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Competition Arises for Panama's Mega Port Project

Panama's Minister of Trade recently confirmed that Singapore-based PSA International plans to build a container port at the Pacific entrance of the Panama Canal. The company already started negotiations with the local port operator Pimpsa to buy the site of the former Rodman Navy base, a facility hitherto used by US-forces. Allegedly PSA plan to spend USD 120 million on the transformation of the facility into a container terminal. Some sources feared the new venture could delay Panama's mega port project at the canal's western entrance which was announced in 2005. Others believe the investments will be complimentary. Japan's NYK, the US-American SSA Marine, Denmark's APM Terminals and Dubai Port World had signalled interest in participating in the mega-port.

Mawan's Triple-Lift Gantries

China Merchants' new Mawan Container Terminal at Shenzhen is the first port in the world that installed a new type of triple-lifting gantry crane. The first three of these ultra-large gantries were installed early this month. They were designed and manufactured by Shanghai-based ZPMC, the world's largest builder of container cranes. The gantries have an outreach of 65 metres – enough to straddle the world's largest container vessels such as the 22-row-wide Emma Maersk type. Opposed to some recent cranes designed for fully automated container yards, the new triple-lift gantries are using a single-lift procedure without lashing platform and without a second trolley on the stacking yard end. In case of Mawan, the terminal uses trucks and flatrack chassis to transport the boxes to stacking blocks which are served by rubber-tired yard gantries – this is a very common design in China.



**The gantries can lift up to six TEU or 120 metric tonnes
photo: Zhenhua Port Machinery Co.**

Top Docks

Now in late February, the world ports' 2006 turnover figures are pouring in. The world's top ten container ports remain the

same as in 2005, with some minor reshuffles of the internal pecking order. However, a look at the individual terminals' growth rates' suggests that changes are due very soon. As for 2006, Singapore defended its top position and handled some 25.8 million TEU. Hong Kong ranks second with 23.5 million TEU, while Shanghai finished third at 21.72 million TEU. Shanghai's neighbouring port of Shenzhen ranks fourth at 18.47 million TEU. The list continues with Busan (12.03m TEU) and Kaohsiung (9.78m TEU). Rotterdam, Europe's largest port, reached 9.60 million TEU and thus ranks seventh. Fuelled by a 17.9 percent growth, Dubai overtook Hamburg and handled 8.90 million TEU. Dubai thus managed to overtake the German mainport despite the fact that Hamburg enjoyed a healthy growth rate of 9.6 percent at handled 8.86 million TEU in 2006. The top ten are finally completed by America's largest port. Los Angeles moved 8.47 million TEU, and enjoyed a growth rate of a of 13.2 percent. Given the ever-rising cost of intermodal transport in North America, one might doubt if Los Angeles will be able to maintain its growth: Over the next few years, a number of new terminals on the US-east coast will become operational. These facilities will surely attract a their share of containers destined for cities and regions in the heartland. Though not yet entirely reflected in the top ten ports, Chinese terminals presently enjoy the highest growth rates of all container ports. Not less than 14 Chinese ports handled more than one million TEU in 2006. Double digits year-on-year rises of turnover are frequently achieved. Quite likely, Hong Kong (+5%) will be surpassed by Shanghai (+20.1%) this year. Shenzhen's terminals at handled 14 percent more boxes than 2005. If this trend continues, Shenzhen will overtake Hong Kong in about 4 years' time. With large scale extension programmes underway at Yantian, and Dacan Bay, the ports of Shenzhen have plenty of capacity in the pipeline – something that Hong Kong lacks. Speaking of impressive growth rates, Qingdao (7.7m TEU) only very closely missed the word's top ten and currently ranks fourth in China. A healthy 22-percent-growth might propel Qingdao into the top ten soon. China's number five, Ningbo-Zhoushan, handled some seven million TEU in 2006 and even reached a plus of 34 percent year on year. Ningbo attracted lots of new business and features in many mainline loops like Maersk Line's giant AE7 – soon to be

