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Le Havre's Terminal de France leads container growth

THE French Port of Le Havre has seen its container trade grow in the first three months of the year to 609,000 TEU, which means that its container terminals have handled 27 per cent more boxes than in the same period a year ago.

Port authorities are describing this growth as the best quarterly result since the third quarter of 2004 when 574,000 TEU were handled.

To keep up with the growth, a second terminal at its Port 2000, called Terminal

Porte Oceane, is scheduled to begin operations in early autumn. This summer's construction of six new berths will begin at Port 2000. These berths are expected to be completed between September 2009 and May 2010.

The first terminal to open at Port 2000 was Terminal de France, which marked its first year in operation last month. By mid-April terminal operators at Terminal de France handled over 500,000 TEU, and more than 500 vessel calls. The largest container movements handled on a single ship so far amounted to 5,406 TEU in February by the Xin Shanghai, a vessel jointly operated by China Shipping Container Lines and CMA-CGM.

Port authorities predict that as Port 2000 is close to receiving 50 vessels and a total of 56 000 TEU a month, Terminal de France is expected to reach its target of 660,000 TEU this year.

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Hamburg Sud Venezuela appoints logistics operations director

HAMBURG Sud Venezuela has announced the promotion of Omar Castillo to the position of director of finance and for logistics operations.

Mr Castillo joined the Hamburg Sud Venezuela organisation in 2001 and served as the firm's commercial manager. Since 2005, he has served as operations manager for Hamburg Sud Transportes in Valencia overseeing the company's trucking operation in Venezuela and managing the inland container yard in Valencia, a company statement said.

Hamburg Sud serves all major ports in Venezuela offering service to and from the east coast and west coast of the Americas as well as Europe and Australia/New Zealand.

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Deutsche Post World Net Q1 profit rises 8.7pc

THE German mail, express and logistics giant Deutsche Post World Net (DPWN), which owns global courier company DHL, posted an 8.7 per cent increase in operating profit (EBIT) to EUR998 million (US$1.36 billion) in the first quarter.

In the first three months of the year, revenue rose 4.4 per cent to EUR15.5 billion.

"The first quarter confirmed the positive trends of the preceding quarters," said Edgar Ernst, the group's chief financial officer. "We attained growth in our international mail activities and substantial earnings improvements in the express business."

The mail division raised revenue 2.9 per cent to EUR3.93 billion. As done in previous quarters, the mail division more than offset anticipated revenue losses in the domestic mail market through gains in its international activities. EBIT in the mail division fell 10.8 per cent to EUR618 million mainly due to a steep cut in parcel prices last year.

During the first three months of the year, revenue at the express division rose 0.9 per cent to EUR3.33 billion, held back by currency effects totalling EUR150 million. In local currencies, this division grew organically by 6.5 per cent. This growth was generated primarily by the high-yielding international express business.

Europe as well as the Asia-Pacific and EEMEA (Eastern Europe Middle East and Africa) regions recorded strong growth rates. In the Americas, revenue in local currencies gained 3.2 per cent, with high growth rates in the domestic business in Latin America.

The logistics division grew revenue by 6.1 per cent to EUR6.22 billion in the first quarter. Revenue climbed 9.6 per cent. The DHL Global Forwarding business unit registered revenue of EUR2.19 billion, 1.5 per cent less than in the same period last year. The drop was due to currency effects and lower freight rates in some regions.

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China Southern, Air France discuss forming cargo airline

CHINA Southern Airlines has issued a statement saying it has been in talks with Air France about setting up a cargo airline, reports Xinhua.

While China Southern conceded joint venture talks were underway, the statement released by the company stressed that discussions were still at an early stage.

China Southern is the only one of the top three carriers on the mainland that does not have a cargo unit. China Eastern and Cosco established China Cargo Airlines in 1998, Air China has had Air China Cargo since 2003 and Shenzhen Airlines established Jade Cargo International with Lufthansa in 2005.

China Southern vice general manager Xu Jiebo told The Shanghai Securities News last year that his company was seeking co-operation with Air France-KLM and other Sky Team member airlines.

Analysts believe that China Southern prefers European and American airlines as partners because it hopes to promote sales of cabin space for cargo planes on their way back to China from abroad.

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Cathay fears fuel prices will weaken freight volumes

CATHAY Pacific Airways is warning that stiffer market competition and the high price of fuel will affect airfreight volumes in the short-term.

"We face increased competition in a number of markets and many shippers are switching from air freight to marine transport due to the high price of fuel," said Cathay chairman Christopher Pratt after the company's recent annual general meeting.

In March, Cathay and its wholly-owned subsidiary Dragonair combined transported 140,002 tonnes of cargo, a decline of two per cent over the same month a year ago.

"Cargo is a very cyclical business. Cathay will see limited negative impact in the long term," chief executive Philip Chen Nan-lok said in a report by The Standard newspaper in Hong Kong.

On the other hand, the company is forecasting stronger growth in passenger demand, which rose by 2.7 per cent year on year in March with both the airlines carrying a combined 1.87 million passengers.

