



# TSAKANE COURT BRINGS JUSTICE SERVICES CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES

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*Pictures by: Mokgethwa Ngoepe*

*"Building a court in this area will help ensure greater access by bringing justice services even much closer to the people," Minister Radebe.*



The 17km walk, which the community of Tsakane in the East Rand had to endure to access the justice services, is now a thing of the past as the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, Jeff Radebe, officially opened the new Tsakane Magistrate's Court recently.

The opening of this court formed part of the activities celebrated during the Human Rights Month, International Women's Day, and the department's mission of making sure that justice is accessible to everyone in the country.

Currently, Tsakane has a population of approximately 277 000 with a radius of 7km where the majority of people are low income earners and some unemployed. Since 1960, this community has been serviced by the Brakpan Magistrate's Court which is over 17 km away.

"Building a court in this area will help to ensure greater access by bringing justice services even much closer to the people," commented Minister Radebe. The estimated costs of the construction of this court is around R11 million.

The court has four (4) court rooms which will be used for criminal, civil and equality matters, family law and regional court. There are also four (4) offices for prosecutors, four (4) offices for magistrates, a cash hall, a domestic violence office and a civil clerk office.

It also has a maintenance office, office for the Legal Aid South Africa, court manager's office and three (3) holding cells.

"We prioritised the inclusion of the Legal Aid South Africa because many people using these facilities will need the help of Legal Aid SA especially those who can't afford legal representation on their own," the minister explained.

Tsakane Magistrate's Court now renders full services including the regional court services. It will deal with over 50 percent of matters which were held in Brakpan. "The opening of this court will help ease the workload at the Brakpan Magistrate's Court and further speed up cases in both of these courts," said Constitutional Court Judge Raymond Zondo.

Gauteng Regional Head, Ms Emily Dhlamini explained that officials who work at this court have been professionally trained. "In the past few months, we have placed these officials in different magistrate courts in and around Kempton Park to make sure that they are trained properly on court procedures," she said.

Excited community members also gave the new court a thumbs-up. "Brakpan Magistrate's Court is far and travelling is very stressful for an old woman like me as sometimes I can't even afford taxi fare. I am glad that government has finally answered our prayers and built the Tsakane Magistrate's Court for us," said community member, Ms Tholakele Gumede.

Minister Radebe also mentioned that other major constructions to be launched by the department include the Katlehong Magistrate's Court whose construction has already been completed.

During the event, the minister also participated at the ceremonial signing of contracts with civil society organisations which are guarantees of access to justice and are promoters of constitutional rights programme such as the Foundations for Human Rights.

Community members were also offered an opportunity to interact with the minister through the public participation programme. "If you have any suggestions on how we can improve our service our doors are always open for suggestions," said Minister Radebe. ■

