

Maritime boost as development plan starts

South African President Jacob Zuma promised to help ramp up investment in the country's maritime industries as part of an ambitious plan to boost economic growth and cut unemployment.



President Jacob Zuma has called on government and private sector companies to boost the maritime plans to provide services to the shipping industry. Image: GCIS

"The vast ocean space is relatively unexplored in terms of its economic potential," said Zuma in the eastern coastal city of Durban as he launched the first part of the project.

He has tasked government, industry and civil society experts with drawing up detailed plans to develop the country's shipping and shipbuilding, offshore oil and gas exploration, and fish farming industries.

"Economic activity around South Africa's 3,900km coastline has the potential to contribute \$16.6bn to the country's GDP and to create up to one million jobs - tripling current production and employment figures," said Zuma.

The proposals are part of the National Development Plan (NDP), which the government hopes will provide a framework for massive infrastructure upgrades to help improve the economy.

Cosatu rubbishes the plan

The plan was adopted in 2012 but attempts to implement any of the measures within it have met fierce opposition from partners of the African National Congress.

The ANC-allied Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), the country's largest trade union federation opposes the plan, which it says will hit workers' rights.

"We feel the NDP is seriously flawed and self-contradictory," Cosatu spokesman Patrick Craven told AFP.

"We still want to see it completely redrafted," he said.

But the ANC has touted its victory in elections in May - when the party won 62% of the vote - as a sign of support for the plan.

Over a quarter of the population is currently unemployed in Africa's most developed economy, which has battled to shake off sluggish growth.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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