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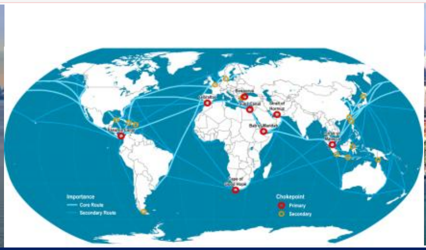

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Global Maritime Trade & Transport

South Korean Ferry Runs Aground With 267 People-Crew Arrested

All 267 passengers and crew aboard a South Korean ferry were safely rescued after the vessel ran aground off the country's southwestern coast on Wednesday evening, the Coast Guard reported.

The 26,546-tonne Queen Jenuvia II, carrying 246 passengers and 21 crew members, ran aground near the uninhabited Jok Islet off Jangsan Island in Sinan County, around 366 kilometres south of Seoul, at approximately 8:17 p.m.

The ferry had departed from Jeju Island and was en route to the port city of Mokpo. Half of the ferry's hull reportedly rested on the rocky The Coast Guard deployed 17 patrol ships, four coastal rescue vessels, a plane, and special rescue personnel to evacuate all passengers and crew safely. Twenty-seven people reported minor injuries, mainly from shock, and received medical attention.islet.

Children, pregnant women, and elderly passengers were evacuated first, with the remainder awaiting transfer on deck while wearing life jackets. Video footage showed passengers waiting calmly as rescue boats approached. Weather conditions at the time were reported to be fair with light winds.

Officials suggested that human error may have contributed to the incident. A Coast Guard official in Mokpo stated that the vessel deviated from its regular course and veered late during navigation.

Commissioner General Kim Yong-jin indicated that the captain or navigator may have made errors, although neither was under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Investigators are reviewing navigation data, surveillance camera footage, vessel traffic control records, and crew testimonies.

On Thursday, the Coast Guard arrested the first officer and an Indonesian crew member for suspected gross negligence. Officers said the two were at the helm and may have delayed overriding the autopilot, resulting in the ferry striking the islet in a narrow coastal channel.

Source:Marine Insighter)

Chinese cruise ships to steer clear of Japan amid diplomatic dispute

SEOUL – Chinese cruise operators are scrambling to avoid Japanese ports as Beijing and Tokyo engage in a diplomatic dispute, which is expected to spur demand for tourism in South Korea, according to sources and cruise schedules reviewed by Reuters.

Tour and port agents said tensions, sparked by recent remarks from new Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, could cause Chinese tourists to be redirected to South Korea from Japan.Earlier in November, Ms Takaichi told Japanese lawmakers that a Chinese attack on Taiwan threatening Japan's survival could trigger a military response.

Adora Magic City – a Chinese cruise ship that travels to Japan and South Korea's touristy island of Jeju – has changed its schedule for December to avoid stopping at the Japanese ports of Fukuoka, Sasebo and Nagasaki as planned, according to a notice posted on the government website of South Korea's Jeju province.

The cruise ship would instead spend between 31 and 57 hours in Jeju, longer than its usual schedule of nine hours, the notice said. An official from Jeju province said the cruise operator requested a change in schedule without providing a reason.

Japan has been counting the cost of the diplomatic dispute, with Tokyo-based tour operator East Japan International Travel Service saying this week that it had lost 80 per cent of its bookings for the remainder of the year. (Source:www.straitstimes.com/asia)

Hambantota Port begins construction of new customs cargo Centre

The development forms part of HIP's ongoing efforts to position Hambantota as a competitive transshipment and logistics hub in the Indian Ocean, offering faster, more efficient services to global shipping lines and regional trade partners.

Hambantota International Port (HIP) has launched construction of a new Customs Import and Export Cargo Inspection Centre, following a ground-breaking ceremony held on 20 November 2025. The event, conducted at an auspicious time in keeping with local tradition, marks the start of a strategic infrastructure upgrade designed to strengthen the port's cargo handling efficiency.

