

MEDIA STATEMENT

SA ports collaborating amid COVID-19

[Durban, South Africa, 29 July 2020] South African port landlord Transnet National Ports Authority is leveraging off its complementary port system to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on its marine operations.

The eight commercial ports have been supporting one another amid COVID-19, including redeploying staff and equipment where necessary to support ports more severely affected by COVID-19.

Lessons learnt at the Port of Cape Town, which was badly affected in June and into early July, have since been transferred to other ports.

TNPA's Acting Chief Operating Officer, Captain Rufus Lekala said, "The COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to a new spirit of collaboration between the eight complementary ports in South Africa. Less affected ports have stepped in to assist by deploying members of their teams to provide relief service to keep cargo flowing into and out of the country. We have bi-weekly meetings where we can all come together virtually and plan across the entire network of ports," he said.

Earlier this month a potential crisis was averted at the Port of East London, where a critical employee in the Marine Operations department tested positive for COVID-19 and a number of close contacts in the department had to go into self-quarantine awaiting test results. The affected workspaces and the port's marine craft were sanitised.

With East London airport still closed at that time due to the lockdown, TNPA was able to use its own helicopter service to fly Captain Gengan Pillay from the Port of Durban to East London, to assist with vessel docking and sailing for a few days. Captain Pillay is a qualified marine pilot, tug master and trainer from the Transnet Maritime School of Excellence, with many years of experience. He is also one of only a few personnel able to operate the older tugs in use at the Port of East London, which use Z-Peller propulsion unlike the newer tugs which use Voith Schneider propulsion and are more easily manoeuvred.

The Port of Richards Bay also rose to the occasion to offer support to the Port of East London, with tug master Njabulo Gina later deployed to East London to relieve Captain Pillay.

The marine personnel in East London, South Africa's only river port, have since been given a clean bill of health and operations are back to normal.

Says Captain Lekala, "We are thankful for the position we have as a multi-port authority and to our port users and stakeholders for their patience while we explore and implement measures to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on our ports and on their businesses."

Ends

Image:

Captain Gengan Pillay stepped in to assist with vessel docking and sailing at the Port of East London. Captain Pillay is a qualified marine pilot, tug master and trainer from the Transnet Maritime School of Excellence, with many years of experience.



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About Transnet National Ports Authority

Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) is one of five operating divisions of Transnet SOC Ltd. The National Ports Authority is responsible for the safe, effective and efficient economic functioning of the national port system, which it manages in a landlord capacity. It provides port infrastructure and marine services at the eight commercial seaports in South Africa – Richards Bay, Durban, Saldanha, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London, Mossel Bay and Ngqura. It operates within a legislative and regulatory environment and is governed by the National Ports Act (Act No. 12 of 2005). For more information visit www.transnetnationalportsauthority.net.

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