

Vehicle supply industry lures state official

By [David Furlonger](#)

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South African vehicle components suppliers have poached a senior government official in a move they hope will give them more muscle and insight in future automotive policy negotiations.



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Renai Moothilal, a senior official in the Department of Trade and Industry's automotive unit, is leaving the department after 10 years to become executive director of the National Association of Automotive Component and Allied Manufacturers (Naacam) on 1 September.

In the early phases of South African automotive policy, components companies were viewed by government as junior partners of vehicle manufacturers who received the lion's share of investment incentives.

Although the playing field has levelled in recent years, particularly through the 2013-2020 Automotive Production and Development Programme (APDP), there remains a prevailing sense among many suppliers that they are still playing catch-up. That is one of the reasons Naacam officials approached Moothilal early in 2016 to head their association, which represents about 150 components companies employing 82,000 people - about three times the number employed in vehicle manufacturing. In 2015, suppliers generated R82bn in sales.

Naacam president Dave Coffey said at the weekend that Moothilal's experience and background would "put us across more strongly" in coming discussions on a successor to the APDP. Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies has said he wants planners to look as far ahead as 2035.

Strengthening partnerships

Having already played a part in the transition to the APDP from its predecessor, the Motor Industry Development Programme, Moothilal has been instrumental in laying the groundwork for what has been called the future "automotive master plan". He has also advised many companies across the automotive sector on investment and production.

Coffey said: "He has a very good understanding of the auto sector. His relationships within government will give us a strong partnership with the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) in future."

Moothilal said the department's director general Lionel October had given his blessing to the switch, as it would help build a strong partnership with the sector. "Having been part of strategy development for so many years, I think I can make a different contribution from the outside. I have a number of ideas on what needs to be prioritised and how to optimise the needs of components suppliers."

He said the future success of the motor industry "is necessary for the development of South African industry as a whole".

Source: Business Day

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