

THE STAR

LOGISTICS

18 February 2021 - 04:00

Yard extension, SGR volumes boost cargo handling at Mombasa Port

Cargo dwell-time has improved to an average 4.6 days from 5.6 days.



In Summary

- KPA has taken over operations at Port Reitz Yard increasing cargo handling space.
- Introduction of double deck wagons on the SGR have also significantly contributed to increased cargo evacuation from the port.

Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) has posted reduced cargo dwell-time at the Port of Mombasa after acquiring more space outside the port, according to the acting managing director Rashid Salim

This, together with increased haulage capacity by the Standard Gauge Railways (SGR) has helped cut dwell-time (the time cargo takes before leaving the port), to an average 4.6 days in January, from 5.6 days in December.

Salim said centralised operations have helped drive efficiency at the facility amid a rebound on economic activities after a slow down last year.

Recently, KPA took over the operations at Port Reitz Yard, an adjacent space to the port formerly occupied by private Container Freight Stations.

Salim said the authority has reorganised the planning units of the logistics partners, increasing harmony in the operations of the unit leading to end-to-end efficiency in port operations.

Loading of double deck wagons has greatly boosted the number of containers being evacuated. We started with one double deck train of 38 wagons hauling 114 TEUs and this has now stabilised at two trains per week

KPA acting managing director Rashid Salim

Dangerous cargo loading which was previously experiencing great delays due to distance of the loading zone from stacking blocks was improved by allowing it to be loaded at Port Reitz.

Additionally, centralisation of the cargo handling processes and the recently introduced double deck wagons on the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) have significantly contributed to increased deliveries to the Inland Container Depots, mainly Nairobi.

“Loading of double deck wagons has greatly boosted the number of containers being evacuated. We started with one double deck train of 38 wagons hauling 114 TEUs and this has now stabilised at two trains per week,” Salim said.

Overall cargo operations have also improved with Kenya Railways last week announcing the best performance ever since the first SGR Madaraka freight trip in (January 2018),

This was recorded in January where 241 trains run from Mombasa delivering 24,256 TEUs (Twenty-Foot equivalent Unit)—the approximate unit of measure of a container, to both Nairobi and Naivasha Inland Container Depots.

“The remarkable performance was due to the revival of majority of wagons earlier under maintenance repairs and internal conversion of additional conventional cargo wagons to load containerised cargo,” Kenya Railways managing director Philip Mainga said.

During a visit of the Naivasha Inland Container Depot on Tuesday, Transport CS James Macharia noted that daily trains have increased to a high of 14, with the SGR operator-Africa Star Railway Operation Company (Afristar) maintaining steady operations.

Manufacturers had on Monday decried continued delays at the Port of Mombasa leading to high demurrage charges, with overall operations being affected by logistic hitches and multiple taxes.

“At the moment, we are having challenges with clearance at the port and minimum tax. These affect the cost of products and its unfortunate that this will be passed on to the consumer,” KAM chief executive Phyllis Wakiaga said.

KPA yesterday however noted improved cargo evacuation where a total of 10,072 TEUs have been evacuated from the port in the past two weeks, compared to 9,774 in the first two weeks of the year.

According to the authority, a single double deck train currently hauls 114 TEUs on a single trip using up to 30 per cent less resources compared to the normal single stack train

Salim said that as of today, the port only allows up to four waiting ships on the queue with the numbers expected to drop in the coming week.

“In fact, we will be loading containers directly from the discharging vessels”, he said.

The port’s performance recorded a decline in 2020 recording 1.360 million TEUs compared to 1.417 million TEUs witnessed in 2019.

The four per cent decrease was attributed to disruptions to the supply chain because of global lockdowns imposed due to the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

As part of improving the service delivery to customers across the region, KPA plans to enhance the use of Hand Held Terminals (HHT) for customers to get real time updates.

“We are in constant communication with our stakeholders to come up with more strategies for swift ship turnaround so that we not only improve efficiency but also jointly meet our obligations,” Salim explained.

Meanwhile forecast for the next two weeks shows that 14 vessels are expected to discharge 19,533 TEUs at the container terminals and load another 21,541 TEUs.

The conventional cargo is expected to receive 18 general cargo ships to discharge 330,623 metric tonnes and load 54,333 metric tonnes.

Three tanker vessels are expected as well to discharge 157,074 metric tonnes of fuel product.