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Global Maritime Trade & Transport

Shipping group CMA CGM to open direct route linking Japan and Europe



TOKYO –27 Feb France's CMA CGM, the world's third-largest container shipping company, will launch its first route connecting Japan and Europe in April, after competitor Ocean Network Express decided to discontinue direct Japan-Europe service.

The new route enters service April 2. Smaller vessels will depart from Japanese ports such as Kobe and Yokohama, travel to China and then reach major ports in northern Europe in 38 days.

The cargo will not be transferred to another ship at intermediate ports, helping to lower the risk of loss and improve on-time performance. With freight rates falling amid a surge of new vessel deliveries, CMA CGM aims to stem its revenue decline by opening a new route.

Until now, Japan-to-Europe routes were operated by Ocean Network Express, a Singapore-based venture backed by Japan's three major shipping companies: Nippon Yusen, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines and Kawasaki Kisen. In April, ONE will end its direct service and switch to a setup in which cargo is transshipped in South Korea at Busan onto a larger vessel bound for Europe.

CMA CGM appears to anticipate sufficient demand for carrying goods without transshipment.

The shipping industry's supply-demand balance has been strained by factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and rising tensions in the Middle East. Shipping companies responded to increased demand by ramping up orders for container ships. Nippon Yusen forecasts that the global container ship fleet will reach 6,467 vessels in early 2026, a record high.

(Source: Reuters/asia.nikkei.com/business/transportation/shipping)

Zim deal offers Hapag-Lloyd entry into niche car carrier market



Hapag-Lloyd's [planned \\$4.2 billion takeover of Zim Integrated Shipping Services](#) offers an opportunity to develop the car carrier business established by Zim's Hong Kong-headquartered affiliate Gold Star Line (GSL), shipping executives say.

GSL currently operates two roll-on/roll-off (ro/ro) services linking Asia and Latin America and Asia with Africa.

The Gold Star Pacific Vehicle Carrier (GPL) service includes calls at Shanghai, Masan (South Korea) and Yokohama, linking with Mazatlan and Lazaro Cardenas in Mexico, Buenaventura (Colombia) and San Antonio (Chile). Current vessel schedules show on-demand inducement calls at California's Port Hueneme and Manta in Ecuador.

Similarly, the VEC service includes calls such as Kobe (Japan), Taicang and Shanghai in China, Mombasa (Kenya) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania). Vessels listed under the same service are also calling at Paranagua in Brazil and Victoria in Spain in the next few weeks. Gold Star's car carriers also call at Ashdod in Israel.

GSL has developed its car carrier operations through specialized business, "targeting niche trades where we can provide a competitive service," a senior source close to the company told the [Journal of Commerce](#).

"As a global operator, we have an ability to pivot quickly and efficiently towards areas to help our customers and their pain points," the executive added. A third GSL ro/ro service connecting Asia and Europe has been suspended, although it could be reinstated.

Operating a lean fleet

Esgian, an Oslo, Norway-headquartered maritime consultant, said Gold Star Line has trimmed its ro/ro operations in the last few months.

"Our data shows GSL currently operates a ro/ro fleet of 13 vessels," Mijeong Jang Rolfsen, Esgian's senior market impact analyst/shipping, told the [Journal of Commerce](#).

The vessels vary in size between 4,000 and 6,500 car equivalent units (CEUs) and are mostly chartered from other operators including Gram Car Carriers, Zodiac Maritime and Cido Shipping.

"In terms of commercial footprint, Gold Star Line recorded 72 port calls in Q4 2025, which is 12% down from the previous quarter [Q3 2025], spanning Asia with services extending to South America and selected ports in Africa," Rolfsen said.

Captain Igal Dafni, who was Gold Star Line's managing director in the early 2000s, said GSL's ro/ro services are potentially a new source of business for Hapag-Lloyd.

Dafni agreed Hapag-Lloyd could use the moves into the car carrier sector by rival container lines Mediterranean Shipping Co. and CMA CGM as a blueprint for its own expansion into the market, using GSL's existing network as the foundation. "But I'm not sure what it will do," he said.

