

Dube TradePort Special Economic Zone Investor BSG and Technologies Launches AI-Powered Robot

Dube TradePort Special Economic Zone investor BSG and Technologies launches Iris, an Artificial Intelligence Humanoid Tutor Robot, a South African First. BSG and Technologies designed their robot to support teaching and learning; IRIS can communicate and teach in all 11 official South African languages and supports multiple subjects, aligned with the South African educational curricula, while also accommodating private and independent school curricula, from Grade R through Grade 12 and tertiary education.

“BSG and Technologies was established in 2017, initially operating as BSG Community Development with a strong focus on science, technology, education and community development. The organisation later expanded and evolved into BSG and Technologies in 2020, strengthening its focus on Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies, artificial intelligence, coding, robotics and digital education.

‘Our vision is to ensure that every learner, regardless of location or circumstance, has access to world-class educational support powered by artificial intelligence. Through IRIS, we are building a future where technology enhances teaching, empowers learners and creates opportunities for communities across Africa.” Says BSG and Technologies founder and CEO Bonisiwe “Thandoh” Gumede.

The company was originally founded in KwaMnqobokazi, Hluhluwe; BSG and Technologies has expanded its footprint with offices, an IRIS showroom within Dube TradePort and plans to establish a manufacturing facility in the special economic zone.

"It is encouraging to see the progress that BSG and Technologies has made since we launched IRIS last year. What began as an exciting demonstration of South African innovation is now evolving into a solution with the potential to transform teaching and learning across our country and beyond. The development of artificial intelligence technologies that respond to local needs, communicate in our official languages and support both learners and educators is fully aligned with our vision of harnessing science, technology and innovation for inclusive development. We welcome BSG and Technologies' continued investment in KwaZulu-Natal and the expansion of its operations at Dube TradePort Special Economic Zone. Initiatives such as IRIS demonstrate how home-grown innovation can create jobs, build technological capabilities and position South Africa as a leader in the Fourth Industrial Revolution." Dr Nomalungelo Gina, Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation

The AI-powered humanoid robot is designed to create an interactive learning experience by engaging directly with learners, answering questions, explaining concepts, assisting with assessments, supporting teachers and analysing learning interactions. IRIS can also be customised for corporate environments, training programmes, presentations and other sector-specific applications and in addition to the 11 official spoken languages, IRIS can communicate in more than 7,000 languages globally, making it one of the most versatile educational technologies available.



KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Rev. Musa Zondi, said: "The launch of BSG and Technologies at Dube TradePort is another example of the innovation and entrepreneurial talent that exists in KwaZulu-Natal. We are proud to see a local company developing solutions that use technology to address real challenges and create new opportunities for our people.'

'The introduction of IRIS, South Africa's first AI-powered tutor robot, shows how technology can be used to improve access to quality education and equip young people with the skills needed for the future. By supporting learning in classrooms and underserved communities, this innovation has the potential to make a meaningful difference in the lives of many learners.' 'As the Provincial Government, we remain committed to supporting innovation, investment and business growth. Through the Dube TradePort Special Economic Zone, we will continue to create an environment where companies like BSG and Technologies can grow, create jobs and contribute to the economic development of KwaZulu-Natal."

The rollout of IRIS to local schools is currently underway. BSG and Technologies had already built more than 2,000 IRIS robots internationally, having received orders in South Africa from private schools. Now with government support through the National IRIS Lab School Campaign, BSG and Technologies has begun rolling out IRIS and related technology, initially with five schools getting the technology: Amangwe High School, Mgidla Secondary School, Ekuthuthukeni Secondary School, George Caltex Primary School, Intakemazolo Combined School.

"Dube TradePort is proud to have created an environment that attracts and supports innovative, knowledge-driven businesses. Through investments in world-class digital infrastructure, including local data centres and a high-speed fibre-optic network provided by Dube iConnect, we have enabled technology-driven businesses to operate efficiently and compete globally." Hamish Erskine, Chief Executive Officer, Dube TradePort Special Economic Zone

BSG and Technologies currently employs 15 people, with projections of creating more than 20,000 employment opportunities over the next five years as IRIS deployment expands into manufacturing locally with global distribution. The projected opportunities will span technology development, artificial intelligence, software engineering, manufacturing, assembly, technical support, education and training, logistics, sales and marketing, administration, and large-scale deployment operations.

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