limit which should be "extended to all vehicles" and it supported government's plans to reduce accidents.

Omar said the new 100km/h rule would remain.

(332) BD 14/12/99

New move in taxi feud

(332)

By Eddie Mokoena

THE smart card payment system, which was introduced in Soshanguve and is alleged to have sparked off violent clashes between two taxi organisations, has been suspended.

This was after the two warring factions, the South African Long Distance Taxi and Local Bus Organisation (Saldtbo) and Federated Long Distance Taxi Association (Feldta), reached a workable solution. They have welcomed a call for a referendum about the reintroduction of smart cards.

Saldtbo spokesman Mr Charles Mole is adamant that the referendum will bring about speedy solutions. He told *Sowetan* that it was likely that taxi drivers would refuse to be part of the referendum because they share in the daily takings.

But Mole said the referendum should look at the problems created by the introduction of the system.

He added that if commuters agree to the introduction of the smart card "we have no choice but to agree as well".

Mr Benny Diale of Feltda said: "As far as we are concerned, we agree to the suspension of the smart card pending a referendum in the near future.

"Our position is that there should be proper consultation with all the stakeholders."

But Professor Hanoch Neishlos, executive director at Applied Technology, the company which provided the technology for the smart cards, said: "We have been denied consultation in regard to the referendum.

"No one has consulted us about this matter and we are sitting with 350 employees. All of them have been sent on leave. We are opposed to the referendum but we prefer broader consultation."

Sowetan 16/12/99

A betting chip in a dangerous gamble

The agreement brokered between warring taxi associations is a flirtation with disaster, writes

Jonny Steinberg

(332) M+G 17-22/12/99

On the face of it, the agreement brokered last week by Judge Dumisa Ntsebeza between Soshanguve's warring taxi associations is both bold and righteous. At first glance it appears Judge Ntsebeza has opened his heart to the weak and vulnerable by taking head-on the predatory national associations that terrorise local taxi operators.

According to the terms of the agreement, the Soshanguve taxi rank will be prised from the clutches of taxi associations and brought under the control of the Pretoria metropolitan council. The use of commuter smart cards, correctly diagnosed by Judge Ntsebeza as the catalyst in the latest round of bloodletting, has been suspended pending the outcome of a referendum to determine whether stakeholders want them.

The agreement also suspends the affiliation of local taxi associations to national "mother bodies", the spine-chillingly inappropriate name given to the big boy empires, and asks local bodies to decide whether they want such affiliations to continue.

Those quick to celebrate the agreement would be wrong, not because Judge Ntsebeza harbours bad intentions, but because he has — due to inadequate information, one must assume — given an unexpected injection of strength to the very "Mafia" he wishes to silence. To understand why, it is necessary to step away from Soshanguve and to look at what is happening nationally.

Big things are happening in the taxi industry. After years of acrimonious negotiation, an all-inclusive national body, the South African Taxi Council (Sataco), was formed late last year. For the moment, Sataco's composition reflects the balance of forces in the industry. All 12 national mother bodies in South Africa, as well as nine provincial councils, are represented on its executive.

The organisation is bound by its constitution, however, to hold a secret ballot among all South African taxi operators within the next year.

Once the composition of Sataco is democratically decided, the government will grant it statutory powers over the industry.

The emergence of a legitimate body signals a sudden and dramatic reversal in the industry's dwindling fortunes. For the first time, it is possible for the government and the private sector to do business with the taxi industry and the sky is the limit.

The government decision in October to put out a tender for the production of more than 100 000 passenger vehicles, and a parallel tender to install smart card technology in every new vehicle, was only conceivable because of the industry's newfound unity. If the venture comes off, the taxi industry will get very rich, very quickly.

Through Sataco's trading arm, it will gain a substantial stake in a continental market for a distinctively African passenger vehicle.

But that is small-fry next to the potential of smart cards. If the industry successfully converts to a cashless economy, South Africa's urban working class will, for the first time, walk the streets with plastic in its pockets. Extend the reach of smart cards from transport to retail to electricity accounts to wages, and the taxi industry may just find itself at the apex a massive financial institution.

If the venture works, moreover, the infamous mother bodies that have dominated the industry for the last decade will find that they are completely superfluous. As the industry's new business ventures are operationalised through its statutory body, so the national associations will become empty shells, completely peripheral to the industry's heart-beat.

Judge Ntsebeza has thrown down the gauntlet to national taxi associations and invited them to fight for their lives

The beauty of the project is that it envisages the erosion of the "Mafia's" institutional foundations without ever taking its bonchos head-on.

The changing economics of the industry will simply nudge the mother bodies into irrelevance. And the door will be left open at every point for their leaders to join the institutions of the new.