The facility is slated for completion within five to six months, paving the way for operations to commence by April 2026. Once operational, the centre will significantly streamline the examination and clearance of import and export cargo, reducing processing times and improving overall logistics flow through the port.

The ceremony was attended by several key officials, including Director General of Customs Seevali Arukgoda, Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG) CEO Wilson Qu, and Rank Container Terminals Ltd Managing Director Ravi Wijeratne, underscoring the project's importance to Sri Lanka's maritime sector.

The port is targeting a substantial rise in throughput, aiming to boost annual container volumes to 2 million TEUs by 2027. The new inspection centre is a critical enabler of that ambition, as it will enhance customs coordination, improve transparency in cargo checks, and support the port's broader expansion plans.

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Port Klang's: ASEAN's maritime beacon and Malaysia's pride

KUALA LUMPUR – In the summer of 2025, Port Klang shattered records and expectations: catapulted into Lloyd's List's top 10 busiest container ports, it leapfrogged regional titan Hong Kong and staked its claim as a new global maritime powerhouse, right on ASEAN's shores.
This achievement—perhaps Malaysia's proudest logistics milestone of recent decades—did not occur by chance.

It was the result of bold vision, strategic investment, tireless execution, and a unified sense of purpose among every staff member at Northport and Westport, orchestrated under the leadership of Lembaga Pelabuhan Klang (LPK).

The strategic levers behind the success

Port Klang's rise is not simply a numbers game. It's about building capacity, creating robust networks, and future-proofing Malaysia's role at the heart of the world's busiest shipping lane—the Strait of Malacca.

1. Consistent cargo growth and national trade fundamentals

Port Klang's throughput surged to 14.64 million TEUs in 2024—a robust 4.1 percent increase from the previous year, powered by an 8.9 percent jump in import and export activity.

Strategic positioning along the Malacca Strait and close alignment with Malaysia's diversified trade policies made the port a natural go-to for regional and global shipping, attracting over 40 main line operators.

2. Ambitious infrastructure expansion

Westport's ongoing CT10–CT17 terminal expansion will double the port's handling capacity to 28 million TEUs by 2028—a scale-up unprecedented in Southeast Asia.

Northport's upgrades to Wharf 9 and adjoining facilities now support the largest container vessels, boosting operational efficiency and throughput.

The ambitious Carey Island Project—under development—can potentially elevate Port Klang's total annual capacity to 30 million TEUs by 2060, putting single-digit positions within reach.

3. End-to-end maritime services ecosystem

Port Klang isn't just a gateway; it offers comprehensive maritime services from ship repairs to bunkering and crew change, attracting transshipment volumes and positioning itself as a regional hub for service excellence.

4. Resilience amid global challenges

Amid disruptions like the Red Sea crisis and shifting global trade flows, Port Klang's ability to adapt, optimize, and stay open for business showcased its strategic depth and operational grit.

A lead role in ASEAN's maritime ambitions

Port Klang's ascendance mirrors the broader aspirations of ASEAN as a trading bloc striving for greater economic resilience and global connectivity.

Malaysia is now the fifth largest country by total container throughput, a feat contributed to in equal measure by Port Klang and the Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP), which maintained its 15th position and handled 12.25 million TEUs in 2024—a remarkable 16.9 percent surge over the previous year.

This regional dynamism transforms ASEAN from a mere production base into a logistics and maritime trade hub with global clout.

As container flows shift away from over-congested Northeast Asian ports and global shippers seek resilience, Port Klang and its ASEAN peers stand ready to shape 21st-century supply chains.

Vision insights from LPK leadership

Capt. Subramaniam (Capt. Subra), General Manager of LPK, shares: "We are now recognized as a transshipment hub of choice—not just for Malaysia, but for Asia. The creation of local critical mass, partnerships with main line operators, and targeted operational incentives have positioned Port Klang at the forefront.

"This is a result of careful planning, strategic collaboration, and the collective commitment of every individual across Northport and Westport.