MSC entered the vehicle carrier sector in 2024 after acquiring Gram Car Carriers and has a fleet of approximately 20 pure car and truck carriers. CMA CGM operates ro/ro services in the Mediterranean and North Africa.

Flurry of new vessels pressurizing the sector

While GSL is focused on bespoke services that should be more profitable, the wider car carrier sector is facing increasing headwinds, especially potential overcapacity that could hit freight rates.

"There is a huge backlog of new vessels to be delivered between 2026 [and] 2030 which will create significant pressure for tonnage providers and operators," a senior executive at a European freight forwarder specializing in the vehicle carrier sector told the [Journal of Commerce](#).

British shipbroker Clarksons said there are 140 car carriers on order, equivalent to 16% of the existing fleet of 899 ships, although 27% of the fleet is over 20 years old and is a likely candidate for scrapping.

"So, I am not so sure the sector will continue to boom and [be] ... a great market to enter, especially if you are not well established," the forwarding executive said. "It could be Hapag-Lloyd will keep GSL's existing car carrier services until they feel comfortable and see how things turn out."

Hapag-Lloyd and Gold Star Line executives told the [Journal of Commerce](#) it was too early to comment on how the Hamburg-based carrier would develop GSL's business.



Asian Maritime Industry

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Kaohsiung, Subic Bay ports sign sister-port agreement



Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chi-mai, center, poses with other event guests at the event marking the 14th anniversary of Taiwan International Ports Corp in Kaohsiung yesterday.

Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chi-mai (陳其邁) said the development of the Port of Kaohsiung is closely linked to the city's growth. In the face of rapid global changes, he said, the city government and the port operator have continued to move forward together toward shared goals.

Chen added that the city government will continue working with the port on digital transformation and sustainable development to create the best possible prospects for Kaohsiung Port's future.

TIPC Chairman Chou Yung-hui (周永暉) said the company recorded operating revenue of NT\$23.53 billion (US\$750.69 million) last year.

Among its operations, Chou said international cruise calls totaled 567 last year, up 37 percent from a year earlier, while passenger numbers reached 1.1567 million, reflecting strong growth.

Looking ahead, Chou said the company will continue to strengthen port infrastructure and service capacity, while improving cruise services, and leveraging digital and sustainable innovations to upgrade both hardware and software, supporting growth in the shipping sector and the tourism economy.

TIPC's Taichung Branch signed a contract with Taiwan Power Co. for the construction of natural gas pipelines and related facilities in the southern waters of Taichung Port.

The project is expected to handle annual natural gas transport volumes of up to 2.3 million metric tons, highlighting the port operator's role in supporting Taiwan's critical infrastructure and national energy security, the company said. (Source: Taipei Times)

China's Zhi Fei completes full unmanned port operation



After several years of incremental testing and sea trials, the smart container vessel Zhi Fei has completed what is described as the world's first full-process unmanned operation. On Saturday, the vessel navigated, berthed, and handled cargo at an automated terminal in Qingdao Port without crew intervention on deck.

Earlier phases of the vessel's development and entry into commercial service still involved hybrid intervention during complex port manoeuvres. The latest operation marks a shift towards managing the entire logistics cycle autonomously.

The 300 TEU vessel docked at the terminal using a sensor array and a domestically developed navigation system. On arrival at the quay, a vacuum-based automatic mooring system secured the hull using high-power suction pads in less than 30 seconds, replacing conventional manual line handling.

Following mooring, the automated terminal equipment carried out loading and unloading operations. The process was coordinated through the A-TOS terminal operating system and A-ECS equipment control system. These systems synchronised quay cranes and guided vehicles with millisecond-level response times.

"This successful operation proves that the integration between autonomous vessels and smart ports is no longer a theoretical concept but a functional reality," said a spokesperson for the project's technical team.

The vessel remains capable of manual, remote, and autonomous control and continues to operate within the fleet of Shandong Port Shipping Group. The full-process demonstration in Qingdao indicates progress towards broader adoption of automation in shipping operations, including objectives linked to reducing accidents and addressing labour shortages. Source: [Container News](#)

Asian Logistics Sector

Making Vietnam a strategic logistics hub.

