



**tourism**

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## **Minister lauds disability-friendly hotel**

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Cape Town – Tourism Minister Derek Hanekom says the opening of a hotel that employs deaf people is the first of its kind and should inspire the hospitality industry to follow suit.

The Park Inn Radisson Hotel opened its doors in Newlands, Cape Town, on Thursday night.

The hotel has partnered with the Deaf Federation of Southern Africa (DEFSA) to build a hotel that boasts facilities that creates a special access for people with disabilities.

A third of all staff members at the hotel are deaf. One non-executive member of the board is deaf and DEFSA also holds shareholding in the hotel.

Speaking at the opening of the hotel, Minister Hanekom said by employing staffers with disabilities, the hotel had raised the bar and posed a challenge to the local and international hospitality sector.

“What this does in the world of tourism and in the hospitality industry is that it raises the bar. When we talk about responsible tourism, when we talk about community participation, it challenges all other hotels around the country to do the same – to rise to the challenge,” he said.

Minister Hanekom also said involving deaf people was a way of tapping into the potential of skilled professionals that have been overlooked by employers.

The Minister said South Africa has more than 400 000 people who use sign language, and that just over one million people in the country are almost deaf.

“If we can tap into this potential, we can make this country a better place, and I think that is what we should be doing.

“We should be looking at the great potential, the great talents that we have for our people, recognise these talents, unleash these talents,” he said.

He said 70% of all deaf people in South Africa were unemployed because of societal attitude.

“It is an attitude that needs to change,” said Minister Hanekom.

The Minister also said the country had one of the greatest constitutions in the world that has a Bill of Rights that advocated for the right to dignity of all that live within the borders.

“When you have a job, you are one step ahead to having a life of dignity. Through this project, we are harnessing and tapping into the potential of the many people in our country,” he said.

Minister Hanekom congratulated the management of the hotel for having taken the initiative to partner with DEFSA and said government would do all it can to support the hotel going forward.

**Source: SAnews.gov.za** (<http://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/minister-lauds-disability-friendly-hotel>)