"To move into the single-digit rankings, we must continue to invest not only in infrastructure, but also in digitalization and talent. Our journey is just beginning—Malaysia is now a force to be reckoned with on the global logistics stage."**(Source: Asia News Network)**

UK, Indonesia reach $5.24b shipbuilding deal of security & Fishing

The UK and Indonesia have agreed to a four billion pound ($5.24 billion) maritime deal led by defence firm Babcock to build vessels for the Southeast Asian country, the British Government said on Friday.

"The boats will be built in Indonesia using British shipbuilding expertise, which will support 1,000 jobs at home in the UK," the UK Government said.

"The deal underlines the UK and Indonesia’s shared commitment to stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific, upholding freedom of navigation and supporting a rules-based international order."

Set to be announced by deeply unpopular Prime Minister Keir Starmer during a call to President Prabowo Subianto from the G20 Summit on Saturday, the new programme will see the UK and Indonesia jointly develop maritime capability for Indonesia’s navy and more than 1,000 vessels for its fishing fleets to boost seafood consumption and in turn, food security.

The majority of jobs are expected to be secured at Babcock’s Rosyth shipyard, with further roles at the company’s Bristol site and Devonport dockyard.

"The future vessels will be deployed in an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable way," said Babcock Chief Executive David Lockwood.

"This includes projects on dynamic fish-stock assessment, fisheries management, marine conservation, and community-led coastal resilience initiatives."

97 Passengers, Foreign Tourists, Safely Rescued near Koh Kood in Trat

The Royal Thai Navy’s Maritime Enforcement Command Center Region 1 (Thai-MECC Region 1) launched an urgent rescue operation after the passenger vessel Suea Dam Glow, carrying approximately 97 passengers en route to Koh Kood, reported a hull breach and water ingress about 10 nautical miles off Laem Sok Pier.

The vessel’s crew requested emergency support, specifically water pumps, to manage flooding. Thai-MECC Region 1 coordinated with the Marine Civil Affairs Division and the Joint Civil-Military Command for Maritime Security to dispatch naval assets.

The Royal Thai Navy deployed HTMS Thepa and Patrol Boat to the scene. The operation is being conducted in close coordination with Thai-MECC Region 1, regional marine authorities, and local rescue teams.(**Source: Pattya News)**

The Chokepoint: Strait of Malacca

Thailand's $27.5 billion Land Bridge is being described as one of the most ambitious infrastructure projects in Southeast Asia, but to understand why it has captured such global attention, you first have to understand the narrow corridor it seeks to bypass: the Strait of Malacca. This sliver of water between Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore is one of the most heavily trafficked shipping routes on Earth, a maritime shortcut connecting the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. For centuries, it has been the main artery through which Asian goods, energy supplies, and manufactured exports have moved toward Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Its geography is both a blessing and a curse—strategically placed, economically vital, but dangerously narrow and politically sensitive.

Every year, tens of thousands of vessels pass through the strait, carrying everything from consumer electronics to crude oil. A significant portion of the world's traded goods moves through these waters, and for China the dependency is even sharper. Roughly four-fifths of its imported crude oil travels through this single bottleneck.

The vulnerability created by this reliance is what Chinese leaders have long described as the "Malacca dilemma," a persistent anxiety that if the strait were to be blocked or controlled by unfriendly actors, China's economy could be throttled overnight. The fear is not unfounded. While the strait lies within the jurisdictions of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, the broader maritime security architecture surrounding it is heavily influenced by Western-aligned powers. In any confrontation or geopolitical stand-off, access to or control over this chokepoint would become a powerful lever. A sudden closure, even temporary, would force ships to take far longer routes around the tip of Indonesia or even around Africa, adding days or weeks to transit times, inflating insurance costs, and potentially destabilizing supply chains dependent on speed and predictability.

This is the backdrop against which Thailand's Land Bridge emerges as a potential game-changer. The project envisions two massive deep-sea ports—one on the Gulf of Thailand and the other on the Andaman Sea—linked by a high-capacity transport corridor that includes multilane highways, freight rail, and integrated logistics hubs. Instead of ships queuing for access through the congested Strait of Malacca, cargo could be offloaded on one side of Thailand, transported across land, and reloaded onto vessels on the opposite coast. This bypass dramatically shortens the path between the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, promising reduced shipping times, lower costs, and above all, a reduction in strategic vulnerability.

