

Work on digital migration project underway

The work of switching off analogue transmitters as part of the government's digital migration project is ongoing.



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This is in line with President Cyril Ramaphosa's announcement during the State of the Nation Address that the phased switch-off of analogue TV transmitters would begin in March. It is anticipated that this process, which will be done province-by-province, will be completed by the end of March 2022.

As part of World Telecommunications and Information Society Day, the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, will be switching off analogue television broadcast services in Bethlehem, Dihlabeng Local Municipality, on Monday.

Bethlehem is the penultimate high power analogue site to be switched off in the Free State, with Bloemfontein as the final one in the province. This follows a concerted effort by the department, the state-owned companies under its mandate and external stakeholders involved in the digital migration programme.

"So far 16 analogue transmitters have been switched off since March 2021 in the Free State. An additional four low-power secondary sites linked to Bethlehem will also be switched off on the day.

"The analogue switch-off in the Free State is continuing, simultaneously with the switch-off in the Northern Province," the

Ministry of Communications and Digital Technologies said on Thursday.

The Minister said her department is encouraged by the participation of the private sector broadcasters and local electronic manufacturers, in ensuring that households that do not qualify for the subsidy are aptly catered for through existing alternative digital TV reception decoders and television sets in a retail market.

Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams will also visit sites connected to broadband by the SA connect project, a flagship programme of the department. These sites include schools, health facilities, libraries and government buildings in order to improve public access to the internet.

“As a result, to date, 970 government facilities, including hospitals, clinics and schools, are connected to the National Health Insurance database in eight district municipalities across seven provinces.

“One of the most important government objectives is expanding broadband access, and the conclusion of digital migration is an important link in achieving this goal. The conclusion of digital migration will further free up valuable spectrum and thus enable widespread availability of broadband for public and private use,” the Ministry said.

Ndabeni-Abrahams will also test the speed and functionality of broadband connectivity that provides internet access to learners by remotely connecting from a public library in Bethlehem to a school in Phuthaditjhaba in QwaQwa, located 90km from Bethlehem.

World Telecommunications and Information Society Day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 17 May 1969, commemorating the establishment of the International Telecommunications Union.

It is aimed at raising awareness about the possibilities that the internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) can bring to societies and economies.

This year the theme is Accelerating Digital Transformation in challenging times.

“We observe this day when the world is in the middle of a devastating pandemic. The fight against Covid-19 has put into sharp focus the need for the ICT sector to patriotically work as a collective and deploy its capabilities in fighting the spread of the virus,” Ndabeni-Abrahams said.

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