In a bid to ward off the negative affects of future fuel price spikes, Cathay has arranged hedging for up to the 55 per cent level in the second quarter, up to 45 per cent for the second half of this year, and nine per cent next year. In addition, the airline has introduced cargo surcharges of HK$2.20 (US$0.28) per kilogram for short-haul flights and HK$4.40 per kg for long-haul flights, the report said.

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Emirates Group net profits soars 24pc

The Emirates Group announced its 19th consecutive year of profit with a record performance backed by continued double-digit growth, a company statement said.

Group net profit increased 23.5 per cent to a record AED3.5 billion (US$942 million) for the financial year ending March 31, 2007.

The group's revenue during the reporting period surged 28.4 per cent to AED31.1 billion compared to AED24.2 billion last year. Revenue from one of its subsidiaries, Emirates Airline, totalled AED29.8 billion for the year, AED 6.8 billion or 29.5 per cent higher than income of AED23.1 billion in 2005-06.

The statement said the airline also carried three million more passengers during the financial year, for a record total of 17.5 million.

Emirates SkyCargo recorded strong growth across its network to carry 1.2 million tonnes of cargo, surpassing its record of one million tonnes of cargo carried last year by 13.5 per cent. The division's revenue of AED5.4 billion was AED874 million, 19 per cent higher than the year before.

Fuel costs remained the top expenditure accounting for 29.1 per cent of total operating costs, up from 27.2 per cent the previous year and 21.4 per cent the year before.

Hong Kong falls to third place among world container ports

HONG KONG slipped from second to third place behind Singapore and Shanghai among world container ports by volume based on throughput figures for the first four months of 2007.

Singapore maintained its lead with a four-month throughput of 8.8 million TEU, up 14 per cent year on year. This was followed by Shanghai's 8.08 million TEU, up 26.8 per cent, which was followed by Hong Kong's 7.4 million TEU, a barely perceptible gain of 0.4 per cent over the same period.

Singapore's April throughput amounted to 2.2 million TEU up 13.4 per cent while Hong Kong experienced a 1.9 million throughput, an increase 1.6 per cent. Shanghai did not provide monthly figures.

Hutchison unit awards Boskalis US$60m Panama CT job

DUTCH dredging company Boskalis Westminster NV has signed a EUR50 million (US$60 million) contract with a unit of Hong Kong's Hutchison Port Holdings to extend the container Port of Balboa at the Pacific side of the Panama Canal, reported Thomson Financial.

The 15-month job, which starts this month, was awarded by Panama Ports Company, a Hutchison subsidiary. Work includes the construction of additional port area, a retaining rock dike and a link structure to the existing berths 16 and 17.

Boskalis will deploy its American Stuyvesant trailing suction hopper, a large backhoe and transport barges for the job. Civil engineering will be done by Intercoastal Marine Inc, of Panama.

The project is designed to meet the growing container traffic through the Panama Canal, which will be deepened and expanded with additional post-panamax locks in coming years.

Rail network set for break-up into five companies: report

China's rail network is to be broken up into at least five companies based on geography, reported China Economic Review.

Citing Hong Kong media, the magazine's web site reported the details of the plan would be discussed at the 17th Communist Party Congress this fall.

The rail network is currently split up into 16 bureaux under the Ministry of Railways with the Jinan Railway Bureau alone responsible for 2,793 kilometres of track and 334 stations in Shandong province.

Tariffs for cargo are expected to rise 20-50 per cent over the next two years, having hit 2.87 billion tonnes annually.

The ministry's bureaux are based around specially administered cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, as well as provincial capitals such as Jinan, Wuhan and Xian, reported Singapore's China Knowledge agency.

But a spokesman for the Ministry of Railways said he knew nothing of the reported break-up, reported China Knowledge.

MSC, Conbulk buy three upgraded 2,680 TEU ships from Maersk

French-owned MSC and Greek-owned Conbulk have bought three upgraded 2,680-TEU ships from Maersk Line (USA), according to AXSLiner News.

MSC has taken the Sea-Land Independence and the Sea-Land Defender, while Conbulk took the Sea-Land Explorer, which had been under long-term charter to MSC.

They belong to a series of 12 vessels ordered in Japan in 1978 by Sea-Land Service as 1,667-TEU vessels but then enlarged in 1985 to take on 2,472 TEU. Further capacity was raised so the deck could take on another 200 TEU.

Most of these ships are owned by US banks and Maersk Line (USA), or its parent AP Moller, which bought Sea-Land Service in 1999. The old Sea-Land ships were most recently deployed on regional relay services in East Africa, before which they were on intercontinental services.

Coscon takes fastest transit times award

COSCO Container Lines (Coscon) has been recently named the carrier that provides the "fastest transit times" at the 2006 Lloyd's Loading List Awards ceremony, which was held at the historic Lord's Cricket Ground.

The carrier received the honour for its UK-PRC/HongKong/Taiwan Service and the UK-South-East Asia Service.

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