

SME Export Incubator to support government objectives

PRETORIA: The Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) - Standard Bank Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Export Incubator will support two objectives of government which are incubation roll-out and export promotion, says Trade and Industry Minister, Dr Rob Davies.



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Speaking at the launch of the incubation centre in Johannesburg on Tuesday, Davies said the challenges posed by the decline in the mineral commodity prices have had a major impact on South Africa as a producer of mineral commodities, therefore South Africa wanted to diversify the economy and move up the value chain.

Taking SMEs to higher levels

"This move will require small enterprises to know their business and what is required for them to be able to move up the value chain. We have engaged chambers of Commerce and Industry regarding building on their membership to take SMEs to higher levels," said Davies.

He highlighted that the Department of Trade and Industry (dti) was running an Export Development programme aimed at ensuring that businesses were ready to participate in international trade by being "export ready" to take their products to other markets. "We want to give businesses a "passport" which will ensure that they are ready to export so when we take them on international missions, they are actually ready to export their products to those markets," he added.

He said the JCCI-Standard Bank incubator programme was welcomed, especially because it was an initiative that was supported by industry, and not relying on government funding. Davies urged other industry players to do the same in order to grow small enterprises.

A pilot programme

Ambassador of Germany in South Africa, Walter Lindner, said the German government is happy to have co-founded the programme as it would contribute to the creation of jobs in the country. "We are using this programme as a pilot, which when successful, could be replicated not only in other parts of South Africa but all over the world," added Lindner.

The three-year incubation programme was co-funded by the JCCI, Standard Bank and Giz to the tune of R6 million. The centre, which currently hosts 15 businesses with a capacity to house 40, will provide formal training on export matters, professional advice and expert mentoring to Gauteng based black SMEs to enable them to become exporters of their product or service on an on-going basis.

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