operated with 13,500 TEU ships. Several terminal projects are underway in Ningbo-Zhoushan, offering enough room to grow. Further south in the Pear River Delta, the port of Guangzhou (number six in China) has developed very quickly and reached a turnover of 6.6 million TEU. The region's new terminal at Nansha on the Delta's western banks contributed strongly to a 41-percent-growth. Tianjin – literally the port of Beijing – reached 5.9 million TEU and ranked seventh on the list. A strong development was also recorded at Xiamen (4.02m), Dalian (3.17m) Lianyungang (1.3m), Yantai (1.17m), Zhongshan (1.1m), Fuzhou (1.03m) and Yingkou (1.01m). All of these ports enjoyed growth rates higher than 20 percent.

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Transanund and Transjorund

Another new container feeder vessel has been introduced to the trade to the Baltic recently. The new Transanund was delivered from IHDA Shipbuilding in the Netherlands. The ship will be followed by an identical sister vessel very soon. Transanund is operated by Rederi AB Transatlatic of Sweden. The ship is the first of its kind and was designed by German abh-Engineering of Emden. Transanund's sister vessel is scheduled for delivery in March and will carry the name Transjorund. The container feeders both carry a maximum of 809 TEU. They measure 141.10 metres in length and have a beam of 20.60 metres. Both units are propelled by MAK-built eight-cylinder engines that develop 8MW. The vessels' top speed is 18 knots and they provide electricity for up to 150 reefer containers. Both feeders' hulls were subcontracted from a Chinese shipyard and towed to IHDA's production facility at Krimpen aan de Lek last summer.

The two ships will trade between the German ports of Hamburg and Bremerhaven and Kemi and Oulu in northern Finland.



Transanund departs Hamburg
Photo: Christian Costa

MSC and CMA CGM Opt for Super Jumbos

According to shipbrokers' reports, both MSC and CMA CGM managed to negotiate capacity increases for up to 16 containerships each company has on order from South Korean shipyards. The ships will be jumboised to 11,000 TEU. Thus, as many as 32 ships originally specified at around 9,600 TEU will instead be delivered a super carriers until 2010. The first order for super large carriers outside Maersk Line was placed some months ago by the French Line who signed eight 11,300 TEU ships from Hyundai. Now another eight orders originally specified at 9,700 TEU were upgraded to 11,300 TEU vessels. The Mediterranean Shipping Company is believed to have negotiated an upgrade of a series of 9,700 TEU ships to around 11,300 TEU too. The number vessels to be jumboised ahead of delivery could be as high as 16. It is however unclear whether some of the earlier ships in the series can still be extended at such a late stage in the construction process. MSC's and CMA CGM's orders are shared between Hyundai Heavy, Daewoo Shipbuilding and Samsung Heavy. Both carriers originally

wanted 13,000 TEU ships, but the shipyards were unable to construct these vessels within the building slots already allocated to the 9,700 TEU ships. A 13,000 TEU vessel would have required a totally new order and would have resulted in a rather late delivery date of maybe around 2011. The yards have come up with new designs which can be constructed side-by-side in the existing newbuilding docks, which are about 100 metres wide. The jumboised ships will be delivered in between late 2008 and 2010. Expanding the vessel's will cost between USD 9 million and USD 16 million apiece. This brings the price per ship to USD 145 million, roughly USD 12,800 per TEU slot. The ships will measure 366 metres in length and have a beam of 45.60 metres. The ships that have now been ordered very much resemble a design suggestion we made in Autumn of 2005. Your editors believed that 11,100 TEU ships of 364 metres would be an option for CMA CGM and MSC. Check out our pdf-file in the misc section.