Against this backdrop, the agreement Judge Ntsebeza negotiated flirts with disaster. On the face of it, a referendum on the future of smart cards and a democratic decision on the future of mother bodies, gives muscle to the meek and the downtrodden — local taxi operators, some of whom have been forced, at gunpoint, to pay subscription fees to unwelcome organisations.

Yet the very subject of the referendum is a strange one. The problem in Soshanguve is not smart cards but the fact that they were deployed by a national association in an ongoing tussle for dominance.

Judge Ntsebeza is punishing one belligerent by gambling the entire industry's treasure chest. He is also gambling the ace those who dream of a legitimate future hold up their sleeve.

There is thus nothing to win but everything to lose in this referendum. And far more than the future of smart cards is at stake.

Judge Ntsebeza has done what the national process so skilfully avoided. He has thrown down the gauntlet to national associations and invited them to fight for their lives. What was a subtly crafted exchange has suddenly become a zero-sum battle.

Can the industry cope with a referendum in a context where the stakes are pushed as high as they can go? It is surely not worth finding out.

If the Soshanguve process ends in bloodshed the very notion of conducting a secret ballot in the taxi industry would lose all credibility.

Sataco's envisioned ballot, meticulously prepared for, and timed to coax potential belligerents on board, would be stillborn. The industry would find itself back at square one.

To be fair to Judge Ntsebeza, he was asked to deal with an immediate local crisis, not a long-term national project. The pressures brought to bear on the negotiation process were morally powerful and profoundly local in character. Judge Ntsebeza could hardly tell Soshanguve's taxi operators to sit back and wait for the magic to drop in from above.

To be even fairer, Judge Ntsebeza may well believe that the notion of gently nudging the mother bodies out of the future is naïve.

Perhaps it is inevitable that those who stand to lose their empires will, at some point, fight back. Perhaps they must be confronted now.

Nonetheless, the least that can be done is to give the national project a chance. As things stand, its future has suddenly become a betting chip in a dangerous gamble.



High stakes: An agreement brokered between warring taxi associations will see local bodies deciding whether they want affiliations with national organisations

Jonny Steinberg is a senior consultant at the Centre for the Study of Violence

Taxi drivers ignoring new speed limit

(332)

Sowetan 17/12/99

By Eddie Mokoena

DESPITE a new law in force with a revised speed limit of 100km/h for taxis and buses, some taxi drivers are still driving at heart-stopping speeds.

Most taxi drivers are bent on defying both Transport Minister Dullah Omar, who proposed the new speed limit, and National Taxi Drivers Organisation (Natdo) spokesman Mr Sipho Mgabhi.

Mgabhi called on taxi drivers to embark on a go-slow and drive at 60km an hour in defiance of the minister's call but later urged taxi drivers to comply with the law.

Sowetan reporters who went on different routes to check if taxis were adhering to the new speed limit, found that they were still driving very fast.

Along the M2 West highway this reporter saw taxis driving at high speed and exceeding the 120km/h limit for the area.

Sowetan sports editor Molefi Mika, who was driving on the Pretoria-Johannesburg N3 highway, said he saw a minibus taxi which was driving behind him just "zoom past".

"I approximated that the taxi was driving at 140km an hour as I was doing 110km per hour," he said.

Mika said the driver of the taxi immediately reduced speed when he saw a traffic officer's car. "Perhaps he remembered the new law only when he saw the traffic officer's car."

Sowetan assignments editor Willie Bokala, who travels on Main Reef Road between Johannesburg and Roodepoort said: "On this road taxis were driving as if they were in a race for money.

"Generally this road is a 80km/h zone and I drove against the speed at 110km an hour and at least 11 taxis zoomed past me at break-neck speed. They were breaking all the rules as well as jumping red robots."

Bokala added that on this stretch of road the were no visible traffic officers or speed traps. He said the only law enforcement utility was a roadblock in Dobsonville doing a routine check-up on ordinary cars.

But Omar's spokesman Mr Mike Mabasa said the general feeling was that most taxi drivers were complying with the new rule.

"We are aware that for some strange reason some drivers are not complying with the new speed limit," he said.

However, Mabasa warned those who were bent on breaking the law that as from Monday his office will jack-up their efforts. "More traffic officers will be deployed on our roads to maximise our presence on our roads."

Most traffic officers stationed at offices will be deployed on both national and provincial roads.

Taxi agreement gives hope (332)

By Gershwin Chuenyane

THE agreement holding together the taxi industry peace process in Soshanguve, Pretoria, is set to become a model for conflict resolution in other affected areas.

Gauteng transport MEC Khabisi Mosunkutu describes the Soshanguve agreement as an example of what the government hopes can be achieved in the taxi industry as a whole.

"We as government would then take the lessons learned in Soshanguve and apply them to the whole of Gauteng. Soshanguve would become the model.

