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# Indaba aimed at harnessing Free State energy

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The Free State premier, Mxoli Dukwana, envisages the planned Energy Security Indaba will provide solutions to enable the province to unlock its full potential for solar energy generation.

Speaking at a media conference on Wednesday, 25 October, he announced the plans of the energy conference, adding that it would attract about 500 experts in the energy field from the public-private sector. The event will be hosted

under the theme "Powering the Future" at the Performing Arts Centre of the Free State (Pacofs) in Bloemfontein.

Dukwana said the discussion would be centred around two sub-themes: "Energy Mix Opportunities, Technologies and Investments", as well as "Energy Regulations, Infrastructure and Efficiencies".

"Serving as a platform for discussion, knowledge sharing and advice, the indaba will also be an attraction for energy investment, for exploration and collaboration within the public-private sector.

"Important stakeholders such as higher education institutions will be part of the discussions to safeguard energy security and the economy of our province," said Dukwana.

He said the provincial government was hopeful to influence policymakers and potential investors to invest in ambitious new solar projects the provincial government was currently developing. These are in Xhariep, Bethulie area, and Lejweleputswa, Goldfields area.

"The area at Bethulie has

been identified due to high solar energy intensity, and offers the second highest next to Upington in the Northern Cape. The Bethulie solar project is 600 megawatt.

"The most important aspect is that the project is close to the grid. We will open a whole new vista of opportunities, whereby we will traverse the complex and yet not insurmountable task of creating jobs, growing our gross domestic product (GDP)," said Dukwana.

He said a solar academy would provide opportunities for

basic in-house skills training.

Dukwana announced that high-level dignitaries who have confirmed attendance of the indaba include the premiers of six provinces: Panyaza Lesufi of Gauteng; Dr Zamani Saul of the Northern Cape; Oscar Mabuyane of the Eastern Cape; Nomusa Dube-Ncube of KwaZulu-Natal; Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane of Mpumalanga; and acting premier of the North West, Nono Moloyi.

Sihle Zikalala, minister for Public Works and Infrastructure, will also attend the gathering.