With an estimated cost of $27.5 billion—equivalent to roughly 1.1 trillion Thai baht—the Land Bridge is more than a domestic infrastructure project. It is a geopolitical statement. Thailand aims to position itself as a logistics power in its own right, capable of drawing investment from global shipping giants, regional governments, and multinational corporations looking for stability in an increasingly uncertain world. For China, the project offers an alternative gateway to the Indian Ocean that is less exposed to external control. For Japan, South Korea, India, and Middle Eastern energy exporters, it introduces new flexibility and diversification into their trade routes. And for Thailand, it represents an opportunity to transform its southern provinces into engines of growth, innovation, and global connectivity.

This is not the first time Thailand has flirted with the idea of bridging its two coasts. For centuries, versions of the Kra Canal—a proposed waterway cutting across the narrowest part of the kingdom—have appeared in imperial maps, strategic assessments, and political discussions.

But the canal faced insurmountable environmental, political, and security concerns, not least because it would have created a maritime divide within Thailand's own territory. The Land Bridge avoids those pitfalls by building overland rather than carving through the earth, making it more feasible, more flexible, and more aligned with modern logistics demands. What makes the current moment different is the alignment of geopolitical incentives. China is searching for alternatives to its vulnerable sea lanes. Thailand's government has made strategic infrastructure a national priority. Investors from the Middle East, India, and East Asia are openly looking to diversify trade routes amid supply-chain disruptions. And as Southeast Asia becomes a centerpiece of global manufacturing and energy flows, the need for redundancy in shipping routes grows stronger.

Meetings this year between Thailand's deputy prime minister and Chinese officials signaled Beijing's enthusiasm for the project. Chinese state-linked firms involved in shipping, infrastructure development, and heavy logistics have shown early interest, viewing the Land Bridge as a natural complement to China's broader Belt and Road initiative. While not officially a Belt and Road corridor, its function aligns perfectly with Chinese long-term strategic goals: diversify supply lines, secure alternative routes, and strengthen regional influence through infrastructure partnerships. Other countries, including Japan and India, have also indicated varying degrees of interest in the project, viewing it as a stabilizing addition to regional trade routes. For Thailand, attracting a diverse group of investors is essential not only for financing but also for maintaining geopolitical balance in a region where influence is contested.

Beneath the geopolitics lies an economic story with enormous implications. Global shipping is a hidden battleground of the modern era, a silent contest where nations compete not with aircraft carriers and missiles but with ports, rail networks, and supply chain infrastructure. The most powerful countries are those that can move goods quickly, cheaply, and reliably. The global economy runs on shipping lanes; whoever controls or shapes those lanes gains influence that is subtle yet profound.

In this context, Thailand's Land Bridge is not just concrete and steel. It is a move in a game few people see and even fewer openly discuss. Control over supply routes has always been a form of power. Empires rose and fell not only through military conquest but through dominance of trade corridors. Today is no different. In a world fragmented by geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and increasingly weaponized trade relationships, alternative shipping routes are strategic assets more valuable than ever.

A functioning Land Bridge would shorten maritime journeys by days, reduce fuel use, decrease congestion near Singapore, and create a seamless logistics ecosystem connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans. As competition increases among major logistics hubs—Singapore, Port Klang, Tanjung Pelepas, and emerging Indian Ocean ports—Thailand's plan introduces a new node capable of shifting the balance of regional trade. Chinese manufacturing centers, Middle Eastern energy exporters, South Asian ports, and even European shipping interests all stand to benefit from a stable, efficient bypass.

Of course, challenges remain. The environmental impact on coastal communities, the cost of construction, the need for long-term political stability in Thailand, and the willingness of major shipping lines to modify existing routes will shape the project's success. But for the first time in decades, the components for a viable Malacca alternative appear to be aligning. Feasibility studies, public hearings, and international consultations are underway. The bidding process is expected to begin in 2026, with construction potentially extending into the early 2030s. If the project stays on track—and if investor interest solidifies—Thailand could become the central chokepoint-breaker in Asia, injecting resilience into global supply chains at a time when resilience has become one of the world's most valuable commodities.

