

Smooth sailing in UAE

The UAE is Asia's most connected country in the maritime world, thanks to its strategic location building connections, adoption of new technology, safety and sustainability and state-of-the-art infrastructure to handle all kinds of ships at its key ports. According to the Review of Maritime Transport 2018 report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the UAE is ranked 25th in terms of ownership of world fleet by dead-weight tonnage in 2015 with 200 vessels of national flag and 695 vessels of foreign or international flag. The UAE is also ranked 19th among the top 20 countries in terms of global container-carrying world fleet in 2018. It also ranked Dubai ninth among 20 leading global container ports in 2017. Amer Ali, executive director of the Dubai Maritime City Authority, said in terms of sea routes, the Gulf is on one of the world's busiest and close to key lanes between the Middle East, Europe and Asia. "Capitalising on its position between Africa, Europe and Asia, Dubai plays a vital role in intercontinental maritime trade, with infrastructure that makes it a natural hub for regional distribution. On intercontinental trade, Dubai benefits from a diversified market, with fall-offs in traffic in one region partly compensated for by more robust markets elsewhere," Ali said.

India signs port partner pact with Myanmar

New Delhi has stepped-up constructive engagement with friendly neighbours in the backdrop of expanding Chinese economic influence in the region. On Monday, foreign secretary Vijay Gokhale visited eastern neighbour Myanmar to ink a pact for appointment of a "private port operator" for Sittwe Port in that country, which is part of the crucial Indo-Myanmar Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport Project. The Rohingya issue is also understood to have been discussed during the visit. The project would also "contribute to job creation and development in the whole region, particularly in the Rakhine and Chin states of Myanmar." Rakhine state has been affected by sectarian violence in Myanmar, which has seen many Rohingya Muslims flee from there to Bangladesh. "The foreign secretary called on the state counsellor, HE Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. All matters relating to bilateral cooperation as well as matters pertaining to international and regional matters of common interest, including developments in Rakhine state were discussed," New Delhi said. The Kaladan project "will provide an alternate access route to the north-eastern region of India" and is also envisaged to "promote economic, commercial, and strategic links between India and Myanmar."

Dubai Customs to launch App that helps complete checks in 5 minutes

Dubai Customs will soon launch an app that will cut customs check at the airports from 45 minutes to five minutes, an official said at the ongoing 38th Gitex Technology Week at Dubai World Trade Centre. The app called iDeclare is being pilot-tested and will be available on both iOS and Android devices early next year. The project is part of the Ports, Customs and Free Zone Corporation's (PCFC) smart initiatives under the theme 'Future Transformations Gate'. Speaking to Khaleej Times on Tuesday, Ahmed Al Rasasi, project lead at Dubai Customs, said the travellers who carry goods that need to be declared should use the app to cut time at the customs check. "Usually when travellers enter Dubai, those who need to declare some goods, will spend at least 30-45 minutes at the customs check because there is a queue. But with the iDeclare app, they can declare beforehand the goods that they are bringing here," Al Rasasi explained. "A QR code will be sent to the traveller and this will be shown at the customs counter for faster entry," he added. The online declaration app will also let the traveller know how much customs duty will be levied. PCFC also launched an app called Nau that connects boat captains (nukdahs in Arabic) with traders who are looking to ship their cargo to nearby ports.

Bangladesh opens Chattogram, Mongla ports for India trade

India and Bangladesh on Thursday (25-Oct) signed an agreement to use the Chattogram and Mongla ports in Bangladesh for movement of goods to and from India. The countries also decided to initiate Kolkata-Dhaka-Guwahati-Jorhat river cruise services. The agreements were signed during the 19th edition of the standing committee meeting under the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade in New Delhi. The two-day secretary-level talks between India and Bangladesh concluded on Thursday. Shipping secretary Gopal Krishna said the move would strengthen trade and ties between the two neighbours. "An addendum has also been signed for inclusion of new ports Dhubri in India and Pangaon in Bangladesh," said Krishna, adding discussions were also held to make the Nakugaon land port in Bangladesh and Dalu in India operational and to connect Gelephu in Bhutan as a tripartite cross-border route. Bangladesh shipping secretary Abdus Samad expressed satisfaction with the present rounds of talks and said the next round of talks were expected in December. "The last round of talks between India and Bangladesh was held in 2016 and I am happy that after two years India has initiated the next round of talks which will help both countries."

