

Toyota SA opens new manufacturing facility

Toyota South Africa Motors (TSAM) officially launched the South African produced Ses'fikile at a prestigious event held at the newly built Quantum Manufacturing Facility in Prospecton; attended by Minister of Trade and Industry, Rob Davies as well as the Minister of Economic Development, Ebrahim Patel.



Opening the Quantum plant at Toyota's manufacturing facility in Durban is (from left) Japanese ambassador to South Africa, Shigeyuki Hiroki, Minister of Trade and Industry, Rob Davies, Minister of Economic Development, Ebrahim Patel, CEO of Europe and Africa Region of Toyota, Dr Johan van Zyl and Regional Numsa representative, Mbusi Ngubane

Back in 2012, the local Quantum / Ses'fikile assembly plant was opened at TSAM's production facility - prior to that this model was imported in fully built-up form.

But the real the real story has been the switch to local production which saw a wholly operational plant with weld, assembly and paint facilities as well as a full logistics operation taking shape from April 2015, to facilitate the production of the Ses'fikile.

"South Africa is a very important market to Toyota globally in terms of supply to the rest of the world and it serves as a gateway to the African continent. With over R550-million invested in the Quantum plant to date, it certainly underlines Toyota's confidence in this country. This sizeable investment shows that Toyota is committed to development in the taxi industry and to continue its contribution to the country as a whole," said Dr Johan van Zyl, CEO of Toyota Europe and Africa Region.

The Taxi industry in South Africa transports over 15-million people daily, which constitutes 60%-70% of the commuting public and furthermore creates thousands of jobs through entrepreneurship and small business development. This illustrates the importance of this industry in the transport and small enterprise sectors and the need for continuous improvement and development of the vehicles. As importers and manufacturers of taxis in South Africa since 1967, Toyota is synonymous with the Taxi industry and is fully committed to the development of both this sector from an entrepreneurial growth perspective and its associated products such as the ubiquitous Ses'fikile which has benefitted from continuous

improvement aimed at meeting the needs of South African commuters and taxi operators alike.

The new Quantum plant has also contributed to the economy with the creation of over 260 new jobs, raising the full Quantum staff compliment to over 300 of which 45% of the new employees are young professionals between 18 - 35 years old. The added benefit to the country's economy with a new plant of this nature is additional job opportunities in supporting sectors - in this case, 165 jobs were created at supplier level; taking the total amount of jobs created by the Quantum plant to well over 400.

Linked to job creation, people development is an integral part of Toyota's business and as such, it was a major building block for this project and R11-million was invested in upskilling staff at TSAM in preparation for the opening of the Quantum Plant."Toyota is fully committed to the development of our employees and the new plant has allowed many employees, particularly the youth and women, to gain new skills and further develop existing skills. We have also made a commitment to assist in the upliftment of women in manufacturing and engineering through various programmes including a graduate trainee programme," added Dr van Zyl.

With an 80% share of the taxi market in South Africa, it is clear that the local product is the preferred vehicle for transporting customers to various destinations in South Africa. "We are constantly looking for local suppliers to produce the parts and accessories we use for our vehicles. This is imperative to us as it further stimulates the economy and allows Toyota to collaborate with suppliers to get the right product at the right price without compromising our promise of quality, durability and reliability," said Dr van Zyl. Furthermore, TSAM made a considerable investment with suppliers to ensure readiness for Ses'fikile - R24-million was invested with suppliers for development of parts and tooling with a further R71-million invested by suppliers to upgrade their facilities.

"Toyota remains focused on delivering 'Better Cars' and 'Creating Customer Smiles' globally. I believe with Ses'fikile, we are making great strides towards these goals," concludes Dr van Zyl.

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