

"Year of the Artisan" to help address critical skills shortage

PRETORIA: Higher Education and Training Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, has placed focus on the country's need for more artisans by declaring 2013 as the "Year of the Artisan".

South Africa needs more artisans as part of the national strategy to deal with the shortage of critical skills.

Last year, in his State of the Nation Address, President Jacob Zuma said the massive investment in infrastructure must produce more than just power stations, rail lines, dams and roads - it must industrialise the country, generate skills and boost much needed job creation.

An allocation of about R1 trillion has been for the Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs) - which include the building of roads, schools, universities, harbours, power stations and other social and economic infrastructure.

Speaking at the launch of the "Year of the Artisan" initiative on Monday, 4 February 2013, at the Ekurhuleni West Further Education and Training (FET) College's Tembisa Campus, Nzimande said that to successfully deliver on the SIPs, the country needed artisans.

He said the growth of industry as well as the SIPs - some of which are already being rolled out - required a significant number of qualified and competent artisans.

"The launch today is in direct relationship to a number of interventions we have taken as a department in systemically addressing the shortage of skills in the country. One of those interventions was the National Artisan Development Conference that we held in July last year.

"Through that conference, we established a platform that will annually review the state of artisan development in South Africa and allow for discussion and consultation on how to continually improve the National Programme for Artisan Development, known as: "7-Steps to Becoming a Qualified Artisan," Nzimande said.

Higher Education and Training Deputy Minister, Mduduzi Manana, will lead the initiative in all provinces, where the option of artisanry as a career option for the youth and other out of school adults will be widely communicated and promoted.

Meanwhile, Nzimande announced that the Green Paper on Post School Education and Training, launched last year in January, was due out soon. He commended the stakeholders involved for resounding response and support into the process.

"It has helped shape our thinking on the challenges, purpose, organisation and priorities of the post school system in South Africa."

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