Adani eyes investments in Bangladesh ports

Adani Group, India's largest private port operator, is eyeing investments in Bangladesh ports through private-partnership, according to senior executives. It is exploring possibilities to invest in Chittagong Port's proposed Bay Terminal, a deep terminal proposed to be developed near the port. Asian Development Bank is considering funding the terminal, which is expected to handle coal. This terminal is also on the top priority of Bangladesh government's infrastructure roadmap. Bangladesh is expanding its congested Chittagong Port. It is inviting private investment through public-private-partnership to further develop the port infrastructure. On Thursday, an Adani Group executive expressed interest in making an investment in the concerned terminal before visiting Bangladesh shipping and trade delegation. The delegation was here for a Secretary level talks between India and Bangladesh. However, questions sent to the company remained unanswered. Adani Group's port arm - APSEZ - has invested in several terminals in India along east coast including Dhamra, Ennore and Katupalli. It has investments in ports, power, energy and real estate and is also present in Haldia, West Bengal. It also has an edible oil refining facility through Adani Wilmar.

Samsung to use Blockchain to cut red tape at shipping ports

Samsung SDS is partnering with Dutch banking giant ABN AMRO to improve logistics processes at Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, the largest port in Europe. And with good reason. Imagine having to fill out 200 paper documents when shipping goods to another continent. Book-size paperwork is what it takes to ship flowers from Kenya to the Netherlands, according to World Economic Forum (WEF). Samsung SDS, one of the world's leading enterprise blockchain providers, wants to reduce all that red tape. In Oct. 22 announcement, the Korean conglomerate said it will help Dutch bank ABN AMRO track the test shipment of a container from Korean factory to Port of Rotterdam in the Netherlands. It's the busiest port in Europe with nearly 470 million tons of yearly freight volume. The pilot blockchain project will begin in January 2019. If successful, it has the potential to fully digitize documentation, enable real-time sharing, allow electronic approvals, secure records, and automate financial settlements at marine ports around the world. "We have been very interested in logistics blockchain in Korea and Europe," said Kim Hyung-tae, vice president of logistics at Samsung SDS.

Kenya's Mombasa Port receives one of the largest container vessels

The continued safe navigation into the Port of Mombasa by Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) pilots has received commendation from the Captain of one of largest container vessel to dock at the facility. Speaking during a brief ceremony to award first call certificate, MSC Maxine master, Captain Shashi Bushan hailed Kenyan navigators for guiding his huge vessel safely into harbour in very harsh weather conditions. MSC Maxine carrying 3500 TEUs sailed into the Port of Mombasa on Wednesday afternoon and went alongside berth 18 where it started to discharge its cargo. MSC Maxine is 300 metres long, 48 metres wide and 62 metres in height. "It is one of the most modern large container vessels transiting the world oceans," Capt Bushan said. KPA officials led by Patrick Makau, manager container operations presented the certificate of first call to the vessel's master. "We remain on-course to be a world class port hence the arrival of much larger vessels that dock here successfully," Makau said. The vessel which had arrived from Port Elizabeth, South Africa was expected to complete discharging and receiving cargo before it sets sail last evening to continue with its voyage. Early in April, the Port received the largest container vessel to have docked.

Port of Virginia poised to become deepest port of US east coast

The Trump administration has approved the Port of Virginia's Wider, Deeper, Safer project to deepen and widen the Norfolk Harbor's commercial shipping channels paving the way for the port to become the deepest port on the U.S East Coast. Under the plan, included in the President of the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, the port's inner harbor's commercial channels will be dredged to 55 feet deep and the channel in the Chesapeake Bay to 56 feet deep. Further, the channel will be widened to as much as 1,400 feet in select areas, which will allow for two-way traffic of ultra-large container vessels. The project's target completion date is 2025. "Virginia's inclusion in this legislation will ultimately provide us the means to better serve our ocean carrier customers by allowing them to sail the biggest ships in their fleets to Virginia," said John F. Reinhart, CEO and executive director of the Virginia Port Authority. "When Wider, Deeper, Safer is coupled with the USD 700 million investment we are making to expand capacity at our main container terminals, cargo owners throughout the Mid-Atlantic and the nation's Heartland benefit because the speed of exports and imports flowing through Virginia will increase."

