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Author: Nomzamo
Yuku



THE DEPARTMENT of Public Works and Infrastructure is investing in the revival of small harbours with the aim of propelling South Africa's economic recovery. | Supplied

REVAMP

Harbours thrown an economic lifeline

NOMZAMO YUKU

nomzamo.yuku@inl.co.za

HOUT Bay and Saldanha Bay harbours are among the 13 small fishing centres which will benefit from a half a billion rand revamp budget following recent complaints from the Parliamentary portfolio committee.

The funding for the upgrades were announced by the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Sihle Zikalala, during visits to Hout Bay and Saldanha Bay harbours on Thursday.

The visits came shortly after a *Week-end Argus* story on Hout Bay Harbour being "the worst of all in province".

Nolitha Nontobongwana, the chairperson of the committee that reported that Hout Bay was in the worst condition, was pleased that the minister had responded and a budget was set aside for renovations and maintenance work.

"Although we were not part of his site visit, we were very impressed with his prompt response.

"We noted our concerns and (he) acted. That is the kind of leadership we need.

"At this stage we have not sat as the committee to discuss the budget and a way forward but we believe the department will be also working with private bodies to accomplish all the work, which is bigger than what one

can imagine," she said.

The refurbishment programme entails the removal of sunken vessels, dredging of the harbour basins, repairs to slipways, shore crane replacements, security, and civil and electrical infrastructure upgrades.

Zikalala said: "The improvements will boost economic activity in these areas. We want to see an economic boom and the small and medium enterprises benefiting from the oceans economy that exist in these harbours.

"The harbours are strategic entry points and vandalism and criminality in these areas pose a high risk to the economy of the country. We need to deal decisively with any lawlessness. These upgrades are a clear commitment of ensuring port efficiency and guaranteeing the economic future of our country.

"We are going to be hands on deck and work with all stakeholders in turning around our small harbours. We want to attend speedily to the remaining bottlenecks such as the long term leases, security of the harbours, land for human settlement purposes, localisation and empowerment of previously disadvantaged communities in the economic value chain of the harbours."

Zikalala appealed to all stakeholders to work with the department in renovating the harbours.

