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department of
Economic, Small Business Development,
Tourism and Environmental Affairs
FREE STATE PROVINCE

Media Statement

To all media houses

14 March 2024

Free State factories rebooted to boost economy and create jobs

Following the successful Free State Investment Conference held two weeks ago, the Free State Provincial Government launched the refurbishment program to upgrade state-owned factories on 12 March 2023, at Botshabelo Industrial Park.

This initiative emanated from the investment conference commitments made by the Free State Government that the province will embark on a transformative mode to create a conducive ecosystem for business growth and innovation, reshape the economic landscape in responding to socio economic challenges, unemployment, and poverty to uplift the lives of the people.

Through DESTEA, the Free State Government focuses on upgrading industrial parks in Botshabelo, Qwaqwa, including Maluti A Phofung Special Economic Zone in Harrismith to allow investors to expand their services and create jobs.

Out of 18 820 jobs sustained in Free State Industrial Parks, currently, Botshabelo Industrial Park has 6000 people working and has the potential to add more 5000 jobs if the factories could be optimally utilized.

On the day of the launch, Ms Naledi Phahlo, a founder and director of DeeDee Hygiene Solutions- -beneficiary in one of the refurbished factories in Botshabelo Industrial Park who manufactures quality detergents for households and industrial use, perfumes, diffusers, and car cleaning products, and PPE, shares her business journey on how the Free State Government upscaled her business.

"I am truly witnessing the faithfulness of God in my entrepreneur journey. I am honored to be one of the young businesswomen who witnessed the assistance of the Free State Government, both financial and non-financial support in bookkeeping training, to sustain my business, contribute to the economy, and create jobs.

I am the winner of DESTEA's 2023 Youth Business Pitching Program and scooped the business value amount of R120 000.

Furthermore, I was assisted with power mixing equipment and offered the opportunity to be part of the exhibitors at SAITEX; the market access exhibition for African buyers and sellers where I met with potential buyers from Zambia who were interested in buying my products in bulk.

However, towards the finalization of the contract, they visited my company and realised that the operating space was not up to the standard as I was operating from a confined space and such alarmed their concern and doubted my capacity.



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Thereafter, I approached DESTEA and FDC for operation space at Botshabelo Industrial Park, and today, the Premier of the Province, Ntate Mxolisi Dukwana together with DESTEA MEC Thabo Meeko showered me with the refurbished factory which will unlock my historical challenges and move forward to accelerate my business and create more jobs", said Phahlo.

As announced during the State Of The Province Address, about R81,5 billion in pledges was secured at the 2nd Investment Conference.

"This is a clear demonstration that indeed Free State is in a mode to unlock economic challenges because just within ten days of the conference, my dreams of expanding the business are realised," Phahlo added.

During the launch, the security system at the industrial park became an alarming issue as some of the SMMEs in the area experienced unfortunate incidents such as crime and vandalism; such behaviour decelerated their businesses.

MEC Meeko responded that based on available limited resources, the department working together with FDC and relevant stakeholders will reinforce and address the security issue because such conduct becomes a threat to industrialization and economic development.

When closing, Premier Dukwana highlighted the province's strategic focus on diversifying its economic base and fostering sustainable development. He further explained that Free State is committed to working closely with investors and the business community to ensure the swift implementation of projects such as the refurbishment of state-owned factories with a strong focus on community engagement and local empowerment.

"Free state remains dedicated to fostering an open and collaborative environment for all stakeholders for the benefit of setting a solid foundation for future prosperity," Premier concluded.

More investors in need of operation space are called upon to apply in order to grow their businesses and create much-needed jobs.

END

Issued by the Free State Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA).

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