



COUNTRY FIRST: Proudly South African chief executive Leslie Sedibe addresses business leaders in Nelson Mandela Bay yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: JUDY DE VEGA

Call to support local businesses

EC CAMPAIGN: Proudly SA stresses importance of home-grown trade

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SOUTH Africa could become the world's biggest warehouse, housing imported clothes and textiles, with increasing unemployment, unless its people fully support products from local manufacturers.

This is according to Proudly South African chief executive Leslie Sedibe, who was in Nelson Mandela Bay addressing business leaders on the importance of local trade in boosting the economy and creating much-needed jobs.

The Proudly South African Business Forum was bringing its "buy local and create jobs" campaign to the Eastern Cape,

highlighting how investment in local manufacturing increases gross domestic product (GDP).

Sedibe warned of a desperate situation in the country should the knock experienced by the retail and textile industry – due to the import of products from China – spill over to other industries.

"If we keep importing retail goods because it is cheaper, we could just end up being the world's biggest warehouse, with the majority of people being unemployed," he said.

"Even that would be dangerous because then people won't even be able to afford those cheap clothes.

"Everybody complains about China, but I'm yet to see a policeman or military person forcing us to buy their prod-

ucts. They have a strategy for South Africa, but do we have one for them?

"And it would be unrealistic to expect South Africa to compete with China."

Sedibe highlighted the need for a return to industrialisation, where more focus would be placed on local manufacturing and boosting the economy.

"Countries that escaped the wrath of the recession are those that rely on their people and manufacturers," he said.

The "buy local" campaign seeks to educate people about the importance of believing in their own products enough to buy local products.

Sedibe said the government had made a "bold statement" with Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan's push for the Natio-

nal Procurement Act.

"If government can inject the bulk of its R1-trillion budget into the country and we focus on producing better exports, we would prosper," Sedibe said.

Buying locally manufactured products resulted in an increase in GDP.

"For every R1 invested in manufacturing, there's a R1.13 increase in GDP. And for each R1 spent, there's a 35c increase in fiscal revenue," Sedibe said.

"If we are going to withstand the shifting global economy, we need to focus on and strengthen the local economy."

The campaign runs in conjunction with the Local Procurement Accord, which seeks to create five million jobs by 2020 and to help achieve the Industrial Action Policy Plan.

For businesses and products to be classified as local:

□ Half the cost of production must be incurred in the country. If the product is imported, substantial changes should be made to the product to ensure jobs are created or protected.

□ Products must be of proven high quality.

□ The company must comply with labour legislation and stick to fair labour practices.

□ They must be environmentally responsible and stick to "green" production processes.

Business owners will showcase their locally manufactured products at the Greenacres Shopping Centre in Port Elizabeth today and tomorrow and at the Regent Hotel and Hemingways Mall in East London next weekend.