



NEWSLETTER

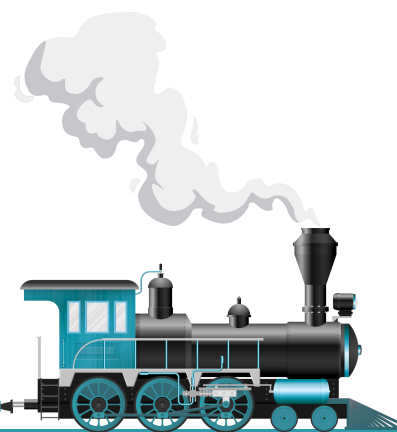


The Future of South Africa's Freight Rail

South Africa's freight rail system, a vital artery for the country's massive mineral exports, is on the cusp of a significant transformation. The government and Transnet are taking a bold step by inviting the private sector to participate in the rejuvenation of key export corridors. This initiative is set to address years of underinvestment and operational inefficiencies that have long plagued the mining industry.

This plan aims to harness private capital and innovation to upgrade and manage crucial rail links, including the corridors connecting the Northern Cape to Saldanha Bay and the Richards Bay coal terminal. By opening the door to private partnerships, South Africa is working to boost its export capacity, streamline logistics, and stimulate economic growth in mining regions.

This revitalization is more than just an infrastructure project; it's a strategic move to ensure the country remains a competitive player in the global mineral market. With a modern and reliable rail network, South Africa can meet the robust global demand for commodities like iron ore, coal, and chrome, securing the future of its mining sector and contributing significantly to the nation's GDP.



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South Africa Joins Global Diamond Renaissance: Fighting Back Against Lab-Grown Rivals

South Africa's cabinet has given the green light for the country to join an international initiative aimed at boosting the marketing of natural diamonds. The move responds to the growing popularity of lab-grown gems and will be funded through a 1% levy on the annual revenues of diamond companies from rough diamond sales.

Minister in the Presidency, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, explained:

"Cabinet has further approved that the diamond industry be requested to contribute 1% of their annual revenues generated from rough diamond sales to support marketing of South Africa's real diamonds, to enable economic growth and job creation."

Mines Minister Gwede Mantashe put it more bluntly:

"Lab-grown diamonds are eating into our dinner. I'm very convinced that the marketing of natural diamonds is a necessary intervention."



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Navigating the Regulatory Labyrinth: The New Mineral Resources Bill

South Africa's mining future hangs in the balance as the Draft Mineral Resources Development Bill of 2025 progresses. The proposed legislation, intended to promote transformation and economic growth, has ignited significant debate and raised concerns across the industry, potentially undermining investor confidence.



A central point of contention is the bill's proposal to re-entrench the **Mining Charter as law**, a shift with far-reaching implications. It could effectively overturn the "once empowered, always empowered" principle, creating a perpetual requirement for new Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) investors and ongoing costs for companies. For investors, this creates significant regulatory uncertainty, making South Africa a less competitive investment destination.

Other major concerns include:

- **Expanded Ministerial Consent:** The bill proposes requiring ministerial consent for every change in control in listed companies, even on foreign stock exchanges. This has been characterized as "extra territorial" regulation, which could deter mergers, acquisitions, and capital flows.
- **Mine Dumps Reclassification:** The bill also proposes to reclassify historical mine dumps as "mines". This imposes new compliance burdens and eliminates the finality of closure certificates, which introduces perpetual environmental liability for companies.
- **BEE for Prospecting:** The application of BEE requirements to the high-risk prospecting phase could "end almost all mining exploration" in the country, stifling the discovery of new reserves.

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The Autonomous Revolution and Digital Twins

The mining sector is at a crossroads. Three of the world's leading consulting firms — PwC, Deloitte, and EY — have released reports highlighting the growing urgency for the industry to transform or risk obsolescence.

