

APERTURE & FOCUS

WEEK 7 | 14 FEB 2024

GLOBAL APERTURE

In a strategic move endorsed by both the U.S. and the European Union, India and the United Arab Emirates [formalized an agreement to establish a trade corridor](#) designed to link Europe with India through the Middle East via sea and rail on February 13th. This pact, despite the backdrop of regional unrest and the ongoing conflict in Gaza, underscores a pivotal moment in bolstering the deep-rooted trade ties between India and the UAE, while also presenting a counterbalance to China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The U.S. National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center [forecasts an end to El Niño by mid-2024](#), transitioning to neutral and likely La Niña conditions— a prediction that could alleviate the Panama Canal water crisis as rainfall increases. As announced last week, the Panama Canal Authority plans to maintain 24 daily transits through the end of the dry season, with hopes of returning to the normal 36 transits per day if the rainy season begins as anticipated.

REGIONAL FOCUS - AMERICAS

United States: On February 13th, a powerful winter storm [delivered over a foot of snow to parts of New England and New York City](#), impacting 13 million people with heavy snow and winds up to 60 mph. The inclement weather resulted in widespread delays, with over 1,100 flight cancellations or delays at key airports and challenging conditions for road freight, highlighting the storm's significant impact on logistics and supply chains in the region.

Mexico: Between February 6th and 8th, glitches in Mexico's National Customs Agency (ANAM) computer system led to significant disruptions in freight movements, notably impacting truck operations at the US border and causing delays of up to 48 hours at ports and airports. [Despite ANAM's efforts to resolve the issues](#), concerns persist among cargo owners and logistics providers regarding future disruptions.

REGIONAL FOCUS – ASIA-PACIFIC

Thailand: A spike in air cargo demand in Asia has led Bangkok Flight Services (BFS) to temporarily halt general cargo imports at Bangkok Airport (BKK) on February 13th, mirroring a similar move in Dubai the previous day. The surge, linked to the Red Sea crisis and pre-Chinese New Year activity, has caused processing backlogs, [prompting BFS to suspend general cargo imports temporarily](#), with exceptions for perishables, pharmaceuticals, dangerous goods, and specialized freight.

India: According to government officials, India will [implement strict Standard Operating Protocols \(SOPs\) for approving new ports](#) to ensure controlled growth in the maritime sector, prioritizing full capacity utilization at existing ports before approving new ones. These SOPs aim to safeguard investments in port infrastructure, mitigate delays in profitability, and ensure that new projects align with existing master plans while also emphasizing the need for adequate port connectivity infrastructure.

REGIONAL FOCUS – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

Dubai: On February 12th, ground handlers [implemented a two-day embargo on import shipments to address backlogs caused by a surge in demand](#). Air service provider dnata processed more than 76,000 tons of cargo in January, representing a 45% year-on-year increase. In response to the rise in air cargo volumes worldwide and challenges associated with container shipping due to the Red Sea crisis, Dubai's popularity as a preferred route for cargo transportation has increased, and the temporary embargo aims to expedite the recovery process and restore normal operations.

Germany: Lufthansa Cargo's operations at Frankfurt and Munich airports faced disruption due to a strike by ground staff organized by trade union Ver.di, lasting over 24 hours from February 7th to February 8th. [While flight operations gradually resumed after the strike ended](#), Lufthansa Cargo experienced cancellations and delays, reflecting ongoing challenges amidst a wider downturn in the air cargo sector.

Belgium: On February 13th, hundreds of farmers on tractors blocked roads around the Port of Antwerp, demanding better pay and conditions. [The protests add to disruptions already faced by port companies due to shipping route changes prompted](#) by Red Sea attacks, exacerbating the ongoing supply chain challenges.