The favorable mechanisms of free trade agreements have helped Vietnam open up opportunities for trade development, increase exports and imports, and create a large demand for logistics services. However, despite many opportunities to participate more deeply in the global service supply chain, the Vietnamese logistics industry still faces numerous challenges.

Cai Mep-Thi Vai International Port, a gateway connecting waterway trade between southern provinces and serving as an international transshipment hub. (Photo: Nguyen Van Khoi)

Many challenges remain.

In recent years, Vietnam's logistics services have grown quite strongly, averaging 14-16% per year, more than double the world average; the market size has reached approximately 45-50 billion USD, equivalent to 10% of GDP and 5% of import and export turnover. By 2025, Vietnam is expected to be ranked among the Top 10 emerging logistics markets; Top 4 in the region for the Logistics Opportunity Index and Top 5 in ASEAN for the Logistics Efficiency Index.

However, according to Dr. Bui Ba Nghiem (Import-Export Department, [Ministry of Industry and Trade](#)), the logistics service sector still faces many difficulties and challenges: Logistics infrastructure is not yet synchronized, and the development of domestic railway, waterway, and road systems is unbalanced. [deep-water port](#) It has potential, but the logistical connections are inefficient.

Currently, only two ports nationwide are directly connected to the railway: [Hai Phong](#) (Hoang Dieu port) and Cai Lan (Quang Ninh), while many ports with high throughput, such as Dinh Vu, are not yet connected.

In addition, Vietnam's logistics costs have decreased from 20% of GDP in 2014 to around 16%, but are still much higher than many countries in the region such as Singapore (8%), Malaysia (12%) and the world average (10-12%).

According to Nguyen Manh Hung, Chairman of Nafoods Group, although processed agricultural products have become a pillar of exports with tens of billions of USD in turnover, reaching more than 170 countries, this industry is still hampered by high logistics costs and limited cold storage infrastructure, which increases production costs and reduces competitiveness.

A report by the Private Economic Development Research Board (Board IV) submitted to the Government in October 2025 also showed that barriers from logistics activities significantly affect the transport capacity and competitiveness of Vietnamese goods in the international market, leading to a prolonged "logistics trade deficit"; inland waterway transport activities have also not developed to their full potential and advantages, failing to optimize goods transportation.

Furthermore, in the context of increasingly fierce regional competition, domestic logistics businesses are mostly small and medium-sized, limited in capital and technology, lacking linkages, and weak in competitiveness, resulting in the high-end logistics service market share still being largely dominated by domestic companies. FDI enterprises hold.

Long-term development strategy

It is clear that in the coming period, Vietnam's logistics industry will face both great opportunities for breakthroughs and a series of challenges as well as global competition.

On October 9, 2025, the Prime Minister approved the Strategy for the Development of Vietnam's Logistics Services for the period 2025-2035, with a vision to 2050 (the Strategy), aiming to develop efficient and sustainable logistics services in terms of economics, society, and the environment, while also enhancing the capacity of businesses and the quality of operations.

According to Deputy Director of Import-Export Department Tran Thanh Hai: For the first time, Vietnam has a comprehensive, long-term, and synchronized strategy to enhance the competitiveness of the logistics industry, opening up opportunities to make Vietnam a regional and international logistics hub, contributing to cost reduction, improving supply chain efficiency, and promoting sustainable growth for the economy.

To realize the stated goals, the Strategy focuses on promoting investment in the construction and formation of large-scale, modern logistics centers in key economic regions; investing in upgrading the system of seaports, airports, inland ports, and international railway networks.

At the same time, priority should be given to developing logistics infrastructure to support e-commerce, smart warehouses, and green urban logistics in order to reduce transportation costs and improve the efficiency of the supply chain. Tran Tien Dung, Vice President of the Vietnam Logistics Services Business Association (VLA), suggested that policies are needed to develop the highly promising ocean shipping sector.