The agreement, which was signed by the Greater Pretoria Metropolitan Council (GPMC), the South African Local and Long Distance Taxi and Bus Organisation (Sallditbo), Federated Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Felldta), Soshanguve Taxi Owners Association (Sotoa) and Soshanguve Local and Long Distance Taxi Association (Solldta) last Friday, has important cornerstones.

The agreement outlines that:

- The GPMC will control and manage ranks and routes in the area. No individual or taxi association will convert ranks into an exclusive area to intimidate or collect money. The ranks and routes will be used in accordance with rules laid down by the GPMC;
- Long-distance operations will be separated from local operations and different ranking facilities will be provided for the long-distance operators;
- Taxi operators will be free to join a association of choice without fear, or be free to not to join an association at all;
- Solldta and Sotao will cooperate with the registrar's office to finalise their registration.
- Any member of an association wishing to withdraw his or her membership or wishing to join another association will be free to do so.
- Sotoa and Solldta will adopt a standard, minimum constitution which is founded on democratic principles. There will be an obligation to hold elections for office bearers, including an executive committee to fill the positions provided for in the standard minimum constitution;
- The elections will be conducted by an independent agency by means of a secret ballot and only members who are listed through the registration process described above will be eligible to vote;
- The associations agree to conduct their financial affairs in accordance with well-recognised, standardised financial systems provided for in the standard minimum constitution;
- Records of all financial transactions will be open to all members for inspection and query as provided for in the standard minimum constitution. Annual financial reports will be prepared and an external and independent auditor will audit the financial records of the association;
- Only members eligible to vote for the executive in terms of registration records will be eligible to vote on matters concerning smartcards and affiliation to federal structures;
- Federal structures, commonly known as "mother bodies", that is Sallditbo and Felldta will agree that the use of smartcards and the question of affiliation by association to mother bodies be determined by a democratic vote;
- The two mother bodies agree to suspend the affiliation of any local association to themselves until the results of the democratic vote are known. Such suspension includes a suspension of payment of any monies associated with the affiliation.

In addition to the above agreements, all the taxis operating within Soshanguve area will be colour-coded in line with GPMC transport plans to identify them and to ensure their adherence to their routes.

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Taxi tensions run high

(332) Sowetan 21 12/99

By McKeed Kotlolo

GAUTENG MEC for transport and public works Mr Khabisi Mosunkutu entered the fray yesterday in the Atteridgeville, Pretoria, taxi saga but stressed that closing the ranks and routes would be the very last option.

Mosunkutu's visit to Atteridgeville followed Saturday's incidents in which alleged supporters of the outgoing executive committee of the Atteridgeville Saulsville Taxi Owners Association (Astoa) manned roadblocks at the entrance to the township and intimidated drivers who had removed the South African Long Distance Taxi Association stickers.

Most taxi owners and drivers removed the stickers about a month ago in protest against alleged maladministration by Astoa officials. Drivers who had removed the stickers, had them replaced by force and were fined R20 by certain Astoa members at the weekend.

Atteridgeville taxi operators will be holding elections tomorrow and the weekend incident was viewed as a tactic by current Astoa officials to canvass for the elections.

Yesterday Superintendent Roy Govender, of the taxi violence unit in Pretoria warned Atteridgeville taxi associations not to use bullying tactics to canvass for support in the run-up to tomorrow's elections for a new executive committee.

He said SAPS taxi violence unit members would be deployed in the township from today to ensure that nothing disrupts the elections.

Meanwhile, Mosunkutu, who described the situation in Atteridgeville after his visit as "very tense", said the government would follow all the possible procedures to ensure that the situation returned to normal.

He said part of his visit was to assure himself and the government that the "matter does not run out of control", adding that the suspension of taxi operations "will be the very last option".

Mosunkutu said the intention of the government was not to close the taxi business but to ensure that it was fair and democratically operated.

He told *Sowetan* that as a result of the tension in the area, it was necessary to have visible policing. He promised to talk to safety and security MEC Ms Nomvula Mokonyane to discuss the possible beefing up of visible policing.

Today Gautrans and Greater Pretoria Metropolitan Council officials will conduct a workshop on the running of elections and the nomination of candidates at the Atteridgeville Community Hall from 9am.

The elections, which will be conducted by an independent body and monitored by government officials, will be held at the same community hall. Mosunkutu will be back in Atteridgeville again on Thursday to announce the results.

Govender confirmed that a number of taxi owners and operators had laid charges of assault and intimidation against certain Astoa members.

"The incident is purely related to the upcoming elections," Govender said. "Because of the elections different groups are fragmenting themselves and lobbying for support."

Police presence in the area will be increased to ensure the smooth running of the elections.