

## APERTURE & FOCUS

WEEK 11 | 15 MAR 2024

### GLOBAL APERTURE

Beginning March 18<sup>th</sup>, The Panama Canal Authority will [increase daily transit slots from 24 to 27](#) to alleviate restrictions imposed due to water shortages. Additional measures, including the introduction of "double locking" and water recycling, have also been introduced to further reduce wait times and accommodate more vessels, despite ongoing drought conditions that may prolong restrictions until the rainy season.

### REGIONAL FOCUS – AMERICAS

**United States:** Cargo containers have already begun [being redirected back to the West Coast](#) to mitigate potential disruptions due to concerns about potential strikes by the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) at East Coast and Gulf ports. Negotiations for the ILA's master contract with the United States Maritime Alliance began in early March.

**Mexico:** An agreement has been signed to [expand the Colombia Solidarity International Bridge between Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Leon, Mexico](#). It aims to increase its capacity from 8 to 16

lanes, facilitating cross-border trade and trucking activities. Mexico experienced a record \$36 billion in foreign direct investment in 2023, signaling a surge in nearshoring as production and manufacturing operations relocate closer to the U.S. border. The trend is being driven by demand for closer and more resilient supply chains and cost-effective operations.

Mexico's container ports experienced a [significant surge in traffic in January 2024, with throughput increasing by 20%](#) compared to December 2023, reaching 728,116 TEU. This growth, led by main Pacific gateways like Lazaro Cardenas and Manzanillo, was attributed to factors such as a rush of exports before the Lunar New Year, congestion at other ports, and the ongoing nearshoring trend. Having experienced a relatively stagnant 2023, Mexico's ports face difficulties managing increased volumes.

## REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

**India:** In the latest development to improve the country's maritime infrastructure, [The Indian government has approved an approximately \\$110 million USD expansion project](#) for Kolkata's Netaji Subhash Dock, aiming to support economic growth by improving trade capabilities. This initiative will modernize the dock, allow for larger vessels, and improve cargo operations, thus strengthening India's competitive position in global trade and contributing to regional economic development.

## REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

**Finland:** One of Finland's largest trade unions, AKT, initiated [a two-week nationwide strike starting on March 11](#), aiming to disrupt freight operations at the country's ports in protest against government policies regarding social programs. The strike targets ferry operations, oil storage facilities, port and terminal operators, and railroad freight operations, with concerns over policies that could weaken workers' rights and collective agreements.

**South Africa:** In response to increased strain on roads from a growing influx of truck traffic, Transnet National Ports Authority announced plans to invest approximately USD 11 million [in rehabilitating key roads at the Port of Durban](#) to alleviate the wear on the port's infrastructure and improve operational efficiencies. This initiative, focusing on the Container, Maydon Wharf, and Island View precincts, is part of a broader strategy to enhance port infrastructure and capacity, including a significant expansion of the Point Container Terminal.

**Czech Republic:** Prague Airport [has launched the Prague Airport Cargo Point](#) in collaboration with 12 other companies, aiming to enhance the airport's cargo air transport competitiveness and development. This initiative seeks to attract long-haul passenger carriers by leveraging air cargo, which accounts for up to 25% of revenues on traditional passenger routes, and to utilize available capacities more efficiently for cargo transportation.

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