

# COMMENT

■ EDITOR'S CHOICE:

RECOMMENDED READS:

**BOTHIE BOYS** - page 20:  
Read Brian Ingpen's heartfelt tribute to the graduates of the General Botha - an institution in the maritime industry that produced mariners of note.

■ ON THE WEB:

[www.maritimesa.co.za](http://www.maritimesa.co.za):  
Industry news and headlines.  
[www.maritimematters.net](http://www.maritimematters.net):  
Our editor's blog

■ CONTACT:

We look forward to receiving your company news. Please send your press releases to us or invite us to visit your company:  
[editor@maritimesa.co.za](mailto:editor@maritimesa.co.za)

**S**o much seems to have happened in the maritime world since the end of last year. There was the massively public sinking of the *Costa Concordia* in January. There were the headlines relating to the withdrawal of UAL from plans to create an oil and gas hub in Saldanha. Our Minister of Agriculture, Foresteries and Fisheries once again got her share of the spotlight and not for her positive contribution to the industry - and the Sekunjalo tender has been the topic of much debate.

The IMO's theme to commemorate 100 years since the sinking of the Titanic seemed particularly significant when the world media put their spotlight on the sinking of the *Costa Concordia* in January. The flurry of media headlines once again put the marine industry in a negative light. From talk of an incompetent captain to inaccurate charts - one should not be surprised that landlubbers will cast a sceptical eye towards the sea.

The cruise industry also made some headlines locally when the Department of Home Affairs issued a directive banning vessels from mooring at the V&A Waterfront. It was a debate that soon died down in the press, but one which highlights the continuing call for better facilities to be made available to this growing maritime opportunity.

Also receiving significant attention was President Zuma's State of the Nation address. Infrastructure was high on his agenda and it was certainly encouraging to hear him mention the importance of upgrading port infrastructure with the view to improving trade.

"For the year 2012 and beyond, we invite the nation to join government in a massive infrastructure development drive. We are going to launch a huge campaign of building the infrastructure nationwide. This will boost the level of economy and create job opportunities," he said.

Highlighting the Transnet capital projects, President Zuma added; "We have also been looking at the necessity of reducing port charges, as part of reducing the costs of doing business. The issue of high port charges was one of those raised sharply by the automotive sector in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage during my performance monitoring visit to the sector last year.

"In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the Port Regulator and Transnet have agreed to an arrangement which will result in exporters of manufactured goods, receiving a significant decrease in port charges, during the coming year, equal to about 1 billion rand in total," he said.

Indeed the Ports Regulator recently rejected the National Ports Authority application for ap-

proval of their proposed 18.06% increase in tariffs for services and facilities for the 2012/2013 tariff year, commencing on 1 April 2012 and ending on 31 March 2013.

The Ports Regulator issued a statement saying, "In considering the NPA's tariff application and various submissions, comments of stakeholders and the regulatory framework, the Ports Regulator concluded that a 2.76% tariff increase was a reasonable increase and therefore appropriate for the 2012/2013 tariff year"

I am not clear on why the NPA continue to ask for such high rates of increase with the full knowledge that they are likely to be rejected by the Ports Regulator. For the last two years we have watched the National Ports Authority ire the public, the media and the shipping fraternity by putting forward these high numbers - and then be quashed to accept significantly lower increases.

But there is something not far off on the horizon that should provide some well-earned fanfare for the industry. Nearing completion, the *Agulhas II* will soon make her maiden voyage to her new home to be put into service as a Antarctic Supply / Oceanographic Research Vessel.

According to her specifications: "The new vessel, *SA Agulhas II*, is specifically designed to perform scientific research. It is also the first ship to comply with the International Maritime Organisation latest SOLAS 2010 safety regulations, which requires that all ships built after July 2010 must be able to return to port within a 1000-mile radius if any incident."

I for one will be waiting on the quayside to welcome her home.

Another cause for celebration amongst our team is the celebration of our 10th anniversary. The March/April issue will mark this milestone for the magazine and we will be announcing a few developments that we hope will put us at the forefront of marine publishing for the continent.

Until then - safe sailing!

Editor: Colleen Jacka

*We rely on Shipscene to know what's going on in South African ports.*  
[www.shipscene.co.za](http://www.shipscene.co.za)

