

Fair finds favour

The City's main business fair continues to grow from strength to strength. **Derrick Dlamini and Sohana Singh** report

A BUMPER 10 000 visitors, as well as delegates from a number of African countries and further afield attended the SMME Fair at the Durban Exhibition Centre about a fortnight ago.

The fair for small, medium and micro enterprises is now in its 10th year and drew a record 400-plus exhibitors. Products and services featured spanned manufacturing, construction, arts and crafts, information technology and communications, tourism, services, and more.

It even included a fashion show. A representative of the fair's hosts – the eThekweni Business Support Unit and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development – said the fashion show was intended to increase awareness of the government's plans to strengthen the sector. Another spin-off was raising the profile of some of the talented people in the local textile industry and fashion design industries.



CLEVER: Michael Joffe (right) of Emtech impresses fair visitors with the capabilities of his embroidery machines

Pictures: DERRICK DLAMINI

Besides the main exhibition, the fair included a conference, a linkages programme (with 24 top companies participating), and one-on-one meetings between small business owners and corporate executives.

Mayor Obed Mlaba reiterated the Council's commitment to developing the small business sector. He said: "It remains our strategy to ensure the growth and support of this sector. The idea is to link them with big business and expose them to international mar-

kets. We continue to pledge our unequivocal support to their growth, as a means to ensure a stable society." Mlaba urged small businesses to "start thinking big and to strive to improve the quality and quantity of products and services."

Let the world know that South Africa is home to quality goods, services and knowledge," said Mlaba.

However, concerns were raised that corporate support for the small business sector in general fell

short of what was needed.

Head of the City's Business Support Unit, Philip Sithole adjudged the fair a success, but said: "We hope (corporate) businesses will heighten their participation in our programmes, including the business linkage strategy. This would help them get BEE scorecard points."

Also, despite efforts by government structures, access to finance and training remained a serious difficulty for small businesses.

Gugu Moloi, Chief Executive of Iman Africa and



DELIGHTED: Fair-goer Sgcu Gumedede is excited by the services offered by Khosi Younis and Keshnee Chetty of HealthSpas

former Umgeni Water boss, was one of the main speakers at the fair's gala dinner. She echoed Sithole's concerns and said policies may need a re-look.

Moloi, who was named as one of the top 30 leaders in South Africa in 2004 and 2005 by the *Mail & Guardian*, said: "If policies are inhibiting us from delivering, then why not change them to benefit the needy."

"Empowerment remains a challenge, and we need to ensure this is thoroughly addressed," she said.

Exhibitors were on the whole delighted with the fair. Michael Joffe, of Emtech, who has a business supplying embroidery machinery, praised the City for its efforts to uplift the small business sector.

He said: "Visitors and other exhibitors showed great interest in my product, an

indication of the success of participating in fairs.

"This was an excellent platform to promote my business. This has indeed provided my business with an ideal marketing opportunity. I have made so many contacts and sales," he said.

Val Pienaar, of VFC Marketing, said she had no regrets participating in the fair for the second time.

"We had so much success last year that this year we decided to do it again."

"Besides promoting our business, we have networked with other businesses and have found services here that can benefit us too. The City must be commended for such sterling efforts to promote SMMEs."

The Business Support Unit is planning a vigorous campaign next year to attract more visitors to the fair.

dlamini@durban.gov.za
singhsohana@durban.gov.za

More pay-and-display meters planned

KEN MCHUNU

THE pay-and-display parking meters have proved to be a success in downtown Durban, now plans are afoot to roll them out to other areas in the city.

That's according to Ricky Pillay, a Director of Emtateni Logistics, the company that has the R30-million, five-year contract to install and run the meters in eThekweni.

Pillay said that since its introduction, the system had helped ease congestion in the central business district (CBD). Enforcing parking by-laws also been made easier for traffic officials.

However, he appealed to motorists to follow the step-by-step instructions provided when using the meters.

Pillay was also concerned about vandalism of the machines and the inserting of foreign objects instead of coins. This was costing the company R200 000 a month in maintenance, he said.

The installation of the solar-powered meters, which were imported from Europe, began in November 2005.

There are now 375 machines in operation in eThekweni. But too many in parts of the CBD, with some sitting idle at times. "We are relocating some of these to areas that need them," Pillay said.

He said 80 new parking meters were planned for Pinetown, Amanzimtoti and Umhlanga.

Durable

"These machines are environmentally friendly, space-efficient and durable," said Pillay.

He said the system had been regarded by some as a failure when it first came in to operation in early 2006. This was because the public was unfamiliar with pay-and-display meters, and because the system had not been quite ready for use at the time. "But, the machines are now in proper working order," he said.

He said initial complaints that the machines did not give change had been addressed. The machines were modified. They still don't give change, but now

Using a meter: Four simple steps

STEP 1

- Park correctly within a marked bay
- Approach nearest blue pay-and-display machine

STEP 2

- Follow the instructions on the front of machine
- Pay with coins until desired exit time is displayed
- Use exact monies as no change is given

STEP 3

- Press green button

- Take pay-and-display ticket from slot on the left

STEP 4

- Place the pay and display ticket on the dashboard so it is clearly visible.
- Note the expiry time on the ticket before locking vehicle
- Return to vehicle before time expires

Should you require help, contact the dedicated call centre at 031 333 9000 (contact details are displayed

give more time in proportion to any extra money inserted.

If you put in the minimum allowed, R2, you get 27 minutes of parking in the CBD. An hour's parking costs R4.50, and if you put in say R5, you will get a few minutes extra.

Motorists may not park in the same bay for more than two hours.

Other problems with the new meters were mostly down to motorists failing to follow the step-by-step instructions displayed on meters, said Pillay.

"One advantage of the new system is that any of the coupons issued from pay-and-display machines in the CBD are valid for all of the bays in the zone. Therefore, if

on all machines). Motorists can also ask Metro Police officers for help. Pressing the red button before the green one will cancel the transaction and return monies in the slot on the right.

OPERATING HOURS
Monday to Friday 8am – 5pm
Saturdays: 8am – 1pm
Sundays and public holidays: Free

Minimum tariff: R2 (27 minutes)
Maximum tariff: R9 (2 hours)

a meter is defective, motorists can buy a ticket from the next machine to ensure their vehicle is not towed."

Motorists are expected to display the coupons inside their vehicles, on the dashboard, as proof of payment.



The owners of vehicles found with coupons displayed on the outside are fined. This discouraged car guards from colluding with motorists by buying them coupons (in exchange for a tip) and putting them on cars should a traffic official arrive.

Pillay said the new system had led to more motorists parking private vehicles in loading zones to avoid paying for coupons. "This forced trucks to double-park and obstructed traffic. "Businesses have cried a loss because of this," he said.

But Metro Police Spokeswoman Snr Supt Joyce Khuzwayo said officers continued to issue fines for all stationary-parking violations.

mchunuk@durban.gov.za