

New technology transforming media industry

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BLOEMFONTEIN: New technologies are transforming the media landscape and creating new opportunities for the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector, says Communications Minister Faith Muthambi...



"The media sector plays a key economic, social and cultural role in bridging the gap between government and citizens," the Minister said at the Free State provincial government ICT Summit in Bloemfontein on Wednesday.

However, Minister Muthambi said this growing synergy between traditional media, internet and social media has highlighted the need to address the twin issues of ownership and content in both print and broadcasting media.

The Minister said since the advent of democracy, the print media in particular has remained dominated by a few companies with insignificant participation by historically disadvantaged individuals and companies.

She said management, control and influence on content must be diversified to allow new market entrants.

Minister Muthambi said the department intends to develop policies and strategies that will transform the media industry so it more accurately reflects the aspirations of the public.

"These will include the development of a media transformation policy and a community media support strategy.

"This is to strengthen government's current commitment to support community media through capacity building, infrastructure and advertising.

"Diversity and plurality at an ownership level, content development that reflects the South African story - particularly news, language, information and analysis - will continue to inform the key principles underpinning our policy and legislative work,"

she said.

ICT

Minister Muthambi said humankind is standing on the cusp of an information and technology revolution. "The question remains how we harness this potential to the benefit of all.

"It is often said that completion drives invention. We must therefore ensure that our ICT sector is both competitive and robust as this will boost investment by the private sector.

"I have no doubt that sustained investment will give rise to greater innovation and development of the ICT sector to the benefit of us all," she said.

Government has already identified the communications sector as a critical growth sector. The National Development Plan (NDP) recognises that the ongoing development of quality communications infrastructure, services, content and applications, is key to the rapid economic, social and cultural development of the country.

Minister Muthambi said working with partners in BRICS, government is beginning to put in place the building blocks of relevant development communication to reach the masses, driven by their respective ICT industries.

She promised to invite some of the participating organisations at the ICT Summit to accompany a delegation to the Russian Federation to explore partnerships with their counterparts in the ICT industry.

Minister Muthambi urged delegates to use the Summit to this platform as a roadmap for the further rollout of ICT in the Free State.

"Let us not leave our people wanting; let us use this platform to build an ICT legacy that will help to unleash the inherent educational, social and economic capital of our people.

"Together we can put the Free State on the path to an ICT revolution and move South Africa forward," she said.

ICT Summit

The three-day provincial government ICT Summit is aimed at establishing strategic partnerships through collaboration and information sharing between government and industry, as a process of advancing the status of the ICT industry in the province.

Through the ICT Summit, the provincial government aims to chart a collaborative future that leads towards improvement of service delivery through ICT.

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