



South Africa forges forward to redress Imbalances of the past



Article by Nolwazi Ndhlovu, Pictures by Caroline Mokotedi

As South Africa celebrates 30 years of democracy, Deputy Minister Sihle Zikalala says its government will forge forward to redress the imbalances of the past. It will also forge a pathway towards economic empowerment of all its people.

The deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI), and Enterprise iLembe District Champion, Sihle Zikalala, was delivering his keynote address this morning at a Business Breakfast Session of the Enterprise iLembe Economic Development Agency. "At the heart of this endeavour has been the nurturing and promotion of black industrialists—a testament to our commitment to rectify historical injustices and catalyse a new era of growth and opportunity."

"Through targeted initiatives and steadfast policy, the country has witnessed the burgeoning of black entrepreneurship and industrialism, from manufacturing and agribusiness to technology and renewable energy."

The purpose of the breakfast session, was to provide an in-depth exploration of the opportunities and challenges within the infrastructure sector, a foundation of economic growth and development. The Business Breakfast Session brought together key stakeholders from government, business, and civil society aiming to foster meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and innovative solutions for the infrastructure sector.

During this address, the Deputy Minister spoke extensively about the work that government has put forward, in order to invest in infrastructure, and in turn bringing poverty alleviation, by reshaping the economy, driving innovation, creating employment, and opening new markets. In KwaZulu-Natal alone, approximately 4000 jobs are set to be created by 35 Black Industries that have been supported and granted funding by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, says the DM.

Furthermore, Infrastructure South Africa, an entity of DPWI, is providing project preparation funding for developing Special Economic Zones (SEZ). "The SEZ Programme is a critical instrument in the furtherance of the country's industrialisation and inclusive growth ambitions. SEZs present an opportunity to cluster domestic and foreign direct investment into selected geographic zones, that offer world-class infrastructure and improved business operating conditions." Furthermore, the suite of services SEZs offer to investors, mitigates against the risk of business failure and improves the viability of the investment, says Zikalala. In the Newcastle and Ladysmith corridor, the establishment of new leather and textile SEZs, will create 4500 employment opportunities.

DM Zikalala told the participants in attendance at this Breakfast session that government's journey to redress the imbalances of the past is far from completion. However, as the journey continues, the Government of National Unity (GNU) confronts challenges such as barriers to access, financing constraints, and gaps in infrastructure that can hinder even the most promising ventures.

