

## Craft sector supports govt priorities

PRETORIA: The South African craft sector supports government's priorities like women empowerment and rural and urban development, Deputy Trade and Industry Minister Elizabeth Thabethe says.



Speaking at the ceremony of the 32nd India International Trade Fair in New Delhi on Wednesday, 14 November 2012, Thabethe said the sector also supported the state's priorities of developing small enterprises, promoting export and the local beneficiation of products.

"It is precisely for this reason that the craft sector in South African has been identified as a strategic sector in our Industrial Policy Action Plan. The plan focuses on scaling up efforts to promote long-term industrialisation and industrial diversification beyond the current reliance of traditional commodities and non-tradable services. The craft sector has the potential to create jobs due to its low entry barriers," said Thabethe.

The sector, she added, also contributed to the country's tourism industry.

"The sector also complements our tourism industry and provides a bridge between informal and formal employment. It also provides innovation and design skills to other sectors such as clothing, textile, furniture and jewellery," said Thabethe.

South Africa boasted deep-rooted cultural traditions in the field of arts and crafts, said the deputy minister, adding that the craft heritage was a major asset in economic terms in that it generated jobs, household income and stimulated local, particularly rural economic development.

The deputy minister expressed optimism and confidence that South Africa's participation in the India fair would lead to greater awareness of the country's capabilities in the crafts market and an increase in the supply of the products to India and the neighbouring countries.

"It will also lead to greater cooperation and friendship between South Africa and India, which both share and cherish the ideals of freedom and democracy," Thabethe said.

The fair was opened by Indian President Pranab Mukherjee and it will run until 27 November. Thirty-three South African crafters are exhibiting their products and more than 60 countries are participating in it.

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