



MEDIA STATEMENT

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Job creation initiatives in the Free State received a shot in the arm with a R35 million investment for the establishment of a high tech medical manufacturing facility in Kroonstad. Unicore Trading (Pty) Ltd, a black economic empowerment company with a broad based investor profile has commissioned a 6000m² which will be the pilot for other manufacturing entities to be set up in Parys and Sasolburg which will ultimately form part of the Free State “manufacturing triangle”.

Unicore will manufacture medical products such as bandages, gauzes, abdominal swabs, hospital linen, uniforms, linen savers, etc. Initially the Kroonstad facility will begin with an employee workforce of about 150, but will at full production, employ about 350 floor workers directly in the manufacturing process. In terms of the bandage and gauze manufacture these will be new product and technologies for the Kroonstad area, and will impart significant on new skills transfer to the workers.

Parys is earmarked for the establishment of a full safety product manufacturing facility, products ranging from arc flash suits, fall arrest harnesses and belts, chemical suits, life jackets etc. It is anticipated that about 450 people will be employed in this facility.

The location of the Sasol plant in Sasolburg has prompted the decision to locate a medicals product extrusion plant in the area. Sourcing of medical grade pvc granules from one of the country's premier marques, will ensure the manufacture of quality medical grade plastic face masks, plastic chest drains, nasal cannulae, Yankauer suction units, suction catheters etc. This unit will employ between 80 to 100 people.

The Free State Province will also serve as the springboard into Africa, for companies wishing to invest in South Africa. Qatar Germany Medical Devices (QGMD) and Qatar Pharma, Doha based companies are manufacturers of quality safety syringes, needles and IV catheters, utilizing worldwide patented technologies and processes and world standard IV Fluids respectively.

Atramat, based in Mexico is presently the world's 4th largest manufacturer of

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absorbable and non absorbable sutures.

The above companies are CE marked, ISO certified entities which manufacture under the most stringent quality controls.

All these entities will ultimately ensure the establishment of a Medical Centre of Excellence in Bloemfontein. This will be the state of the art facility to manufacture patented medical products. The establishment of these manufacturing entities will have long term benefits for the Free State province. Amongst others will be transfer of new skills into the local community, numerous new micro and small entities will evolve from these manufacturing entities from logistic support to supply and also the contribution to the currency circulation within the province is estimated to be in excess of 4 times, resulting in increased contribution to the provincial fiscus.

According to Free State MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Mr Mxolisi Dukwana, the realization of this investment is the results of elaborate investment promotion strategy of the Free State aimed at attracting investments into the province to create inclusive and diversified economy for creation of decent jobs.

These developments are integral part of “The dawn of new economic era in the Free State” as espoused by MEC Dukwana in his budget speech earlier this year. Tabling his department’s 2010/11 budget he said, “We will use the budget to leverage private sector funding to achieve shared growth and integrated development in the Free State. This could be just one of the ways to stimulate the Free State economy to perform as well as the surrounding economies. Our primary aim has been and still is to introduce local value added activities. In this way, surely we will ensure stimulation of different economic sectors which will be inclusive and benefit many”

The cornerstone project namely the Kroonstad manufacturing facility will be officially opened by President Jacob Zuma on the 16th September 2010.

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