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ASIAN SHIPPER

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Singapore's Portek International takes over West African ports in Gabon

SINGAPORE terminal operator Portek International has announced that its wholly-owned subsidiary, Gabon Ports Management (GPM), has taken control of the ports of d'Owendo and Gentil in Gabon, West Africa.

GPM expects to invest EUR3 million to EUR4 million (US$5.8 million) on infrastructure, personnel equipment, maintenance, renewal and refurbishment, IT, security and surveillance systems, and funded from its own cash flow.

"The challenge is to ensure services undergo a smooth transition [while] at the same time introduce new equipment and systems. The second priority will be to provide productivity improvements," said Portek chairman Larry Lam.

Together with Bejaia Mediterranean Terminal in Algeria and the Port of Valletta in Malta, Port d'Owendo and Port Gentil are now the latest in Portek's portfolio in Africa, the Mediterranean and the South Pacific, totalling seven terminal operations.

In 2007 harbour operations contributed 35 per cent share of Portek's revenue. The company is a turnkey provider of equipment, services and solutions for the global port industry, as well as an operator of container and bulk terminals. It has 23 offices in Europe, the US, Asia, Middle East and Africa.

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Hamburg Sud to buy Costa Container Lines fleet, staff and services

HAMBURG SUD is expected to takeover the Costa Container Lines (CCL) organisation, including its liner shipping activities, container fleet and land-based staff in Italy, as well as its agency units in Europe, Central and South America.

CCL's container shipping operation generated revenue of EUR440 million (US$644 million) through the transport of 360,000 TEU in 2006.

The Hamburg Sud announcement about the takeover of CCL follows the signing of a sale and purchase agreement with CCL, Calmedia Agenzia Marittima and the GF Group.

The transfer of the business is to become effective December 1 subject to the completion of the consultation process with staff representatives in Italy and with the approval of antitrust authorities, Hamburg Sud said.

If the deal goes ahead, Hamburg Sud will assume control of CCL liner's following services: Western Mediterranean-East Coast South America, East Coast South America-Caribbean and Mexico, Western Mediterranean-North Coast of South America and Caribbean, Italy-Turkey and Greece, Italy-Algeria, and the Italy-Syria, Lebanon and Egypt service.

"Hamburg Sud will continue using the well-established brand Costa Container Lines and is confident that by adding the CCL business and by integrating the experienced staff of CCL and its agencies, it will further strengthen the position of Hamburg Sud in the core North/South trade lanes and service network," a Hamburg Sud release said.

Hamburg Sud will inherit the CCL container fleet, saying it plans also to charter the container vessels owned by CCL and the GF Group.

Agility Project Logistics makes Thomas Griffin new president

AGILITY, a global provider of integrated supply chain solutions, has appointed Thomas Griffin as president of Houston-based Agility Project Logistics, the company's business unit that serves the oil and gas sectors.

Mr Griffin, who has been employed with the company for 10 years, replaces Gregory Rusovich, who leaves the company to spend time with his family and focus on civic and political activities, mainly related to Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts in his home town of New Orleans, an Agility statement said.

Mr Rusovich led the project cargo company founded by his father in 1947 which was formerly known as Transoceanic before it was acquired by Agility in 2005.

Mr Griffin has more than 35 years experience in logistics, including global business development, operations, finance, and administration with a primary focus on project logistics. At Agility, Mr Griffin's most recent position was senior vice president of Agility Project Logistics. In his new position he will report directly to Essa Al-Saleh, president and CEO of Agility Global Integrated Logistics.

Singapore and Canada wrap up new air transport accord

SINGAPORE and Canada have concluded a new air transport agreement that will enable carriers from the Lion City to operate passenger and all-cargo flights as frequently as desired between the two countries via selected intermediate points, announced the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS).

In addition, they may code-share either with one another, or with any Canadian or third country airlines, said the CAAS communique.

Under the code-share arrangement, an airline is permitted to market its partner airlines' flights as its own, enabling carriers to serve potentially a new market without having to deploy its own aircraft.

Canadian airlines will enjoy similar traffic rights and code-share privileges as the Singaporean carriers under the arrangement, CAAS said.

Swiss WorldCargo adds India capacity with daily Zurich-Delhi flights

SWISS WorldCargo, the airfreight division of Swiss International Air Lines, has announced added capacity to India with the launch of a new daily flight to Delhi from Sunday November 25.

Each flight, flying an Airbus A330, offers 18 tons of capacity to and from Delhi, plus the 22 tons that's already available to and from Mumbai. Departing Zurich 1230 hrs, flights arrive in Delhi at 0035 hrs the following day (local time), while the westbound service leaves Delhi at 0200 hrs, arriving Zurich 0625 hrs.

"India is an important market that has shown massive sustained growth over the past few years and promises to rival the largest markets in the world before long," said Swiss WorldCargo airfreight chief Oliver Evans.

As India's second city after Mumbai, Delhi is a major gateway for air trade to and from south Asia, based on well established industries such as construction, electricity generation, telecommunications, IT, health care, retail and manufacturing.

Swiss WorldCargo has a global network of more than 150 destinations in over 80 countries.

Boeing completes firm configuration of 747-8 Intercontinental

BOEING says it has finalised the configuration of the 747-8 Intercontinental, which will be the largest aircraft manufactured by the US company when delivered in late 2010.

This development follows the completion of major trade studies into the airplane's performance and marks the clearance of one the last hurdles before the aircraft's production.

