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Affirmative action is failing in South Africa

Tue May 15, 3:17 PM ET

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) - After years of affirmative action to correct racial inequalities left by decades of apartheid, management of the South African economy remains largely in white hands, a report said Tuesday.

Corporate compliance with equity legislation was at an "all-time low," the Business Day newspaper quoted a government commission as saying.

Black people were largely consigned to support

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AFP/File Photo: Commuters from the township of Khayelitsha ride a Cape Town train. After years of affirmative...

functions in areas like human resources, corporate affairs and government liaison, according to a report by the Commission for Employment Equity.

"The pace of transformation has been painfully slow," commission chairman Jimmy Manyi was reported as saying.

The number of blacks in top management rose by a "very shocking" 9.5 percent from 2000 to last year.

The number of professionally qualified blacks employed by South African companies declined by 7.6 percent, while that of whites rose 6.1 percent.

The top management representation of white women, who qualify for limited affirmative action promotion, grew from 4.5 percent to nearly 15 percent -- three times their percentage of the economically active population.

This reflected racist preferences of white male managers, Manyi said.

The Star daily quoted him as questioning whether white women should continue benefitting from affirmative action.

"White females are now over-represented at all management levels, and this raises the question whether this group should remain designated."

Black people comprise about 80 percent of the country's 47 million population and women 51 percent.

The South African government has imposed strict equity criteria for businesses and the public sector since the former liberation movement

African National Congress (ANC) came to power as apartheid officially ended in 1994.



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