The Land Bridge represents more than a transport corridor. It is infrastructure diplomacy, energy security, economic strategy, and geopolitical insurance all rolled into one. By offering a new path between two great oceans, Thailand is stepping onto the global stage not just as a tourist destination, but as a nation capable of reshaping how the world moves its goods. In a century defined by fluid power dynamics and shifting alliances, the countries that control the routes of commerce will shape the future. Thailand's bold plan signals the arrival of a new regional heavyweight—one positioned at the crossroads of geography, trade, and strategy.

Maersk opens $140M flagship logistics centre in Shanghai

A.P. Moller – Maersk (Maersk) has celebrated the opening of its flagship logistics centre in Shanghai's Lin-gang area, marking one of the company's largest global warehousing investments.

The **$140 million warehouse** spans **113,000 square metres**, offering **147,000 square metres** of storage.The centre provides a full suite of fulfilment services, supporting customers across China, the **Asia-Pacific region**, and beyond, and aims to enhance efficiency, flexibility, and resilience in **trade operations**.

Vincent Clerc, CEO of Maersk, said: "China is not only the world's largest exporter but also a key consumer market; this centre strengthens our omnichannel fulfilment capabilities and further connects China with international markets."

The opening ceremony was attended by local government officials, Maersk executives, and customers, highlighting the strategic importance of the facility.

Leveraging Shanghai's position as a **global shipping hub** and its proximity to Yangshan Port, the **logistics centre** integrates seamlessly with Maersk's ocean, air, and land services; this scale-driven network enables faster, more cost-effective solutions.

The facility offers four core capabilities: export and import distribution, **regional/global hub services**, and cross-border e-commerce, along with value-added services such as temperature-controlled storage and customised solutions.

With in-house customs expertise and Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) certification, the centre provides efficient clearance for international shipments; it can handle bonded and non-bonded goods under one roof, allowing storage and conversion without additional customs processing.

Silvia Ding, Managing Director of Maersk Greater China, stated: "Brands increasingly require unified inventory management across export, import, and transshipment; our omnichannel fulfilment capabilities now allow customers to efficiently meet both B2B and B2C demands."

Recently, Maersk opened its largest contract logistics facility in Asia Pacific, the Maersk Mega Distribution Centre (DC) in Malaysia, expanding its warehouse footprint by over 30 per cent.

Vietnam and Saudi Arabia Enhance Transport Collaboration

On October 8, during a working session in Saudi Arabia, Mr. Musa bin Ahmed Al-Barqi, the Deputy Minister for Transport and Logistics Services, emphasized the importance of Vietnam as a strategic transshipment gateway for goods destined for various countries in the Middle East. This collaboration is viewed as a significant opportunity for both nations, especially in enhancing maritime connectivity.

Al-Barqi's comments came during discussions with Vietnam's Deputy Minister of Construction, Mr. Nguyen Xuan Sang. The deputy minister expressed aspirations for the two countries to quickly finalize and sign a bilateral cooperation agreement in transport. This includes a critical agreement on recognizing seafarer certificates of competency in line with the STCW (International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers). Such measures are seen as pivotal in bolstering maritime links and ensuring efficient transportation pathways.

Recognizing Vietnam's substantial potential in both maritime and air transport sectors, Al-Barqi underscored the necessity for the swift implementation of targeted cooperation programs. He highlighted Vietnam's robust transport infrastructure and logistics capabilities as key advantages that position the country as a dynamic market drawing significant international investment.

The Deputy Minister reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's commitment to nurturing its partnership with Vietnam, considering it an essential ally in Southeast Asia. In recent years, the cooperative ties between the two nations have seen notable advancements, particularly in the realms of economics, investment, and trade.

Compiled by Dr.Sham Choughule through various sources for private circulation

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