



public works

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South Africa and Cuba strengthen ties in the built environment

The government is determined to win the war against skills shortage in the construction sector in South Africa and that is why it is pulling all the stops to rope in all the necessary help it can get.

This was said by the Minister of Public Works, Ms Thoko Didiza as she led a high-powered South African government delegation in welcoming 51 Cuban construction experts to South Africa.

The arrival of the Cuban experts follows the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between Cuba and South Africa in July last year. The memorandum of agreement was signed by Minister Didiza and her Cuban counterpart, Mr Fidel Segeroa de la Paz – Minister of Construction in Cuba.

The agreement between South Africa and Cuba entails South Africa employing these Cuban Technical Advisors in the field of architecture, engineering, project management and other fields in the construction and property industries. This move is necessitated by shortage of skills in the built environment in the country.

At the welcoming ceremony, Minister Didiza expressed great optimism that the arrival of these experts will accelerate skills acquisition and breathe a lease of life to an ailing industry because of acute shortage of skilled personnel.

“Our country is in the throes of a massive infrastructure development and improvement programme. The massive growth rates in construction spend of around 10% per annum is unfortunately being hobbled badly by skills and capacity problems in terms of skilled personnel in the built environment.

“The challenge is to get as quickly as possible the largest numbers of skilled artisans and professionals into the sector. That is why we believe that the arrival of these Cuban technical advisors will help us to achieve quick wins in the short term and create a base of skilled professionals for the long term,” she said.

The Minister also emphasized the need for transformation in the built environment. “Even as the government accelerates the infrastructure development, the demographic profile of registered built environment professionals is a long way from reflecting the demographics of the country. The skills base must be stabilized and then built up quickly to provide for the growing needs of our economy,” she concluded.

The Cuban Technical Advisors will be deployed in all South African provinces on a three-year contract during which they will impart technical skills to South Africans they will be interacting with.

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