



## ENERGY SECURITY TOP PRIORITY AT RICHARDS BAY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ZONE



The CEO of the Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone (RBIDZ), Thabane Zulu, believes that without energy there is no growth in our economy and that special attention should be given to addressing the issue.

In an exclusive interview with the Daily News, Zulu tapped into the current energy crisis faced by the country and gave pointers on things to be tackled immediately to curb the crisis. He said the country must first assess the resources it had at its disposal and ensure that these were channelled in a strategic way. "It's an unfortunate situation that we find ourselves in but is not necessarily an exception.

Remember also, the issue of energy becomes a security issue and not just a supply of a service. It is a security issue because everything happening in any establishment is sustained through the availability of energy. I think the current situation needs closer attention," said Zulu. "You can't be promoting different sectors for economic growth and at the same time don't invest in your energy sector.

That is just a risk as a country we cannot afford." Zulu has been at the RBIDZ helm since July 2020 after taking the reins from Kaya Ngqaka, who was seconded to the Dube Trade Port Special Economic Zone to act as CEO. He previously held the position of director for International Trade and Development for Africa and the Middle East at the Department of Trade and Industry, showcasing his exposure to the investment facilitation sector.

Thabane Zulu, CEO of Richards Bay Industrial Development Zone, has injected hope about energy security in the future. He also served as a director-general in the Department of Energy. Under his leadership, he has managed to scoop some awards, including the Most Improved BBBEE Compliant Award and the biggest African Energy Leadership Commendation Award from the African Energy Leadership Organisation in Houston, in the US.

Speaking of the award, Zulu said that it was humbling and although it was given to him individually, it was for different teams he has worked with, in particular when he was the director-general at the Department of Energy. "The establishment of different IDZs in the country was a result of the realisation of the importance of developing the economy. Obviously, in KZN we have two, which are the Dube Trade Port and RBIDZ.

"The fundamental objective is developing various infrastructure is to attract and support both domestic and international investment with the sole purpose of creating jobs," said Zulu. He said that they aimed to do this through a battery of interventions which included skills development and the development of small and medium enterprises. "Currently, we have four projects that include an Eskom project, which is a development of 3 000 megawatts worth R75 billion.

"There's a company that is developing a product which deals with paint pigmentation to be used on different products and that is worth R4.5bn," he said. Zulu said that they had decided to focus on the energy sector and were also participating in other sectors for their own growth. Touching on the unemployment rate facing the country's youth, he said that they had developed a programme called Nal'ithemba Enterprise Development, which dealt with skills development, relevant to identified sectors. He added that their programmes targeted the youth and women.