



NEW GAUTENG MALL BOOSTS ECONOMY

THE future of Gauteng's tourism might very well lie in shopping.

Unathi Henama, who teaches tourism at the Tshwane University of Technology, said the opening of the Mall of Africa with about 300 stores will make Gauteng the shopping centre of South Africa.

The mall in Midrand is the country's largest shopping centre ever built in a single phase, with 130 000 square metres of retail space made available by property development company Atterbury.

Henama said: "At the mall's opening on Thursday thousands of customers sought to benefit from the opening specials.

"The mall has opened at a time when South Africa's economic growth is projected to be less than 2%.

"This is not inspiring for an economy that is driven by consumer spending.

"Our unemployment rate is above 25% and we have one of the most unequal societies in the world.

"The economy is not only pulled down by a low growth rate. The mining industry has been cutting jobs as commodity prices have fallen.

"This has thrown many communities and towns into economic distress."

He pointed out that the loss of jobs in mining was felt in other industries.

"The general saying in South Africa is that when mining sneezes, the economy catches a cold," he said.

The mall also opened during a period when the SA Reserve Bank has been increasing the interest rate as a means of controlling inflation.

"Raising the interest rate reduces disposable income available to spend in the economy.

"Our economy is on life support," Henama said. - NEWS24