

ABOUT US

The eZasegagasini Metro is the official eThekweni Municipality publication through which ratepayers and residents are kept informed about news, entertainment and perspectives in the greater Durban region.

It is also a forum for readers' views. It hits the streets fortnightly on a Friday, with 450 000 copies distributed throughout the region.

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KEN MCHUNU

SHORTLY after receiving the country's most prestigious municipal prize – the Vuna Award – for best-run municipality late last year, eThekweni scooped, for the second time, the ZK Matthews award at the ANC's 95th anniversary recently.

The award is conferred every year on the best performing group of ANC

Councillors win party award

councillors in the country.

Mayor Obed Mlaba said the award had been named after one of the ANC's greats of yesteryear. He said it was the ANC's way of acknowledging councils and councillors who had put in place policies that helped communities actively participate in government.

It was "an enormous privilege for the city" to win the award for the second time, he said. EThekweni first won it in its inauguration year, in 2001.

"Although we haven't fully achieved it yet, we, according to the ANC, are the municipality which has come closest to introducing policies

that fit in the definitions of the development state, that encourages a people-centred government," he said.

Mlaba said eThekweni had come a long way in building the city's economy and ensuring residents played an active role in the process.

"It is encouraging to know

our efforts are recognised," Mlaba said, adding that the city now faced the challenge of keeping the award. "It is a floating award, so we need to keep our focus to continue being the country's best."

President Thabo Mbeki presented the award to Mlaba and City Manager Michael Sutcliffe at the ANC's anniversary celebrations, held in Witbank.

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KZN car makers in top gear

SOHANA SINGH

THE automotive industry in KwaZulu-Natal will get a cash injection of R7-million over the next three years thanks to a public-private partnership involving the municipality and the Durban Automotive Cluster.

Both partners have agreed to contribute to improving the competitiveness of the regional automotive sector and recently signed a memorandum of understanding, sealing this commitment.

"This memo is an extension of an existing partnership we have had with the industry roleplayers," said City Manager Michael Sutcliffe.

"Thus far the partnership has proved very successful in improving the industry, and we look forward to another three-year partnership with the cluster.

"The automotive industry contributes significantly to the region and this joint venture proves our commitment to growing the industry and the economy as a whole," said Sutcliffe.

Wolfgang Ropertz, Chairman of the cluster, said the partnership addressed local economic challenges and promoted broad based black economic empowerment.

He said the main challenges faced by the industry could be grouped into the following areas: advancing competitiveness requirements; more onerous compliance requirements; managing operational risk; transformation; and developing skills to world-class levels.

Through its programmes, which include supplier competitiveness, logistics co-ordination, human resources development, industry transformation and manufacturing excellence, the cluster had been able to outperform the rest of the country.

The growth and competi-

tiveness progress of the regional industry has been impressive over the past few years.

For example, real revenue growth among component manufacturers in KwaZulu-Natal was an estimated 36% from 2002 to 2006, which was higher than the growth of 16% and 4% recorded by the Eastern Cape and Gauteng respectively.

Jobs

Job growth has also been positive with local firms increasing employment by an estimated 34% versus 26% in the Eastern Cape and 15% in Gauteng.

Investment in the industry has continued to outperform that of the Eastern Cape and Gauteng.

Over the past year, KwaZulu-Natal firms spent on average 5.1% of their turnover on capital equipment, compared with 2.6% and 4.2% in the Eastern Cape and Gauteng respectively.

Greenfield and foreign direct investment among component manufacturers in 2005/6 was estimated at more than R2-billion.

Investment at Toyota over the same period was estimated at more than R8-billion. Some of the more impressive figures in this regard include Toyota embarking on a ramp-up of production to 220 000 vehicles a year.

Thabani Shale, Portfolio Manager of the cluster, said the focus areas until 2009 would include bolstering the transformation programme, supervisory training, procurement forum, joint auditing and procurement, and the facilitation of the HIV/Aids workplace programme.

"We aim to ensure the region's automotive sector continues to report economic growth ahead of the South African average," he said.



ABOVE: Jonathan Edkins, eThekweni's Head of Architecture, and Miller Matola, Chief Executive of the International Convention Centre, at a preview of the centre's new arena
Picture: BONGA MSIMANG



LEFT: George Benson and Al Jarreau will be performing at the arena's official opening in March

Arena nears completion

FINOLA QUARSINGH

WITH less than 10 weeks to go before the opening of its R460-million indoor arena, excitement is mounting at Durban's International Convention Centre (ICC).

The indoor arena, due to open on 20 March, will be able to accommodate audiences of up to 10 000 and is designed for staging indoor concerts and sports events, including boxing, wrestling, tennis, hockey, netball, gymnastics, ice shows, motocross and equestrian events.

It is expected to put Durban in an exclusive club – among the few cities in the world with a convention centre with an indoor arena of this magnitude.

The city's Head of Architecture Jonathan Edkins said: "The department was involved in identifying the need for expansion of the facility and developing an indoor arena as well as ensuring the sustainability of the ICC – one of the municipality's biggest investments and most successful initiatives.

ICC Chief Executive Miller Matola said: "This new facility will enhance our competitive edge in the global market."

The arena has an entirely flat floor, with the loading bays and entrances all on one level, allowing for simple, cost-effective set-up and logistics. The space will be able to accommodate heights of up to 12m and, through a system of moveable walls,

can also be divided into smaller halls. The facility covers 3 896m², bringing the ICC's total floorspace to 10 450m².

Matola said: "The arena will make the ICC more accessible. We look forward to giving residents the opportunity of taking pride in this city asset as they attend the line-up of exciting concerts, cultural and sporting events planned for the near future."

Two of the world's finest songwriters, singers and recording artists, George Benson and Al Jarreau, will be performing at the arena's official opening. There will be a public performance the following night, on 21 March and tickets will be available from Computicket.

ZAMASWAZI NDLOVU

STEPS are afoot to attract more young people into the construction industry.

The Cato Manor Area Based Management team has formed a partnership with the education sector to promote the industry to the city's

young people as a career option and as a way to contribute to the economy.

A Youth Construction Expo is planned for early next month at the eThekweni

College, in Cato Manor, where institutions of higher learning and businesses involved in the construction industry will showcase their activities.

The theme of the event is "Young Women and Men Building a Strong Foundation for the Future."

At the two-day expo, on 2 and 3 February, captains of

industry will display their wares and talk to young people from across the city.

Tertiary institutions will display study opportunities.

A survey by the city has found that KwaZulu-Natal has a shortage of skilled artisans in the construction sector.

Focus on building industry