Because Vietnam has a large import and export turnover, but is entirely dependent on the logistics chain of foreign shipping companies, Vietnamese businesses are forced to "work for hire" for international logistics coordinators and are only allowed to participate in small, low-value stages of the chain.

If there are policies to encourage and support domestic businesses to participate more deeply in the supply chain, investing in the development of an international container shipping fleet will not only help ensure the flow of goods in import and export but also serve as a foundation for related industries such as shipbuilding and manufacturing. supporting industries Let's break through together.

Source: baoquangninh.vn/dua-viet-nam-tro-thanh-trung-tam-logistics-



Asian Trade

BOC implements anti-dumping duty on Thai gypsum board



- *The Bureau of Customs will start imposing the definitive anti-dumping duties on imports of gypsum board from Thailand on February 27*
- *Tariff set in the agency's Electronic-to-Mobile System*
- *Implementation of the anti-dumping measure is pursuant to Department of Trade and Industry Department Administrative Order No. 2025-05, which mandates the levy for five years*
- *The dumping margin (as a percentage of export price) for Gypman Tech Co. Ltd. is 8.5%; Thai Gypsum Products PCL and all other exporters from Thailand at 9.18%*

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) will start imposing the definitive anti-dumping duties on imports of gypsum board from Thailand on February 27.

The implementation of the anti-dumping measure is pursuant to Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Department Administrative Order (DAO) No. 2025-05, which mandates the levy for five years.

The dumping margin (as a percentage of export price) for Gypman Tech Co. Ltd. is 8.5%, and for Thai Gypsum Products PCL and all other exporters from Thailand at 9.18%.

The tariff will be imposed on imports of standard gypsum board, faced or reinforced with paper or paperboard only, classified under AHTN (ASEAN Harmonized Tariff Nomenclature) 2022 subheading 6809.11.000 originating from Thailand.

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Malaysia targets 30% reduction in onion imports by 2030

Malaysia is expanding onion cultivation with support from government agencies, aiming to reduce import dependency by up to 30 per cent by 2030. The initiative is positioned within the country's food security framework.

According to the Deputy Secretary-General (Development) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Datuk Luqman Ahmad, Malaysia currently imports almost 100 per cent of its onion supply, with an annual value exceeding RM1 billion (US\$210 million). The country also remains dependent on imports for corn and meat products, prompting a phased approach to strengthen domestic production.

"Today I went to the field to witness the government's initiative to introduce onion crops that have high potential. All this time we have been completely dependent on imports, so this step has a big impact in terms of reducing the value of imports and increasing food security," he said.

Onions have a production cycle of around two months. Based on a pilot project, a 0.32-hectare farm can generate nearly RM35,000 (US\$7,350) per harvest season.

"If within two months farmers can earn between RM30,000 to RM35,000, this is a very productive crop. It not only helps the government reduce imports, but also provides a more guaranteed source of income for farmers," Luqman said.

Commercial plantings are underway in Pahang and Sabah, where approximately 8 hectares have been established in the initial phase. Further expansion will depend on land suitability and seed availability.

Output from a pilot project in Kelantan will be allocated for seed multiplication and distribution to other growers. Research support and technology transfer are being coordinated by MARDI, while the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Organisations are responsible for field-level implementation.

The programme is intended to scale onion production capacity and reduce exposure to external supply disruptions within Malaysia's agro-food sector. Source: [The Malaysian Reserve](#)

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BOC set to implement safeguard duty on imported cement



- *The Bureau of Customs will implement the safeguard duty for imported cement*
- *The required BOC notice has been issued in line with a Department of Trade and Industry order in late 2025 that mandates a three-year definitive safeguard measure on importations of ordinary Portland cement Type I and blended cement*
- *In the first year, the safeguard duty is set at P14 per 40-kilogram or P349 per metric ton*

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) will implement the safeguard duty for imported cement. The duty is pursuant to Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Administrative Order (DAO) No. 15-2025, which mandates the three-year definitive safeguard measure on importations of ordinary Portland cement Type I (Association of Southeast Asian Nations Harmonized Tariff Nomenclature or AHTN 2022 Subheading No. 2523.29.90) and blended cement (AHTN 2022 Subheading No. 2523.90.00), originating from various countries.

