

BEE leaders honoured

April 22, 2009 *Edition 1*

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WHAT does the biggest infrastructure project in KwaZulu-Natal - the new multi-billion rand international airport and trade port at La Mercy - have in common with leading Durban-based IT firm AdaptIT and a small air-conditioning enterprise called Christies Air Conditioning?

They are all leaders in the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and transformation drive in the KwaZulu-Natal economy.

The trio took top honours at the Alec Rogoff Broad-based BEE Awards 2009 during the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (DCCI) prestigious 154th annual gala dinner at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre last week.

Emoyeni Air Conditioning (which trades as Christies Air Conditioning) and JSE-listed AdaptIT walked away winners in the large and small business categories respectively. The Airports Company of South Africa (ACSA), Dube TradePort (DTP) and the ILembe Consortium jointly won the coveted new title of Alec Rogoff BEE Project/Deal of the Year Award for the groundbreaking new airport north of Durban.

Large business winner AdaptIT and the new international airport project in particular are regarded as leaders in their field, boasting amongst the strongest BEE credentials in their sector in the South African economy. AdaptIT has been recognised by the influential Top Empowerment Companies as "one of the most empowered companies on the JSE", while the airport project is touted as having the highest BEE participation of a major infrastructure project in South Africa.

"We at DTP are extremely proud to receive the Alec Rogoff Broad Based BEE Award together with our partner ACSA and contractor ILembe. We would like to thank the Durban Chamber and NERA-KZN for the recognition given to the TradePort project - the largest capital infrastructure spend in KwaZulu-Natal," said DTP boss Rohan Persad.

"ACSA is proud to be associated with DTP and ILembe on this project... We are extremely excited to have been nominated and have won such a prestigious award," said Terence Delomoney, ACSA's GM for Durban International and National Airports.

KZN has been labelled a "laggard" in the past when it comes to BEE and transformation in the business sector and overall economy. The annual Alec Rogoff Broad-based BEE Awards is spearheaded by the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) and National Empowerment Rating Agency KZN (NERA-KZN) in association with The Mercury. It was established last year to put the spotlight on empowerment efforts in the province. The awards also aim to profile and recognise innovative home-grown solutions to transformation in the KwaZulu-Natal economy.

"The Alec Rogoff Broad-based BEE Awards is an important annual initiative that aims to honour successful and effective transformation...deals and initiatives in KZN. It also aims to inspire other companies to take transformation of the local and regional economy more seriously," said DCCI chief executive officer Gugu Mazibuko.

Speaking at the Durban Chamber's annual dinner Clive Manci - the newly-elected president of the DCCI - said the observation of continued disunity between the predominantly established white business and predominantly emerging black business continued to impede progress on the empowerment front.

"The DCCI will seek to increase its efforts in advancing the ideals of the Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act, as a principle enshrined in the constitution.

"We can no longer afford to have a divided business community in Durban if we are serious about growing a multi-racial and inclusive economy; if we are serious about addressing crime and... about people development for the success of business. These matters should unite us, not divide us."

He said challenging issues such as black economic empowerment needed to be dealt with decisively, through frank and candid conversations.