



Preparing to fly to India yesterday to begin a one-year internship are Moses Kotane Institute students Wiseman Mndaweni, Nonkululeko Nxumalo, Nokulunga Sithole, Tholithemba Ngema, Zanele Msweli, Sthembiso Sibiya, Slindile Mbatha, Cebile Biyela, Precious Masinga, Dannie Gumede, Siphelile Vundla and Qiniso Mthembu. They are the first of 10 000 KwaZulu-Natal students who will be trained in information and communication technology in India.

PICTURE: TERRY HAYWOOD

Youngsters take flight to new careers

NTOKOZO MFUSI

TWELVE KwaZulu-Natal students flew to India yesterday as part of a government initiative to create employment for 10 000 youths.

The initiative is a training programme of the KZN Economic Development Department, the Confederation of Indian Industries and the National Institute of Information Technology of India.

The programme would train 10 000 youths in software engineering in India over five years.

One of the 12 was Qiniso Mthembu, 21, of Ngwavuma in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

After completing matric in 2005, Mthembu thought his life had ended because his mother could not pay for his tertiary education.

Speaking to The Mercury before flying off yesterday, Mthembu said: "I sat at home from 2005, not doing anything, and thought my dreams of becoming something were shattered, but today I see a bright future ahead of me."

Still clearly in shock, Mthembu said: "I met the premier (Zweli Mkhize) today and I sat there and could not believe it was me. I do not know why I was chosen out of all these people, but I am glad I was

chosen; I am truly blessed."

His mother, Phumzile Mathenjwa, said: "I dream that one day he will be a professor or the head of a company. As a parent you feel guilty when you cannot give your child what they need in life because of finances."

Another student, Zanele Msweli, said: "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We know we will face challenges, but our lives have been changed forever and it's for the better."

The students were initially trained by the Moses Kotane Institute, which has trained 220 unemployed youth in business process outsourcing since last year. The training in India

would allow the students to gain experience that would prepare them for employment and the creation of businesses.

Mkhize, who saw the students off, told them to be good ambassadors of the country.

"You are the first of 10 000 going to India on a pilot project, so be responsible, use the opportunity and make us proud."

National Institute of Information Technology general manager Rakesh Misri said he was excited about the project.

"The objective is for these under-privileged youths to be employable, have entrepreneurial skills and to create employment for others."