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# INDUSTRIAL FOCUS

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## RBIDZ: Scaling to greater heights with investment attraction despite challenges



KWAZULU-NATAL Premier, Sihle Zikalala led the latest provincial government engagements with international diplomats and international investors in Gauteng recently. This was done in an effort to reassure them of the province's readiness for business, and of the stabilisation of economic activities following the recent destruction caused by the riots and looting across the country.

Zikalala also emphasised the importance of getting this key message shared far and wide, in order to revive confidence and investment undertakings in the province. The unrest caused damage and destruction of close to 40 000 businesses, and cost the KZN economy more than R20 billion. Further to this, 150 000 jobs were lost.

The KZN provincial government's recent assurances and fruitful engagements are contributing to an influx of inbound trade missions to investment destinations such as the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone (RBIDZ), for the identification of business opportunities in different sectors of the economy. The critical sectors of focus, which are also primed by the KwaZulu-Natal province, are mainly geared towards socio-economic stability and labour intensity. These are also the ones that the RBIDZ is luring investors towards.

From the economic interventions and communication of cohesive messages that call for active participation in the economic recovery plan, provincial government is making major strides towards rebuilding the KZN economy. In line with government's mandate of facilitating economic growth through the attraction of sustainable investments and job creation, the RBIDZ is well-paced and strongly making strides with investment attraction, having recently hosted His Excellency, Alexander D Sidoruk, the



From left: Mel Clark (RBIDZ Board Chairperson), MEC Ravi Pillay (KZN EDTEA), His Excellency Alexander Sidoruk (Belarus Ambassador to SA), Thabane Zulu (RBIDZ CEO) and Noah Nyawo (Chairman, Nqanawe Holdings).

Belarus Ambassador to South Africa. Ambassador Sidoruk was joined by a delegation of investors who have formed a joint venture with a local investor, Nqanawe Holdings. This joint investment will see the two partners venturing into a ground-breaking investment of a tractor assembly plant, which will be built at an estimated cost of R800 million. This will be the realisation of the dream of having the first tractor brand built in South Africa and its location being at the RBIDZ. Noah Nyawo, chairman of Nqanawe Holdings remarked that this "will undoubtedly create much-needed jobs, stimulate the economy, increase the green footprint and deal with food security".

The intense, two-day engagement was presided over by Ravi Pillay, KZN

MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, and Thabane Zulu, RBIDZ CEO, supported by the uMhlathuze Local Municipality. In addressing the delegation, Pillay highlighted that even before the outbreak of Covid-19, the RBIDZ had already signed investments worth more than R11 billion across different key sectors of the economy. He elaborated further that during the pandemic, the RBIDZ continues to attract significant investments to the province in line with its mandate.

The MEC expressed delight in recognising the joint venture for looking beyond the Covid19 challenges and rather focusing on being part of the journey to create a better future. He further assured the delegation of

government's support of the partnership between the investment companies. "As government, we are fully committed to this partnership as we believe it augurs well for our recovery plans, especially in relation to manufacturing, which is one of our key sectors. Before the outbreak of Covid-19, the manufacturing sector accounted for more than 20% of the provincial employment and contributed 25% to the province's GDP. This can be attributed largely to the investment incentives that this government offers to investors and companies that locate their manufacturing base in our province," said Pillay.

"The province is determined to recover this sector as well as others, and grow them beyond the pre-pandemic levels."



The Nqanawe Holdings and Belarus delegations during the site visit.

KZN's economic recovery and transformation plan provides a clear blueprint on how it is stimulating growth across the various sectors. As part of the plan, the province has identified 14 key economic sectors, including:

- Agriculture and agro-processing
- Clothing and textiles
- Creative industries
- Finance and services
- Fourth industrial revolution (4IR), ICT and innovation
- Health innovation and manufacturing
- Industrial development
- Informal sector
- Infrastructure development
- Trade and investment
- Mining and mineral beneficiation
- Oceans economy
- Tourism

"The partnership between Nqanawe Holdings and Minsk therefore feeds into at least three of the above mentioned key areas – namely agriculture, manufacturing and investment attraction. Nqanawe

Holdings will be able to manufacture tractors locally, and projections are that this could increase local content. This will work perfectly for our agriculture mechanisation efforts and also for our efforts of localisation across sectors. That is why we want to see this partnership being successful," said Pillay.

In addition, the close proximity of the RBIDZ to the industrial ports of Durban and Richards Bay will enable the investor to export to countries around the world. The partnership therefore reaffirms that KZN remains a wise choice for both local and international investors.

The MEC further assured investors that the provincial government has succeeded in restoring law and order.

"We want to assure you that investing in KwaZulu-Natal remains a smart move at this time, as all communities, labour and businesses are working together to rebuild the economy. KwaZulu-Natal is rising once again and scaling to greater heights."

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