Coal giant unveils machinery upgrades

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THE continent’s largest coal export facility, Richards Bay Coal Terminal (RBCT), on Thursday launched its R1.34-billion machinery upgrade to boost productivity and improve turnaround times.

The project, initiated in 2015, came in under budget, saw the replacement of ageing stackers, ship loaders and substations,

Some of the equipment, now more than four decades old, were reaching the end of their design life and had to be replaced to grow the terminal’s existing yearly throughput capacity.

Two new rail-mounted stacker reclaimers are expected to have a capacity of 6 000 tonnes per hour compared to the previous machines’ 4 500 tonnes per hour, while the ship loader will have 10 000 tonnes per hour capacity compared to the previous 8 000 tonnes per hour.

The reclaimers will further cut the amount of bulldozing needed after its coal-carrying arm was extended further into the coal yard, from 40 metres to 60 metres.

The project also reconfigured the terminal’s five existing electrical substations and added a new substation.

RBCT Chief Executive Allan Waller said the successful execution of the project ensures the sustainability of the South African coal industry and remains a significant contributor to the economy.

‘It is quite appropriate that we commission these projects in a year in which both logistical value-added chain partners, Transnet Freight Rail and RBCT, achieved record outputs with the terminal exporting a record 76.47 million tonnes of coal in 2017.”