



NTA
NATIONAL TAXI ALLIANCE

MEDIA STATEMENT

7th Floor North State Building
99 Albertina Sisulu Road
Johannesburg
2001
Tel: 011 331 9706 / 011 331 5894 / 011 331 9707
Email: nta.taxi@mwebbiz.co.za
nta@nationaltaxialliance.com
www.nationaltaxialliance.com

NATIONAL TAXI ALLIANCE MEDIA BRIEFING ON THE NATIONAL TAXI LEKGOTLA, TAXI RELIEF FUND AND MANAGEMENT OF THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE TAXI INDUSTRY BY THE NTA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPRESENTED BY PRESIDENT MOHANOE FRANCIS MASITSA

Date Issued: 23 OCTOBER 2020

At: Halfway Toyota Fourways – Johannesburg.

On behalf of the National Taxi Alliance leadership, affiliates and members at large, I take this opportunity to welcome all the media houses present here today. Your acceptance of our invitation and your presence here today is much appreciated.

Please allow me to reiterate the, objectives, principles and values which underpin the existence of the National Taxi Alliance. The National Taxi Alliance is an independent taxi organization formed by taxi organizations, associations and operators, primarily to at all times articulate the hopes and aspirations of its members and defend and promote their interests in their quest to provide a seamless, safer, accessible and affordable commuter taxi services.

The South African Taxi industry remains the backbone of the South African economy as the biggest commuter transport in our country, catering for more than 70% of the commuting public and therefore it remains the most important mode of public transport in the economic and social lives of both the middle class and underprivileged South Africans.

NATIONAL TAXI LEKGOTLA

The National Taxi Alliance is not participating in the Provincial Taxi Makgotlas and will not be participating at the oncoming National Taxi Lekgotla. This decision was taken after negotiations between the Minister of Transport, Minister Fikile Mbalula and the NTA deadlocked after the NTA realized that the minister and his department were negotiating in bad faith.

It is indeed bad faith for Minister Mbalula and his department to expect us to participate in the Lekgotla discourse as praise singers of his preferred organization Santaco with no participatory independence and identity. Minister Mbalula and his department have made it abundantly clear that the purpose of the National Taxi Lekgotla in to entrench Santaco as the apex leadership of the taxi industry and to give Santaco statutory powers to regulate the taxi industry. This is tantamount to inviting us to interfere in the affairs of another organization we do not belong to.

Minister Mbalula invited civil organizations and business to the 20 August 2020 National Taxi Lekgotla discourse launch and among many invitees were four independent Trade Union federations, four business representative bodies and all of them were invited with speaking rights irrespective of their same sector representative duplications. Only the NTA was invited to attend the launch without speaking rights. We were forced to decline the invitation after they failed to include us in the programme. This humiliation and trivialization of the NTA is proof of the predetermined outcomes of the National Taxi Lekgotla outcomes.

Minister Mbalula and his department have invoked the failed unification of the taxi industry of 2001 as reasons for not allowing the NTA freedom of association, whereas reality is that, for reasons and conditions similar to the current ekewed organizing of the National Taxi Lekgotla , the National Taxi Alliance officially

pulled out of the 2001 Durban conference after submitting a memorandum of grievances and withdrawal from the conference.

I need to deal at length with the much talked about 2001 “unification” of the taxi industry. It must be noted that the failure of the 2001 project to unite the taxi industry emanated precisely from the partisanship bias towards Sataco by the then MECs and the National Ministry of Transport. It became very clear as the conference started that the main purpose of the conference was to assimilate the National Taxi Alliance into Sataco, by a new name Santaco. MECs and Santaco conspired in choosing delegates to the conference in all the provinces and MECs refused to fund NTA delegates and the national department of transport could only fund twenty delegates from the NTA and consequently the NTA ended with only 20 delegates and Sataco/Protacos with 980 delegates enjoying unfettered support from all spheres of government at the painful exclusion and humiliation of the NTA. After realizing that the NTA was only there to deliver its name to Santaco with no voting delegates and the requisite materials and government support we then delivered our memorandum of grievances and formally withdrew from the conference and left. We subsequently met with the then Minister of transport, the late Abdullar Omar (may his soul rest in peace) and briefed him that our withdrawal from the conference means we will continue as NTA because Freedom of Association is one of the human rights enshrined in the constitution of our country.

We don't regret our decision to refuse to be coopted, because our independence has enabled us to deliver apex projects that directly benefitted taxi operators and catapulted and entrenched them in the middle class economic status. One of such projects negotiated and signed off by the NTA is the Siyaya project which delivered millions of rands to both NTA and Santaco.

The above allegorical references to Santaco are not intended to disparage or impugn Santaco as there are men and women in Santaco we work closely with and have high regard for.

Apart from the above glaring predetermined outcomes of the National Taxi Lekgotla there are many flaws in the documents guiding the National Taxi Lekgotla discourse and we highlight a few of them in this brief.

Minister Mbalula launched the National Taxi Lekgotla discourse on 20 August 2020 and is expecting to complete the process at the end of October 2020. How realistic is this undertaking, given the magnitude of the tasks at hand?

