

DP World wins 30-year concession for Port of Banana in Democratic Republic of the Congo

DP World has won a 30-year concession with an option of a further 20-year extension for the management and development of a greenfield multi-purpose port project at Banana, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Port of Banana will be the first deep-sea port in the country along its small coastline of 37 kilometres, which currently only has the riverine port of Matadi. DP World will set up a joint venture with 70% control, and the government of DRC holding a 30% share, to manage and invest in the Port of Banana. The first phase of the greenfield project, with an estimated initial investment of \$350m, will include a 600-metre quay and 25-hectare yard extension with a container capacity of 350,000 teu and 1.5m tonnes for general cargo. Construction is expected to start in 2018 and is expected to take approximately 24 months to complete. The initial investment of \$350m will be spread over 24 months and the total project cost of more than \$1bn over four phases will be dependent on market demand for the port, industrial and logistics zone infrastructure. The development gives the Democratic Republic of the Congo the opportunity to be connected into global trade lanes, to have access to a wide range of global markets and to reduce its dependency on neighbouring countries' ports.

Nigeria starts construction of Lekki Deep Sea Port in Lagos

Nigeria's government has launched the construction of the Lekki Deep Sea Port in Lagos, pledging to provide the needed support for the project. Located at the center of the Lagos Free Trade Zone, the deep sea port will feature three container berths, one dry bulk berth and three liquid berths. It would be capable of handling up to 2.7 million TEUs on an annual basis. Port developers are also expected to undertake dredging of the port channel to a depth of about 16 meters in an effort to accommodate larger ships. The USD 1.5 billion project, which is expected to be finalized in 2020, would deliver one of the largest sea ports in the region, Muhammadu Buhari, the President of Nigeria, was cited as saying during the inauguration ceremony, held on March 29. The port would enable Nigeria to maintain its position as a leading maritime hub in the West Africa and Gulf of Guinea Maritime Domain. The development of Lekki Deep Sea Port has been conceptualized on the basis of a significant gap in projected demand and capacity. Market studies indicate that the demand for containers is expected to grow at a CAGR of 12.9% up to 2025. The capacity shortfall for container terminal facilities in Lagos was projected to reach up to 5.5 million TEUs in 2025.

Port of Charleston maintains spot among busiest in U.S., world

The Port of Charleston was the 8th-busiest seaport in the United States last year with nearly 2.2 million cargo containers moving through its terminals, industry newsletter Alphaliner said in its annual global ranking. Charleston maintained its ranking ahead of the Port of Seattle — 1.42 million cargo containers in 2017 — and behind the Port of Tacoma, which handled 2.25 million. Alphaliner bases its figures on 20-foot-long increments, a standard way for the maritime industry to count containers. The Port of Charleston saw 9.2 percent annual growth in containers in 2017, the nation's third-highest percentage increase. Its eighth-place overall U.S. ranking was unchanged from last year. The port has seen a year-over-year decline in containers so far this year but expects to make up the volume in coming months. "Our container volumes are on track leading into spring, which is generally a strong season for the port," said Jim Newsome, president and CEO of the State Ports Authority. The arrival of big ships traveling through the expanded Panama Canal has led to a boom in cargo for East Coast ports, with Charleston setting a record for containers handled at its terminals in 2017. Its counterpart in Savannah also set an annual record with an 11 percent rise.

Inland container depot opens in northern Laos to facilitate trade with China

A Lao company has officially opened an inland container depot (ICD) at the Boten Specific Economic Zone (SEZ) in Laos' northern province of Luang Namtha. The opening ceremony was attended Wednesday by Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Somdy Douangdy, Luang Namtha Provincial Governor Phetthavone Philavan, Chairman of Management Committee of Boten SEZ Zhou Kun and Chairperson of the Lao International ICD Thoosavan Sichanthongthip. The Lao International ICD will become the largest logistics distribution center in Laos-China border area, while facilitating the bilateral trade, said Chairman of Management Committee of Boten SEZ Zhou. "Our goal is to offer the convenience of border transportation, and make it more flexible, safe, and smooth, so as to reduce logistics cost and to attract more foreign investment to Laos," said Thoosavan, chairwoman of the company when addressing the opening ceremony. The ICD is located at the center of an economic corridor linking Laos to China and Thailand, and is expected to serve the three countries' needs for transportation, and trade and economic cooperation, Thoosavan told Xinhua.

Djibouti plans new container terminal to bolster transport hub aspirations

Djibouti is in talks with French shipping company CMA CGM to develop a new container terminal at an initial cost of \$660 million as part of the tiny African country's bid to expand into a sea and air transport hub for the continent. Aboubakar Omar Hadi, chairman of the Djibouti Ports and Free Zone Authority (DPFZA), told Reuters on Tuesday that the authority hopes to award the concession in July. It was also prepared to buy out DP World's stake in an existing container terminal to end a row with the Dubai port operator and avoid arbitration, he said. Djibouti's strategic location has led the United States, China, Japan and former colonial power France to build military bases there. Its ports already serve as an entry point for cargo which is then sent by smaller vessels to ports along Africa's eastern coast, but it is now seeking to become a sea-air trans-shipment hub for the entire continent. To do this, Hadi said DPFZA was also planning to construct a \$350 million airport and expand Air Djibouti's fleet of cargo aircraft. The new container terminal project could break ground as early as September with construction expected to take 24 months, Hadi said, speaking on the sidelines of the Africa CEO Forum in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Indian ship owners threaten to flag out if cabotage is eased and RoFR removed

