

THE STAR

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SGR cargo uptake up 28% in February on improved efficiency

Kenya Railways attributes improved performance to newly introduced double decker loading.



In Summary

- It has also pegged the performance to continued maintenance of containerised loading wagon fleets.
- It has also assured SGR passengers of safety despite Covid-19.

Cargo uptake on the SGR has continued to register an upward trend with growth on volumes hauled from the Port of Mombasa compared to last year.

Last month, 23,040 TEUs (Twenty-Foot equivalent Unit)—the approximate unit of measure of a container, were moved by the SGR freight service to both the Nairobi and Naivasha Inland Container Depots.

This is 28.2 per cent more than the 17,974 TEUs moved during the same month last year, a time when Covid-19 had not yet hit economies.

The February performance translates to an average of 8.2 trains carrying over 800 TEUs per day (230 trains), against some 210 freight carrying trains that were reported to have made the trip in a similar period last year.

In results released yesterday Kenya Railways Corporation managing director Philip Mainga attributed the improved performance to the newly introduced double-decker loading.

KR reiterates its commitment to working closely with Kenya Ports Authority, Kenya Revenue Authority and other government agencies operating at the port to sustain ongoing efforts to reduce any delays on our clients' cargo delivery needs," Mainga added.

Kenya Railways Corporation managing director, Philip Mainga

Continued maintenance of containerised loading wagon fleets, which has pushed average daily supply up to 400 wagons to the port of Mombasa by Afristar, the SGR operator, has also played a critical role in improving operations, he said.

On the conventional cargo front, Afristar delivered 128,291 metric tonnes of bulk wheat to Nairobi, both for Kenyan millers and those operating from further in the port's hinterland in February, 2021, against 3,897 metric tonnes delivered during the comparable period last year.

This is a growth of more than 32 times.

Bulk cargo haulage has been enhanced by the recently introduced service of loading bulk cargo on special high-sided wagons covered with tarpaulins, a process that requires fewer hours to load a train with 46 bulk wagons.

"With the reduced rates for Naivasha ICD, KR continues to appeal to our esteemed clients to continue nominating containers to this new facility," Mainga said.

Civil works on the link between Naivasha SGR and the Longonot MGR (Metre Gauge Railway) section are now at an advanced stage, and on course to offer quick transition of cargo destined for neighboring countries, the MD noted.

"KR reiterates its commitment to working closely with Kenya Ports Authority, Kenya Revenue Authority and other government agencies operating at the port to sustain ongoing efforts to reduce any delays on our clients' cargo delivery needs," Mainga added.

The best monthly performance however remains that of January when freight services hit a new record since operations started in January 2018.

During the month, 241 trains run from Mombasa delivering 24,256 TEUs to Nairobi and Naivasha ICDs.

Meanwhile, KR has assured passengers using the Madaraka Express Service of their safety, as the country grapples with what has been described as the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mainga said that they had instituted “adequate measures” to ensure that the service, including the night trip between Nairobi and Mombasa, continues operating safely during the prevailing backdrop of the pandemic.

He cited some of the measures that continue to be implemented strictly on the service to ensure passenger safety as the maintenance of a comprehensive passenger database to allow for contact tracing, where necessary, and the limitation of the service to only two stops: at the start of the trip (Syokimau Terminal) and end of the journey (Mariakani Terminal).

Kenya Railways has also ensured that the termini are fully compliant with Ministry of Health protocols against the spread of the novel Coronavirus.

It has also ensured that cabin staff are trained on the handling of on-trip medical emergencies, should they occur.

“It is important to understand that the Madaraka Express Night Service is a non-stop ride from Nairobi to Mombasa. The possibility of our passengers interacting with individuals who have not been vetted at the start of the journey, for instance vendors, is totally removed from the equation,” Mainga said.

The potential of passengers contracting Covid-19 from such interactions is thus non-existent, Kenya Railways management notes.

“Together with Afristar the operator, we remain unstinting in our commitment to continue adhering to the existing rules and guidelines, so as to be able to effectively and efficiently offer what we consider an essential service,” Mainga said.