

Smart Skills Centre opens in Saldanha Bay

The Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority (CHIETA) has become the first to make the new vision a reality by unveiling the CHIETA Smart Skills Centre in Saldanha Bay, Western Cape.



CEO of CHIETA Yershen Pillay, Chairperson of MCT SETA Simphiwe Thobela, Minister of Higher Education Dr Blade Nzimande, CHIETA Chairperson Wezi Khoza and Executive Mayor of Saldanha Bay, Andre Truter, as well as Industrial Development Zone Kaashifah Beukes

The aim of the R3m centre, which was unveiled on Tuesday, 25 October 2022, is to bridge the digital skills divide and accelerate the development of basic digital skills for a future-fit workplace.

This comes after the Higher Education, Science and Innovation Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, articulated a vision for Smart Skills Centres to be established in all parts of the country in 2020.

“The Smart Skills Centres were planned to usher in a new era of skills development and training that would be located within rural communities and able to offer digitised training programmes for rural masses,” the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) said.

The launch, according to CHIETA, follows the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, less than a year ago, with the Saldanha Bay Industrial Development Zone (SBIDZ) Licensing Company.

The project is the culmination of a partnership between CHIETA, the Industrial Development Zone (IDZ), the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (Nemisa), and the Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority (MICT SETA).



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28 Jul 2022



“The CHIETA Smart Skills Centre is but one of nine Smart centres that will be developed across the country by CHIETA,” the authority said.

The centre’s services are free and include access to data and training courses aimed at job seekers, business start-ups and small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) that wish to grow their operations.

The centre is fully automated and features equipment, which is in line with the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) training requirements.

Nzimande said CHIETA and the Freeport Saldanha IDZ recognised the need to develop digital readiness through technology-enabled learning programmes like virtual and augmented reality, robotics, and the internet of things, among others.

“I congratulate CHIETA’s visionary leadership for conceiving the idea of such a centre and for locating it with the Saldanha Bay Industrial Development Zone.”

He said that the centre would increase the number of sustainable businesses and available talent, ensuring that the Saldanha Bay economy grows.



Saldhana Bay Smart Skills Centre

CHIETA CEO Yershen Pillay has described the CHIETA Smart Skills Centre as a game-changer in skills development and training.

“Rural communities will now have access to free data and Wi-Fi services as well as basic digital skills and 4IR-related training thereby ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital skills revolution.”

He believes that what makes the centre unique is its accessibility to rural communities and the virtual reality or virtual reality-based training for artisans.

Pillay said the centre will include a digital boardroom for SMMEs and cooperatives to conduct meetings with potential clients.

“The centre will also offer skills programmes in the areas of 5G cellular networking, data analytics, technopreneurship, Java programming and cybersecurity.”



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In addition, CHIETA has committed to enrolling 50,000 learners in digital skills programmes through its centre by March 2025.

“This will ensure that people are equipped with the necessary skills to excel in the workplace.”

According to Nemisa CEO, Trevor Rammitwa, there are more than 3,000 online courses on offer, while the organisation will also avail its training facilitators for face-to-face classes.

“The centre is an exemplar in the pursuit of excellence in tech education, research and development towards high calibre solutions and the generation of business that find opportunities to drive innovation as part of Saldanha Bay’s socioeconomic development,” said Freeport Saldanha IDZ CEO, Kaashifah Beukes.

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