The industry is rapidly embracing automation, with self-driving haul trucks already in use at some iron ore and platinum mines. **By 2040, an estimated 40% of South African mines will be using digital twins**—virtual replicas of physical mining sites. These models allow engineers to simulate scenarios, optimize operations, and enhance safety without risk, highlighting the industry's commitment to innovation and safety. The hazardous nature of deep-level mining makes a shift towards technology essential for safety and efficiency

Data Analytics for Operational Intelligence

Beyond automation, the widespread application of data analytics is transforming operations. By collating data from equipment, geologists, and managers, mines can create dynamic maps to improve operating efficiencies across a wide range of functions, from safety and maintenance to financial management. The use of analytics, such as the **system developed by Talbot to manage water usage**, enables proactive, predictive maintenance and better resource allocation, ultimately leading to cost savings and improved environmental stewardship.



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South Africa's Ferrochrome Dilemma

South Africa, the world's leading source of chrome ore, is facing a critical dilemma: despite holding vast reserves, its ferrochrome industry is faltering. A perfect storm of high electricity costs and depressed market prices—currently below the economic viability threshold of \$1 per pound—has forced major players like Glencore to temporarily halt all smelting operations.

The industry's future hinges on two key government initiatives: **lower electricity tariffs** and incentives within Special Economic Zones (SEZs). While these solutions are within reach, the choice is stark. The country must either invest in local beneficiation to capture the significant value-add or risk ceding its industrial dominance by continuing to export lower-value ore.

Despite the short-term challenges, **long-term demand remains strong**, with forecasts projecting 3-4% annual growth in the global market.



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A Bright Outlook for South Africa's PGM Sector

South Africa sits at the core of the global mining industry, and the outlook for platinum group metals (PGMs) is glowing. Around the world, governments are ramping up defence and aerospace spending in response to rising geopolitical tensions—and our PGMs are right at the centre of it all.

These metals aren't just minerals pulled from the earth; they're the backbone of high-tech systems. Think of the avionics that guide aircraft, the heat-shielding components in missiles, or the precision electronics in advanced military gear—platinum, palladium, rhodium, and iridium make them possible.

As innovation in defence accelerates, so does global demand for what South Africa produces best.



But the story doesn't stop with defence. The world's shift toward clean energy is opening new frontiers. Militaries are already exploring hydrogen fuel cells to power vehicles, ships, and drones—and PGMs are essential to that technology. It's a powerful mix of security and sustainability, and South Africa's resources are at the centre of both.

For our economy, this means more than exports. It's about opportunity: jobs, skills development, and new pathways for growth. With our expertise and talent, South Africa is ready to rise to the challenge and lead in a market where the future is already taking shape.

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Modernizing a Traditional Industry: A New Era for Mine Safety Regulation

Mining's Future: Innovation or Risk?



MSHA's latest push to cut red tape and modernize regulations has industry leaders excited—but many workers' advocates warn it could threaten safety. Will these changes lead to a smarter, safer mining industry or open the door to new dangers?

Read more to see which side holds the balance—and how the right talent can shape the future.

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The Legacy Behind the Bilnor Name: The Next Chapter - Part 2 of 4

In Part Two of our interview, Bilnor founder Antoon Lombard highlights how the company grew into a family-led force in mining and engineering, with his sons leading Bilnor Projects and Bilnor Staffing Solutions, stressing that hard work and integrity—"We built Bilnor on principles, not bribes"—remain central to its enduring legacy.

👉 Watch the full interview [here](#)



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September Holidays:

Heritage Day
Wednesday
24th September



Celebrating Women, Building the Future of Mining & Engineering

This Women's Month is a reminder that the mining and engineering industry's future must be built on inclusion as much as resilience.

As our CEO, Antje Lombard, puts it: *"Empowerment isn't just about opportunity; it's about creating a safe, supportive environment where women can lead, innovate, and thrive. By uplifting women, we uplift our entire industry, our communities, and our nation."*

Alongside this, the sector continues to navigate major shifts—from freight rail reform and diamond revival to regulatory challenges and ferrochrome pressures. Meeting these challenges will take adaptability, vision, and a commitment to transformation.

Bilnor remains focused on supporting the people, partners, and pioneers driving that change, and on building an industry defined by strength, connection, and purpose.



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