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PORTS REVIEW

State of W Cape harbours assessed

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SIX SMALL harbours across the province, including Robben Island's Murray's Bay harbour will for the next week, starting today, be the focus of a parliamentary oversight visit by the National Assembly's committee on public works and infrastructure.

The aim of the visit, which begins this morning at the Saldanha Bay harbour, is to review the status of the small harbours in terms of management; repair and maintenance; leasing and job creation efforts.

The committee will visit Yzerfontein harbour and Hout Bay harbour on Wednesday, Kalk Bay harbour and Gordon's Bay harbour on Thursday.

On Friday they will wrap things up with a briefing by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, the

Department of Sport, Arts and Culture and Robben Island management before touring Murray's Bay harbour on Robben Island.

The visit by the committee comes as Transnet National Ports Authority's (TNPA's) Robertson dry dock, situated in the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, reopens for business as a modern ship repair facility.

The dry dock is the oldest operating cobblestone dry dock in the world, and is used largely for commercial purposes.

It dates back to 1882 when its foundation stone was laid by Prince Alfred, second son of Queen Victoria.

Port of Cape Town manager Rajesh Dana said: "The upgrade of the Robertson dry dock dewatering infrastructure is one of the projects TNPA has been pursuing to modernise its ship repair facilities.

"At the Port of Cape Town, we are committed to ensuring that our facilities are of international standard to enable us to continue to provide value to our customers."

In June last year, the Port of Cape Town undertook the extensive process of replacing the dry dock's dewatering system, which was necessary to mitigate safety risks, improve operational efficiencies and ensure compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Dana said the engineering works required a complete shutdown of the facility, and with the project now completed, the dry dock has reopened and is already working.

At the same time, TNPA has relaunched the Integrated Port Management System at its eight commercial ports.

The system had been suspended to

allow TNPA to enhance the security controls and minimise the risk of a cyberattack in future.

TNPA chief harbour master Rufus Lekala said the system offers "state-of-the-art vessel management technology and is globally recognised as a system that facilitates efficient vessel monitoring through the automation of traditionally managed operations."

He said the system provides near real-time access to operational information which results in ease of decision-making and improved port performance.

In this year's provincial budget, Finance MEC Mireille Wenger pledged to strengthen her department's dedicated Port of Cape Town team, with additional human resources.

She said the province would be continuing to push for private sector participation at the port.