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The South African Maritime Safety Authority unveils South Africa's first training vessel

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The South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) today unveiled South Africa's first ever vessel acquired for the training of maritime cadets.

The vessel will be used for research and also as a platform to conduct country-wide awareness campaigns.

Starting today the SA Dedicated Training Vessel will embark on this official journey to XX. It will stop in Namibia, Angola, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria to collect maritime cadets to join the South African cadets already on board.

Previously known as the Aghulhas 1, the SA Dedicated Training Vessel, came under the control of SAMSA after the Department of Environmental Affairs handed it over after obtaining an upgraded Aghulhas 2.

Sindiswa Nhlumayo, Executive Head of Centre for Excellence at SAMSA said the SA Dedicated Training Vessel came at a time when the organization was streamlining its maritime skills development programme and pushing the agenda of increasing the number of seafarers in the country. South Africa has under 2 000 seafarers in its registry.

"We are thrilled that the vessel is finally in our books. The acquisition means a lot to SAMSA. Not only have we become the first to convert a vessel of this size to a fully-fledged training vessel in the whole world, but we've also helped to shape the future of hundreds of South Africans aspiring to follow a career in maritime.

The shortage of training berths for our cadets remains the key obstacle to addressing skills shortage, particularly offshore skills. To date the cadet training programmes are being completed on the basis that third party shipping companies make training berths available, at no real cost to them, to train these cadets on their vessels and once qualified to be free to employ them cadets in their own fleets.

The acquisition of this vessel is a step forwards changing the current status quo as it will allow South African cadets to complete their sea-time on a South African registered vessel," she said.

Nhlumayo said the vessel will further strengthen SAMSA's mandate to contribute towards the country's maritime economic growth.

"Skills shortage is a major challenge for the country, particularly in the maritime sector. This has contributed to a drop in active shipping companies in South Africa but we believe that with this acquisition, we have the potential to double or even triple the size of the industry and contribute to job creation in years to come," said Nhlumayo.

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