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SA ports report 9% rise in vessel traffic

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Durban Container Terminal Pier 2. Source: Transnet

Transnet has reported a 9% year-on-year increase in vessel arrivals across South Africa's port system for the 2025/26 financial year, with cargo volumes also improving across key categories.

According to figures released by Transnet on Tuesday, Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) handled 8 630 vessel arrivals during the year, up from 7 912 in 2024/25.

Cargo throughput across TNPA's eight commercial seaports increased by 4.2% to about 304 million tonnes, which Transnet said was the strongest growth since the 2011/12 financial year.

Automotive volumes led the increase, rising by 13.3%, with the Port of Durban exceeding its throughput targets.

Container volumes grew by 7.1% and exceeded annual budget expectations by 3.6%. Transnet said the increase was supported largely by a 22% rise in citrus fruit volumes.

Dry bulk cargo volumes increased by 4.2%, driven mainly by export demand for chrome ore, magnetite and manganese.

Breakbulk and liquid bulk volumes showed signs of gradual recovery, according to Transnet.

“The overall strong growth performance signals an improved domestic economic landscape, including gains from the Transnet recovery initiatives and improvements in port and rail efficiencies,” said Transnet group chief executive, Michelle Phillips.

Key infrastructure projects across the port system were gaining momentum, Transnet said. At the Port of Durban, expansion plans were aimed at increasing container-handling capacity, while upgrades at the Port of Cape Town, including container stack improvements and truck staging facilities, were expected to improve efficiency and reduce congestion, the company said.

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