

R886m invested in varsity ICT

The Higher Education and Training Department says R886 million has been invested in connecting South African universities and public research organisations to each other at a minimum speed of 10 gigabits per second.



(Image: GCIS)

Deputy Minister Professor Hlengiwe Mkhize announced this on the eve of her departure for a two-day Southern African ICT for Education Summit in Zimbabwe, where she will make a presentation on "Investment in ICT for Higher Education" in South Africa.

"The intention is to connect learning institutions located in rural areas to each other and to other institutions in the country, while at the same time fostering collaboration and exchange of information," said Mkhize.

The South African National Research and Education Network (SANREN) project is expected to create a network between higher learning institutions and research organisations in a few years' time, and investment into the project has been made since 2007.

Mkhize delivered her presentation today, 26 January 2012, to ministers and deputy ministers from various countries in the Southern African region and top leadership of global ICT industry players.

Poverty, poor infrastructure, but...

While counting poverty, poor infrastructure in rural areas, patriarchy and the unavailability of enabling gadgets for disabled people among the key barriers to ICT access in higher education in South Africa, Mkhize was quick to point out that government investment in ICT infrastructure would ensure the effective utilisation of ICT tools in education.

Government has made significant investments in ICT infrastructure to turn the situation around by using ICT more to benefit the higher education sector and to improve the country's global rating on the index.

"At least R500m has been allocated for the rollout of a national wireless broadband network by Sentech, and this will specifically focus on rural areas," Mkhize said.

SANREN project

An additional R300m has been allocated to upgrade the country's existing broadband, increase the network's capacity and reach and provide a backbone for Sentech's broadband network.

"This is in addition to the R886m that has been invested in the SANREN project over the past five years, and this is the country's broadband connectivity network for public research institutions and universities which is also linked to the international network," Mkhize said.

The Southern African ICT for Education Summit 2012 will have Ministers of Education, as well as Ministers of Information and Communication Technology from Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Botswana, Zambia, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, South Africa and the host country Zimbabwe deliberating on the issues over two days.

Representatives from universities, global ICT industry players, the USAID, UNESCO, African Development Bank and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa are some of the stakeholders participating in the event, which is a follow-up from the first one that was held in Morocco in July last year.

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