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SA's mining boards 37 percent black

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Johannesburg - Black representation on the boards of mining houses in South Africa has shot up from 0.05 percent to 37 percent since 2001, according to a Mining Research Report released here by Landelahni Business Leaders, the executive search company in the Landelahni Group. Landelahni Group chief executive, Sandra Burmeister, noted that this represents a significant shift since the Mining Charter was formulated in October 2002.

"However, at other levels, representation in the mining industry trails the average across all industries."

The research, covering 80 percent of the mining sector, was undertaken by Landelahni to provide insight into the progress made in employment equity at operational and corporate level in the mining industry and to provide guidelines to companies in developing employment equity strategies in line with the requirements of the Mining Charter.

While the number of non-engineering black and white executive directors in the mining industry grew significantly between 2001 and 2004, the ratio between black and white remained static at around 13 percent.

Black representation in positions from executive to mid-management level grew from 24 percent in 2003 to 29 percent in 2005, according to the report.

At corporate head office and at mining operational level, more than 80 percent of blacks were in support functions such as human resources, shared services, finance and communications. At operational level, the research indicates that out of 100 shafts, there were 11 black mine managers, compared to two in 2001.

The study also notes that, to date, the mining industry has been slower than other sectors to put processes in place to meet transformation requirements.

Burmeister, however, said the significant board transformation that has occurred is a step in the right direction and that it is bound to accelerate the process across the rest of the organisation. "What remains worrying, however, is the downward trend in engineering graduates from tertiary institutions since 1998, including those with mining-specific degrees."

The study did not probe why this was the case, but it is possible that potential white engineers have followed other paths because of the fear that transformation may undermined their job security.
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