In order for taxi operators to receive the relief fund and qualify for subsidy, taxi operators are expected to register companies and transfer both their Operating licenses and taxis to the said companies, register for corporate tax as opposed to the current personal tax and comply with the Labor Relations Act. This process is painstakingly laborious to the extent that it is humanly impossible to complete in two months. Further compounding the problem is that in terms of the National Land Transport Act NO 5 of 2009, operating licenses are issued to taxi operators in their personal capacity, and taxis are financed in the name of the taxi operator therefore demanding that both the National Land Transport act and the National credit act will need to be amended to accommodate the envisaged changes.

The costs and the advantages and disadvantages of the purported migration to companies have not been determined in order for the taxi industry to see the benefits of migration to companies and the better off benefits of the imagined new taxi industry.

We hear that everything is being rushed through in haste in order for the taxi industry to be included in the 2020/21 financial year public passenger transport subsidies. We strongly believe that, it would be disingenuous for the taxi industry to give away what they have for a subsidy regime and magnitude they don't know or approve.

COVID -19 TAXI RELIED FUND

In response to the undertaking made by His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa to assist businesses in distress due to the Covid -19 lockdowns. Minister Mbalula announced that government had set aside a budget of R1.135 Billion for the taxi industry. A number of meetings were held between the National Taxi Alliance and Minister Mbalula. After failing to convince government to increase the fund given the dire straits the taxi

industry found itself in, we conceded defeat and reluctantly accepted the amount and asked government to expeditiously distribute the funds using the SARS infrastructure. We warned government not to release the money to the taxi bodies, but to deposit it directly into the bank accounts of taxi operators. We were surprised when government subsequently introduced impossible requirements for taxi operators meet as conditions to access the funds, which included registering companies, registration for corporate tax and compliance with the Labor Relations etc.

The corona virus affected the taxi industry operating in its current format and therefore the relief fund was pledged to address the current realities and not the future imagined taxi industry challenges. We have sent a legal letter of demand to the Minister of transport wherein we are demanding that the Minister must confirm within ten days, when they are releasing the money to the recipients, how much operators will receive per taxi and confirmation that the money is still there and that it will be distributed through SARS.

We don't know of any sector among many that benefitted from the government's covid -19 relief fund that were subjected to such stringent and impossible requirements? Why is the taxi industry treated with such disdain?

We expected Minister Mbalula and government to appreciate the devastating effects the Covid -19 lockdowns have had to the taxi industry financially. Many taxi operators have had their taxis repossessed by financial institutions and others are unable to keep their taxis on the road and have therefore lost their only livelihoods. This is happening while the Minister of Transport and government are playing politics while taxi operators are failing to feed, educate and clothe their families.

In the event that government fails to meet the ten days' payment of the relief fund deadline, our lawyers have been instructed to go to court to pray for an order compelling government to payout the relief fund.

COVID-19

The Minister of Transport and his department have reneged on the promises they made to the NTA to deliver three batches of Covid-19 deterrents to the taxi industry throughout the country, i.e. sanitizers, masks and taxi window blockers. Sadly, they only delivered one batch and kept on making empty promises. We are worried that it appears the country is heading towards the second wave of the corona virus and the taxi industry in the absence of proper precautions and availability of deterrents could become a super spreader of the virus.

Our message of maintaining social distance, wearing a face mask at all times, disinfecting and sanitizing taxis has found resonance with our structures and members, however without the requisite materials our efforts will be in vain and we are therefore tinkering on the brink of a catastrophe in waiting.

70% LOADING CAPACITY

After His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the move to the Covid-19 level one restrictions we expected the Minister of transport to announce regulations allowing the taxis operating long distances, i.e. interprovincial and cross border to start loading at fully capacity. Our members operating these routes have been without a stable income for more than seven months and it appears government in this regard has forgotten balancing living with earning a living? It is our firm belief that a taxi that is fully disinfected and sanitized at regular intervals and loading passenger wearing masks and sanitized is as safe as a taxi loaded at 70% capacity. We therefore call upon government to increase the long distances carrying capacity to 100%. Failure to do so is an invitation to taxi operators to break the rules out of desperation.

The National Taxi Alliance remains committed to the unity of the taxi industry in diversity, for the purposes of having a regulated, empowered and professionalized taxi industry, subject to the Minister of Transport in particular and government in general levelling the playing fields, thereby creating a climate conducive to a just, fair and equitable participatory democratic process.

In the light of the above highlighted serious challenges, The National Taxi Alliance has resolved that until the above stated challenges are resolved NTA will not be participating at the Provincial taxi Makgotlas and the

national taxi Lekgotla, but will retain its independence, while existing and functioning within the prescripts of both the constitution of our country and applicable legislation.

On 30 October 2020, we will be announcing the dates for our protest marches against the bad treatment and misrule of the taxi industry by government.

I thank you....


For further details or inquiries, please contact our National Spokes Person, **Theo Malele** at **082 711 7385**



Issued by:



For National Taxi Alliance

 theologa@gmail.com

 Cell: 082 711 7385

Tel: 011 331 9706

 www.nationaltaxialliance.com

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Toll Free: 080 011 33 22