DP World on Track to Meet Market Expectations

Port and terminal operator DP World witnessed a rise in volumes, as gross container numbers grew by 2.6% in the first nine months of 2018. During the period, the group handled 53.6 million TEU across its global portfolio of container terminals. At a consolidated level, DP World's terminals handled 27.7 million TEU during the first nine months of 2018, a 1.6% improvement in performance. "We have seen our volume growth decelerate due to the strong prior year performance and general caution in the market given the current uncertainty in global trade," Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Group Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, said. "On our wider portfolio, we have made good progress in strengthening our product offering to play a greater role in the global supply chain as a trade enabler," Bin Sulayem said, adding that despite the softer volumes, DP World is on track to meet market expectations. Volumes declined by 0.5% in the third quarter of 2018 due to the tougher year-on-year comparables and softer volumes in the UAE. The UAE handled 11.3 million TEU in the nine-month period, down 2.1% year-on-year, with third quarter volumes dropping by 6.7% due to the challenging macro environment and loss of lower-margin cargo.

India's largest RO-PAX ferry service to be launched in Gujarat

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani will launch country's largest RO-PAX ferry service on October 27 from the Ghogha Terminal in Saurashtra. The vessel 'Voyage Symphony' will sail for its maiden journey from Ghogha to Dahej with passengers as well as multi-wheeled cargo. It has a capacity to load 60 trucks, 5-7 buses, 35-40 cars, 40 bikes and a cumulative capacity to carry 525 passengers on board per voyage. Termed as the largest in the country by its size, the RO-PAX ferry service will reduce the travel time for cargo and passengers from 10-12 hours by road to just 1.5 hours between Ghogha and Dahej. The operator, Indigo Seaways Pvt Ltd, an arm of Surat-based Detox group, has entered into an exclusive PPP agreement to ply on the given route and has a revenue sharing contract with the Gujarat government's ports authority, Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB). The tariff fixed by the operator varies from Rs 4,500 for multi-wheeled cargo (empty) buses and trucks, Rs 800 for cars, Rs 150 for two-wheelers. While for passengers the one-way ticket charges range between Rs 200 and Rs 400, depending on the class of travel. A High Speed 'Passenger' Ferry Service (RO-RO) on the same route was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 22 last year.

India, Iran, Afghanistan hold first trilateral on Chabahar port project

India, Afghanistan and Iran Tuesday held their first trilateral meeting on Chabahar port project during which they reviewed its implementation. The meeting assumes significance as the strategically located port on the energy-rich Iran's southern coast was coming under the ambit of US sanctions on Tehran. "Detailed discussions were held between the three sides on full operationalisation of the trilateral Agreement for international transit and transport through Chabahar port," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. In May 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan had signed a pact which entailed establishment of a transit and transport corridor among the three countries using Chabahar Port as one of the regional hubs. "All sides shared the view that full operationalisation of trilateral Chabahar initiative will promote connectivity and economic development of Afghanistan and the region," the MEA said in a statement. It said the meeting decided to constitute a follow-up committee that would hold its first meeting within two months in Chabahar port. It said the committee would discuss and aim to finalise protocol to harmonise transit, roads, customs and consular matters for making the route attractive and decrease logistic costs.

JNPT mulls acquisition of 3 ports in Maharashtra; aims at doubling

Country's largest container port JNPT is mulling to acquire three ports in Maharashtra, as it targets to more than double its profits. The Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) is also going ahead with its efforts to develop an offshore port at Wadhawan, north of the financial capital. Union Shipping and Ports Minister Nitin Gadkari told PTI that the JNPT, which handles more than half of the overall container traffic, is looking to acquire Vijaydurg, Revas and Dighi ports. It can be noted that of the three, only Dighi is an operational port while the other two are concessions held by corporations with little or no development on the ground. Gadkari said the Revas port, where the concession is held by Reliance Industries, is "in problem" and a solution will have to be found in co-ordination with the Maharashtra government. The minister also said that the port is in talks to acquire Vijay Kalantri-promoted Dighi Port in Raigad district, which is facing financial trouble and has been undergoing resolution in insolvency courts. According to reports, the Dighi Port owes over Rs 1,600 crore to a consortium of banks led by the Bank of India. Gadkari said there are "environmental and political" issues with regard to the Greenfield Wadhawan port development but added that the ministry is still going ahead with it.