

Forum highlights vital role of research

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PUPILS from 11 Bay schools had the opportunity yesterday to interact with some of the brightest researchers and scientists in the country.

A group of about 100 pupils and scientists filled a lecture hall at the Nelson Mandela University Business School.

This is where the two-day annual Department of Science and Technology and National Research Foundation

Centres of Excellence Directors Forum is being hosted. The group listened intently as two of yesterday's speakers explained the importance of research and their entities' contributions to it.

They were Department of Science and Technology director-general Dr Phil Mjwara and Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa (Caprisa) associate scientific director Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim.

Both emphasised the necessity for pupils to invest in academics and the potential contribution they could

make to the world through the research field. Mjwara said: "Research and technology is part of everything we do. It's how we develop.

"It informs us to ask the right questions to gain a better understanding of the universe and allow us to progress.

"The department uses research and technology in everything, from the biggest projects like the SKA [Square Kilometre Array] to improving service delivery and how we grow our food."

While Karim's speech included information on the current HIV situation

and the progress in response to the epidemic, she too emphasised the importance of the youth.

"Africa is the only continent where more than 60% of its population is under 30. Nowhere else do the youth have that much influence on their own future," Karim said.

"Hence young people play a very important role in shaping the future trajectory of the continent."

Today, Science and Technology Minister Naledi Pandor will deliver the keynote address at 9.15am.