Fleet-owners in India have threatened to flag their ships outside the country if cabotage is further eased and a so-called right of first refusal (RoFR) available to them is removed. Forcefully defending its turf in the wake of signals emanating from the governments policy managers in Delhi on potential cabotage relaxation and removal of RoFR, industry lobby Indian National Shipowners Association (INSA) has said the move will have a "definite impact" on the economy without any "discernible gain". This has sparked fears among fleet owners at a time when many developed countries are strengthening their cabotage laws to protect their national flag ships. Only Indian registered ships are allowed to ply on local routes for carrying cargo, according to India's cabotage law. Foreign ships are allowed to operate along the coast if Indian ships are not available, and with the permission of India's maritime regulator. No incentive: Local shipping companies get a right to match the lowest rate offered by a foreign flag in tenders issued by state-run firms under the chartering guidelines framed by the Director-General of Shipping. Only if Indian shipping companies decline, is a foreign flag ship allowed to carry the cargo.

Moving import containers at JNPT gets cheaper

Importers routing their container cargo through the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), will save as much as 18 per cent on existing rates for transporting them onwards to final destinations over five different routes. Transport firms have quoted substantially lower rates on a tender issued by JNPT for hauling containers landing at India's busiest container gateway as part of the direct port delivery (DPD) scheme introduced to speed-up imports and cut time and costs. "The rates quoted by the transporters are 2-18 per cent lower than the existing rates," a Shipping Ministry official said after price bids were opened by the port authority last week. "The rate quoted by transporters is 14,000-70,000 per container for different routes," he said. The tender, a first of its kind in India, involves selecting road transporters which will deploy around 2,665 tractor trailers (TTs) (both owned and aggregated), manufactured after April 1, 2009, for evacuating containers landing at the port, to locations in Gujarat, Ahmednagar, Nashik, Aurangabad, Nagpur, Indore and Hyderabad, Goa, Bengaluru and regions near Mumbai over distances of 40-1,100 kms. According to the transport solution proposed by JNPT, all DPD containers will be distributed route-wise.

Middle East College launches new programme in Logistics Management

In light of the Logistics Strategy 2040 which aims to develop the logistics field in the sultanate, Middle East College (MEC) organised a launching event for its new programme in Logistics Management offered in partnership with NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands, at the MEC Student Hub. The event was held under the auspices of Eng Abdulrahman Salim al Hatmi, group CEO of Oman Global Logistics - ASYAD, and in the presence of Dr Abdullah al Sabahi, chairman, MEC, Dr Kiran G R, dean, MEC, Maarten Van Rijn, from NHTV Breda University, distinguished academicians from the public and private institutions, MEC's management, staff and students. In his inaugural address, Eng Hatmi expressed his satisfaction as the higher educational institutions are training the skillsets of prospective executives and employees, perfectly synchronising with the industry requirements and demands. He also assured his total support to make the learning process more practical with the active support of the logistics network in Oman. He said, "Congratulations MEC! Developing human capital in the logistics sector is one of the four pillars of our strategy and I am pleased to see that the momentum is gaining pace across all of our educational establishments."

'Dhowber' platform to boost Dubai's lead in maritime transport

The Port, Customs & Free Zone Corporation (PCFC) on Saturday announced that it had launched its 'Dhowber' platform. The Dhowber app is a marketplace that brings together boat captains (nukdahs) and traders, who are looking to ship their cargo to nearby ports. Nukdahs can define the dhow route, display the boat capacity and connect with traders. Dhowber allows both nukdahs and traders to register, search, and enquire availability and book cargo shipments, all from one user-friendly, easy-to-use mobile app. Payments are also handled via the app so that nukdahs can receive payments immediately. Additionally, there is a two-sided rating system, which allows both traders and nukdahs to rate each other. And finally, the traders can track their cargo from departure to arrival. Sultan Ahmad Bin Sulayem, Chairman and CEO of DP World, Chairman of PCFC, said that the new project will boost Dubai's dhow trade competitiveness by applying new tools to organise cargo transport. Dhowber is a smart platform that will help in cargo activity reservation for traditional dhows on the Dubai creek, he said, adding that the platform will rely on artificial intelligence (AI) to provide a dynamic pricing engine based on demand, as well as auxiliary services such as insurance of goods.

India Govt to use AI, blockchain technology for seamless cargo movement

Zero human intervention in cross-border trade is something the finance ministry says it is exploring, using blockchain technology and artificial intelligence (AI) for cargo movement. Beside saving cost and time, it could help India vastly improve its ranking on the 'trading across borders' parameter under the ease of doing business ranking by the World Bank. The department of customs is exploring the methods mentioned earlier, as also use of robotics and machine learning. This is in line with the government's digitisation agenda. "Through these, a cargo or consignment will be cleared without human interface at all," said a senior official. He said the department was looking at possible implementation by next year. Blockchain, the underlying technology for cryptocurrencies, is essentially a distributed ledger that records transactions in sequential blocks, creating encrypted data that can be shared between several parties through the supply chain, updating these instantly, without risk of fraud. This will do away with the need for physical documents and its processing by customs officials. Such a facility will initially be limited to certain importers or exporters. Members of the Authorised Economic Operator programme, for instance.