**National Assembly**

**Question No: 1025**

**Mr K P Sithole (IFP) to ask the Minister of Transport:**

(1) With reference to the rail network that has grinded to a halt in the Eastern Cape, with carriages having been standing idle since 7 January 2022 and the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa citing operational challenges such as theft and vandalism as the reason, and given that a similar situation persists in Cape Town in the Western Cape where trains are also standing still following the problems caused by power-cuts to a major power sub-station, what has his department done to mitigate the effects of the failing rail infrastructure on business operations;

(2) whether his department has intervened with a solid action plan to secure power supply to ensure that trains continue operating in spite of power cuts; if not, why not; if so, what are the full, relevant details? NW1272E

**REPLY**

1. **Eastern Cape Region -** The rail infrastructure in the Eastern Cape is owned and protected by Transnet and as such PRASA utilises this infrastructure by agreement with Transnet. The East London rail corridor cannot be operated using PRASA owned electrical locomotives as the Overhead Electrical Traction power is not available due to vandalism and theft.

PRASA continues to engage with Transnet on recovering and rehabilitating the network. In addition, PRASA is in process of temporary leasing diesel locomotives from the market while pursuing long-term solution to acquire shunting diesel locomotives to mitigate the risk of Transnet locomotives withdrawal and leasing arrangements. The engagement has been escalated to the level of the CEOs at both organisations.

**Western Cape Region -** On 8 March 2022 an ESKOM Traction substation supplying power for the running of Trains in Cape Town in Western Cape was vandalised resulting in the interruption of train service in Cape Town. Eskom responded and repaired damaged equipment and cables and the power supply was restored the following day, on 9 March 2022. PRASA, working in collaboration with ESKOM, has since deployed additional security personnel to guard this important power supply node (and other vulnerable hotspots) for the trains in the Western Cape.

(2) **Eastern Cape Region -** PRASA is intervening with a number of options, the short term being to hire diesel locomotives fit for this purpose to operate both the East London and Gqeberha corridors. In the long term, as part of its initial rolling stock procurement program, PRASA is planning to provide the Eastern Cape with the new fleet of trains as an integral part of its overall rolling stock replacement program.

 **Western Cape Region -** PRASA, ESKOM and TRANSNET have set up Security Response actions as a means to bring better collaboration and resources to secure the SOEs infrastructure against vandalism.

 PRASA has further deployed security in the network to safeguard critical installations, substations, relay rooms and hotspots areas.

 There is a process underway for substations and relay rooms to be installed with “target hardening army spec” security fencing, CCTV surveillance and alarm systems for intruder detection.