

02/03/2001

CMA-CGM to reinforce services to Port Klang

Jimmy Yeow

CMA-CGM, the French Line, says it is reinforcing its services to Port Klang and eyeing investment opportunities in the country's infrastructure, including ports.

Obviously happy with the current service levels at its hub in Westport, Port Klang, CMA-CGM, according to its group managing director Farid T. Salem, will upgrade its various shipping services from Port Klang to the Mediterranean, Europe and US, to boost its market share.

Being a major client of Westport, the line has drawn plans to increase its market share from the current 27 to 30 per cent of the terminal's throughput of 1 million TEUs (20-foot equivalent units) with the service upgrade including concentrating its transshipment operations in Port Klang.

Port Klang total throughput last year was 3.2 million TEUs of which 1.22 million was transshipment boxes.

"This can materialise as we are upgrading our mainline vessels to bigger capacity and starting feeder services linking Port Klang, Thailand and some Indonesian ports," he told reporters at the CMA-CGM office in Shah Alam on Wednesday.

CMA-CGM officials said Salem was on a three day visit to Malaysia to review the line's operations and explore investment opportunities in Malaysia.

While in Malaysia, he called on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and held discussions with Westport officials.

Salem said CMA-CGM will upgrade to bigger capacity vessels on three of the Port Klang-Mediterranean-Europe services and Port Klang-US West Coast service.

This will involve the introduction of eight new 6,500 TEUs (20-foot equivalent units) capacity and six 4,000 TEUs vessels in these trades.

For the North Continent (FAL) service, CMA-CGM will replace the 4,000 TEUs vessels with the 6,500 TEUs capacity ships, and the North China Service (NCX) vessels will be replaced with the 4,000 TEUs size from the 2,500 TEUs currently.

Also in company's pipeline, is the move to introduce 4,000 TEUs vessels to replace the 3,300 TEUs vessels currently plying in the Mediterranean service (MEX) while the US West Coast Transpacific service will see the injection of the 4,000 TEUs vessels, and taking out the 3,300 TEUs ships now in the trade.

About 85 per cent of the service upgrade is expected to be in place by this year, Salem said.

In June, CMA-CGM will also start a feeder service with its 350 TEU vessel linking Laem Chabang and Bangkok in Thailand with Port Klang. This service will boost the transshipment trade between Port Klang and Bangkok, Europe and US West Coast.

The line is also studying the possibility of covering some Indonesian ports such as Jakarta. To a question, Salem did not dismiss the possibility of the line investing in a port in the country.

"Today, Malaysia is a stable country and it has the infrastructure and a place where one can easily think of making a home base."

"We are interested in your high quality of infrastructure network of ports, airports and road transportation. It is very developed and thus permits us to conduct a long-term presence and investment in Malaysia," he

concluded.

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