

Black Industrialists Programme pushing for inclusivity

PRETORIA: The Black Industrialists Programme is set on generating more black industrialists as well as to create greater inclusivity in the economy, says Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies.



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Speaking at *The New Age* breakfast briefing on Wednesday, 3 February, Minister Davies said government has been talking about the need for radical economic transformation in the country.

He said if South Africa is to achieve the targets of higher levels of inclusive economic growth and greater inclusion, the country has to change the productive base of its economy radically.

"We've got to move from being a producer and exporter of primary commodities and that has become more urgent with the current state of prices in the mineral economy. We have to add value and industrialise, that is the common objective.

"At the same time, we have to create greater inclusivity. If the manufacturing sector in particular is going to be a leading force for radical change in the productive base, it has got to become more inclusive," said the minister.

"While Black Economic Empowerment is being introduced in the [manufacturing] sector, there has been a need for a dedicated programme to generate black industrialists who can lead a process of transformation in the sense of promoting greater inclusion in the sector.

"The final document was approved by Cabinet last year and that will bring together a number of agencies that are involved in funding. There will be a forum established that is due to hold its first meeting in March. Applications are also open," said the minister.

He said pledges have been received from several agencies, including the National Empowerment Fund (NEF).

Minister Davies said they are looking to identify industrialists that are personally involved in manufacturing ventures.

"I know that there are capable black industrialists, who are capable of running industrial companies in chemical industries, for example. But we're not at the scale that's required either in terms of the numbers in enterprises... The programme is intended to provide support for that," he said.

The minister's deputy Mzwandile Masina said the programme is intended to get the participation of black people into the productive side of the economy.

"We are trying to ensure that we can ramp-up a number of activities in the manufacturing sector and support those who are doing work in the sector. There are also those who are new entrants, who are graduating from being SMMEs... Those are the main things we are looking at," said the deputy minister.

NEF chief executive officer Philisiwe Mthethwa described the programme as being long overdue. She said the NEF in 2007 set up a strategic projects fund dedicated at unlocking opportunities for black industrialists.

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