

Botswana Innovation Hub Turns the Soil to Start Infrastructure Works

A new dawn begun on the morning of Friday 22nd October 2010 as the Botswana Innovation Hub held its groundbreaking ceremony at their site in Block 8, Gaborone. The ceremony marked the commencement of construction of site master-plan infrastructure works of the Botswana Innovation Hub (BIH) and is an important milestone in its development at the BIH.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony, the keynote speaker, Minister of Infrastructure, Science and Technology, Honourable Johnie Swartz, said that the Government of Botswana has adopted a variety of strategies to achieve economic diversification, of which the Botswana Innovation Hub (BIH) is one. He further explained that the BIH was being developed as a science and technology park, which will be a nexus for knowledge creation and innovation.

"Similarly, BIH seeks to encourage greater collaboration among universities, research laboratories, large and small companies in order to facilitate the conversion of new ideas into innovative technologies ready for the market. We see it as an effective means to generate employment and make existing companies more competitive through cooperative research and development, shared facilities, and benefits derived from common locations," he continued to explain.

For his part, the Chairperson of the BIH Board, Mr. Daniel Neo Moroka shared the Minister's sentiments in saying, "In an age when creativity and innovation are acknowledged as the prime ingredients of economic success, it does not come as a surprise that the government of Botswana took a step towards establishing a science and technology park in Gaborone."

The Botswana Innovation Hub Implementation Office has contracted the Botswana Development Corporation (BDC) to manage and coordinate design and construction of infrastructure, which includes master planning/urban design, infrastructure design and construction and design and construction of the icon building and annexes. Speaking on behalf of BDC at the Groundbreaking, Acting BDC Managing Director, Mrs. Sametsi Ditshupo said that BDC was approached by Government primarily due to their expertise, experience and long history in property development and management. She explained that BDC is working around the clock to ensure that they deliver to the deadline of three years that they have been given to complete the project, from inception to handover.

The Botswana Innovation Hub implementation project, run under the Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology (MIST), is one of the key projects identified by the country to promote an information and knowledge society that harnesses creativity and innovation. It is one of the initiatives intended to facilitate economic diversification and growth by creating more private businesses in the country. This will be done in three ways: offering a business incubation platform for new start-ups; helping potential existing

companies to grow; and attracting foreign companies to come to Botswana. This will be done in 4 focus areas namely; Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), Mining technologies, Energy & Environment and Biotechnology. As a science and technology park, the Botswana Innovation Hub (BIH) is being established as a commercial nexus for knowledge creation and innovation. It is the first of its kind in Botswana. The Botswana Innovation Hub will connect high technology innovators, market experts and capital providers to transform ideas into viable business ventures.

The Hub will be a one-stop “plug-and-play” environment, providing office space for rent and developed land for lease, conference, meeting and training facilities, laboratory space for R & D activities, recreational facilities and cafeteria. BIH will provide companies with flexible premises and quality business services thus offering a truly world-class business environment that complements the high-tech image of companies operating here.