**In 2005 we suggested these 11,100 TEU ships to come on stream for CMA CGM very soon.
drawing: Jan Tiedemann**

Still Delays at Rotterdam

The port of Rotterdam and especially the Delta terminal again suffered from severe congestion over the last few weeks. The box jam recently even forced ECT to ban all empty containers from entering the terminal. Last week, ECT became the target of widespread criticism when the company claimed that the recent problems would not be limited to Rotterdam, but

extended across the north range ports – accusations that were promptly denied by sources at Hamburg, Southampton and at other ports. None of Rotterdam’s competitors confirmed a total ban of empties. Klaus-Dieter Peters, CEO of Hamburg’s largest stevedore and terminal operator HHLA, told Lloyd’s List that ships arriving at the port suffered from “massive deviations from their schedule when coming from Rotterdam”. The president of ECT acknowledged that 2007 started poorly with the January storms, fog and customs action. Nevertheless he admitted that he did not want to make excuses and rather solve the problem.

Suez Tries to Lure Asia-US Traffic

The Suez Canal will offer transit-fee discounts to divert Asia-US Traffic from the Pacific to the Atlantic. The Canal Authority’s move obviously aims at attracting shipping companies that are frustrated by the Panama Canal’s recent toll increases. The Suez tries to maximise its share of world trade before the Panama Canal finishes the construction of an additional set of very large locks, as well as further modifications designed to increase the waterway’s capacity. Presently 80 percent of US-American imports from Asia comes through ports on the continent’s West Coast. Congested West Coast ports and soaring railway costs will prompt liner companies favour all-water services to serve destinations on or near the East Coast. These services might either run through the Panama or Suez Canal.

New Laeisz Ship Launches Nemo

The newly delivered 2,742 TEU container vessel Pona has been introduced to commercial services on last week’s Thursday. The ship is managed by Hamburg-based Laeisz and carries the charter name CMA CGM Copernic. Its maiden call at Hamburg inaugurated the (southbound leg of) the French Line’s new Nemo Service that connects Northern Europe, the Med, East Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Southwest Asia, the Indian subcontinent and Red Sea ports. The new loop will at first be operated on a bi-weekly basis. Later this year, additional tonnage will be deployed to the sling in order to provide weekly

departures. Since the loop is peculiarly long, Nemo's line-up will eventually consist of a fleet of 13 vessels. All ships will be in Pona's size range. CMA CGM Copernic was built at the German Aker Ostsee yard. The gearless vessel measures 221.60 metres in length and has a beam of 29.80 metres. Powered by a 22-MW seven-cylinder engine, Pona reaches a top speed of 22 knots. Later this year, Laeisz will receive one more ship of this type, to be named Posen.



**Laeisz's Pona at Hamburg - The picture shows the ship upon its maiden arrival, carrying its charter name.
photo: Jan Tiedemann**

DP World Favoured Bidder for HHLA Stake ?

German media reports suggest that DP World is leading the race to buy a 49.9-percent share of HHLA, the state-owned operator of several large container terminals in the German port of Hamburg. Allegedly, DP World offered EUR 1.6 billion for the share in HHLA. The Dubai-based company also announced it would bring additional vessel traffic to Hamburg. The government of the free city and state of Hamburg declined to comment these rumours. Apart from DP World, Deutsche Bahn, German building company Hochtief, 3i Venture Capital of Britain, Allianz Capital and the Australian Macquarie Bank are among the bidders. Hamburg is believed to favour the bids of

DP World and Deutsche Bahn. The city's parliament will have to eventually decide on the future of HHLA in summer. Not surprisingly, HHLA's workers' council announced to fight against the sale of a share of the company. The council claimed that DP World would soon try to smash HHLA and dispose of it. The employees' representatives stated the case of DP World's US-American terminals as an example, but obviously failed to realise some backstory there.

Samsung Ready to Build 12,600 TEU Panamax

Now that the Panama Canal extension scheme has been decided upon, it very much looks as if we have to get used to a new terminology in container shipping: Late last week, South Korean shipbuilding giant Samsung Heavy announced the yard was ready to take orders for a 12,600 TEU panamax container vessel. Samsung's engineers have come up with a design for a ship that utilises the maximum dimensions permissible in the extended canal. The design measures 366 metres in length, and is 48.4 meters (19 rows) wide. The nominal capacity would be 12,600 TEU. The design uses a deck house in the forward part of the ship, partly to adhere to the Panama Canal Authority's 350-metre-sightline rules.

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