"We have designed the 747-8 Intercontinental to be the ideal airplane serving the

400- to 500-seat market between the 777 and the A380," said Michael Teal, deputy chief project engineer for the 747 programme. "The airplane will provide airlines significantly lower operating costs, as well as improved economics and environmental performance compared to the 747-400.

In terms of the airplane's performance, the 747-8 will be 5.6 metres longer than its predecessor, the 747-400 which it replaces and provides 467 seats in a three-class configuration and flies 14,815 kilometres without refuelling stops.

A statement from Boeing said the 747-8 will provide nearly the same trip costs to those on the 747-400, 10 per cent lower seat-mile costs, and 28 per cent greater cargo volume. The 747-8 has also been designed to be 16 per cent more fuel efficient and 30 per cent quieter than its predecessor.

With firm configuration complete, Boeing said in the release that the company and its suppliers can begin detailed design of parts, assemblies and other systems. Detailed designs will then be released to Boeing suppliers and factories to begin production of the aircraft.

"Now our team and partners must concentrate on completing the detailed designs needed to begin production and deliver the airplane on schedule in late 2010."

The 747-8 programme was launched in November 2005 by Cargolux Airlines and Nippon Cargo Airlines. Lufthansa was the first airline to order the 747-8 Intercontinental in December 2006.

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Shanghai's quarterly results keep it world's number 2 box port

THE Port of Shanghai's third quarter throughput rose 21 per cent to 19.3 million TEU, maintaining its standing as the world's second largest container port after Singapore, the city's vice mayor Yang Xiong told a recent investors' conference.

Mr Yang said overall tonnage reached 419 million tons and that keeps the port on course to be the world's biggest by the end of the year. He also noted that more throughput is expected after the Yangshan Phase 3 Terminal starts operations in 2008.

But Mr Yang said the port now needs to catch up with London, Singapore and Hong Kong in financial services, insurance and maritime arbitration services.

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Port of Wuhan plans 11 new berths to add 2.7 million TEU capacity

THE Port of Wuhan plans to build 11 new berths and upgrade five existing berths to generate an extra capacity of 2.7 million TEU to become the largest port and container hub on the upper and middle Yangtze in the next five to 15 years, Xinhua reported.

The port's throughput will surpass 1.5 million TEU or 100 million tons by 2010 and later rise to 2.9 million TEU or 168 million tons by 2020.

According to director of Wuhan port authority Wang Changqing, the port will become the transshippment hub for trade between central, south western, eastern and northern China as well as southeast Asia.

Port of Wuhan handled 348,000 TEU or 50.3 million tons in 2006.

Sinotrans to list dry bulk business in Hong Kong November 23

Sinotrans Group plans to list its dry bulk cargo business in Hong Kong on November 23, according to the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong.

As the parent company of Sinotrans Limited, Sinotrans Group is expected to raise as much as US$800 million, with UBS and BOC International as sponsors.

A source from the group said not only dry bulk cargo business but also other assets will be listed. Sinotrans Group has 35 bulk cargo vessels and many oil tankers with deadweight tonnage of over two million tons.

Since the group plans to channel its storage and logistics business into Sinotrans Limited to form an all-around logistics operator, it decided to list its dry bulk cargo business separately due to its business cycle and volatility.

NYK Conference Hall opens at Shanghai Maritime University

SHANGHAI Maritime University has opened its newly completed 260-seat NYK Conference Hall.

Takao Manji, NYK senior managing corporate officer, and Hiroshi Hattori, NYK managing corporate officer, as well as university administrators and faculty attended the opening ceremonies of the new facility.

The NYK Conference Hall was built using a donation of CNY900,000 (US$122,000) from NYK and will be used for both curricular and extracurricular events.

NYK has been a major supporter of Shanghai Maritime University for several years with scholarship offerings, loans and the participation by NYK senior staff in the education of students.

NYK has established its own special class of selected students, who are given two and a half years of courses and one year of shipboard training. The first graduates are now working on NYK Group containerships, car carriers and bulk carriers.

NYK said it will continue to support initiatives to improve maritime education and contribute to the maritime profession through close ties with Shanghai Maritime University.

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Western Liaoning Coastal Economic Zone beckons to HK investors

WESTERN Liaoning Coastal Economic Zone (WLNCEZ) has become a new growth point for Liaoning's opening up and economic development, said Liaoning province's vice governor Li Wancai.

The government of Liaoning province held an investment promotion conference for the five Western Liaoning cities in Hong Kong recently and the vice governor specially introduced the WLNCEZ to Hong Kong investors.

WLNCEZ covers three coastal cities including Jinzhou, Huludao and Panjin and two near-ocean cities of Huxin and Chaoyang and its investment opportunities have attracted attention from home and abroad, Mr Li said.

WLNCEZ is rich in port and coastal resources with two ports. Jinzhou and Huludao, opening as well as a 473-kilometre coast line, accounting for 20.7 per cent of the length of the Liaoning seaboard, he said.

One development area in WLNCEZ, Jinzhou Bay, has been advancing rapidly since it opened for business last year. Up to now, the 34-square kilometre Jinzhou Bay area has attracted 83 projects with a CNY18 billion (US$2.41 billion) investment.

WLNCEZ, located along the rim of Bohai Sea, is the nearest ocean port to Inner Mongolia and the "land bridge" from northeast China to north China.

All of the five cities in WLNCEZ are now connected to expressways and is an hour's drive from one to the other.

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