DTI had said the measure is intended to level the playing field between domestic manufacturers and importers and is not expected to be passed on to consumers, as the safeguard duty applies solely to imported cement.

For the first year of implementation, the safeguard duty is set at P14 per 40-kilogram or P349 per metric ton (mt), according to BOC [Customs Memorandum Circular No. 42-2026](#), which was issued to implement DAO 15-2025.

Under the DAO, imports originating from developing countries listed in its Annex A with de minimis import volume will not be subject to the definitive general safeguard measure.

Exports of new exporting countries, except the developing countries covered by the de minimis rule, will automatically be levied with the definitive safeguard duty.

Moreover, importers of ordinary Portland cement type I and blended cement originating from a country that is exempt from the safeguard duty should submit a Certificate of Country of Origin issued by the authorized agency/office in the source country of manufacture, subject to affixation of "Apostille" to the document or authenticated by the Philippine Embassy/Consulate General, as applicable.

The imposition of the safeguard duty will be subject to monitoring and review to ensure prices remain stable and supply stays sufficient to cover demand at any given time. DTI said the Tariff Commission's (TC) recommended safeguard duty rate represents only around 3-4% of prevailing retail prices. DTI likewise clarified that the excess cash bond paid by importers or the difference between the provisional and final duty assessed will be refunded once the corresponding DTI department order is issued.

Prior to TC's recommendation, DTI was already imposing a provisional safeguard measure on imports of cement from various countries after its initial investigation found increased imports caused substantial injury to the domestic industry.

BOC last year also implemented the provisional safeguard measure in the form of a cash bond amounting to P400 per mt or P16 per 40 kg bag on ordinary Portland cement and blended cement, pursuant to DTI DAO No. 25-01, which approved the imposition of provisional safeguard measure.

This was pursuant to Republic Act No. 8800, or the Safeguards Measures Act, which authorizes the imposition of such measure "in critical circumstances where a delay would cause damage which would be difficult to repair, and pursuant to a preliminary determination that increased imports are the substantial cause of injury to the domestic industry."—**Roumina Pablo**

India cancels up to 75,000 tonnes of soybean oil imports

India, the world's biggest soybean oil buyer, canceled several more cargoes from South America as a rally in international prices gave traders an opportunity to book profits. About 65,000 to 75,000 tonnes that Indian traders booked for April to July have been scrapped in recent days, said Aashish Acharya, vice president at Patanjali Foods Ltd., one of India's top vegetable oil buyers. The move involves buyers cancelling the cargoes and effectively selling them back to the supplier at a higher price, providing a profit of roughly \$40 to \$60 a tonne, Acharya said.

The amount of so-called washed out soybean oil could reach around 100,000 to 120,000 tonnes in the coming days, he said. Several other vegetable oil traders confirmed the moves to Bloomberg.

Benchmark soybean oil futures have rallied to a more than two-year high in Chicago amid stronger energy prices, Washington's trade deal with India and optimism that US biofuels blending quotas will support demand. The cargo cancellations come as Indian buyers have enough soybean oil and expect a potentially record South American crop to bolster supplies from around April.

"Buyers who previously purchased contracts at lower prices of around \$1,080 to \$1,100 a tonne are now exiting those positions, as prices have risen to \$1,140 to \$1,147.50," Acharya said. There will be more "in and out" trading as the market braces for large South American supplies, he added.

When buyers decide not to take delivery of cargoes, sellers typically then won't need to source physical supplies and incur related costs. Canceling shipments now can also reduce the risk Indian traders could face in selling the oil locally later in the year, when new South American supplies could pressure the market.

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



Dr. Sham Choughule. Shamc2001@yahoo.co.in

Director (International Business, Logistics, and Maritime Transport)

Association for Global Economic Development-India

Corporate Office: A/111, Mittal Court, Nariman Point, Mumbai - 400 021.

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