

■ CONSTRUCTION

Rescue plan for industry

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Top government ministers are coming to the rescue of the embattled construction industry after it shed 140 000 jobs and lost billions of rands in business.

Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu and Public Works and Infrastructure Minister Patricia de Lille plan to meet with the construction industry soon to resolve its crisis.

They said the sector was key to the economy.

The construction industry has in the past few years been battling and some of the major players are closing shop.

Industry giants Basil Read and Group Five have filed for business rescue.

Part of the reason for the decline of the construction sector is that there has been no business from government and private sector and slow payment in contracts by the government.

Government policy says suppliers must be paid within 30 days, but this does not happen as it takes months and years for some departments to pay contractors.

The government has cut its infrastructure budget by 12%, which impacted on the construction industry.

De Lille said they were willing to work with the industry.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has moved the Presidential Infrastructure Co-ordinating Commission to De Lille's department.

The government has allocated R100 billion in the Infrastructure Fund.

"A fund for infrastructure of R100bn has been established. Infrastructure is going to play a key role in economic growth. The construction industry is in steep decline.

"Over 140 000 jobs have been lost. As the Department of Public Works we will release 300 projects to stimulate the industry to create more jobs," said De Lille.

She said the 300 projects were worth R5bn and would revive the ailing construction industry.

Sisulu also said she would meet with the construction industry on their challenges.

She said there were a number of projects that government was undertaking and want the industry, which is facing a crisis, to take part in.

The industry players were in Parliament when Sisulu was delivering her budget vote for her department.