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# Dire straits as tourists desert KZN

*Call to fix collapsing infrastructure and  
get Durban's beaches back to blue flag status*

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AT LEAST 80% of foreign tourists have not returned to KwaZulu-Natal since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This was revealed by the Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa (Fedhasa) at a joint media briefing with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, in Durban yesterday.

The briefing, led by Public Works Minister Dean Macpherson and Fedhasa national chairperson Rosemary Anderson, came after a consultative meeting on how to bring foreign tourists back to their pre-Covid numbers in KZN.

After the meeting, both parties said tourism in the province had not returned to where it was before the Covid-19 outbreak. They said there was a need for all government departments to work together with role players in the hospitality and tourism sector to make the province a favourite destination for tourists again.

Fedhasa's East Coast chairperson Brett Tungay said 80% of foreign tourists, who are key to driving rural tourism, were still not keen on coming back to the province.

He cited various negative factors such as crime, infrastructure collapse which led to the persistent closure of beaches because of high E-coli levels, floods and the July 2021 unrest as factors driving foreign tourists away.

"Foreign tourists are key to growing the economy in the rural areas since they are the ones who want to experience rural life and see cultural sites that they heard about," said Tungay.

Fedhasa also cited the loss of blue flag status for the province's beaches as the main contributor to tourists' reluctance to return to the province.

Fedhasa's East Coast general manager Jaya Naidoo said the authorities,

especially eThekweni Municipality, must work harder and fight to return its beaches to blue flag status which he said will help win back foreign tourists.

On what needs to be done to make the province the number one tourist destination again, Naidoo said an aggressive marketing campaign was needed as well as cutting red tape in the visa application process which takes weeks to be processed.

"We need to send a positive message about our province and make visas easily available to tourists. We need to work hard to make the province great again. There is a lot of negativity out there which works against our province so we need to deal with that," said Naidoo.

Explaining his department's role in improving tourism in the province, Macpherson said he felt it was important to come and meet Fedhasa since dilapidated state infrastructure was contributing to low numbers of tourism.

He said his department would fast-track the recapturing of hijacked and abandoned buildings which will assist in eliminating criminals using them to target tourists.

Macpherson said next month, his department would announce how it planned to use the recaptured buildings as sites of construction not of destruction. He said those buildings could house homeless people who are terrorising tourists.

KwaZulu-Natal Public Works and Infrastructure MEC Martin Meyer said his department was making sure that all public buildings were used to benefit the people of the province.

The South Coast was listed as the most affected part of the province regarding the fall off of tourism. The area has even been snubbed by domestic tourists.

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