

TRADE



Shanghai handled 37.1 million teu of containers last year, an increase of 1.6 per cent from the previous year. Photo: Xinhua

Yangshan port to expand cargo handling capacity

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Seven new berths would be opened at the Yangshan deep water port in Shanghai on December 10, boosting the harbour's annual cargo-handling capacity to 40 million containers, giving it an edge as the world's busiest container port.

The new berths of the 12.8 billion yuan (HK\$15.3 billion) fourth phase of the port would boost the total capacity by 11 per cent, or four million 20-foot equivalent units (teu), eventually expanding to 6.3 million teu a year.

A press officer with Shanghai International Port Group, Yang-

shan port's owner and operator, confirmed that the inauguration of the fourth phase would take place on December 10.

"Shanghai is determined to stay ahead of the competition in terms of port development," said Xiao Yingjie, president of the Merchant Marine College at the Shanghai Maritime University. "Authorities and operators have been prioritising technologies and management to enhance the Shanghai port's global status."

The harbour is equipped with advanced cranes, lifts and carriers with the latest technology in loading, discharging and transshipping cargo quickly and safely.

As many as 130 automated guided vehicles would be used at

the port, the largest number of automatons installed in any container terminal worldwide.

Yangshan began construction in 2002 and handled three million teu during the first year of operation in 2015. The port was kept busy by thriving trade from the Yangtze River Delta around Shanghai.

By 2010, Shanghai had surpassed Singapore as the world's busiest container port by volume.

Shanghai handled 37.1 million teu of containers last year, an increase of 1.6 per cent from the previous year, retaining its crown among global container ports for the seventh year.

Still, most of that activity was domestic trade and commerce,

with a mere 7.2 per cent of the traffic categorised as international transshipments, or cargo that has sent onwards to other ports around the world.

Last year, Shanghai municipality set a target of 15 per cent for international transshipments by 2040. Yangshan port is part of the free-trade zone that the city began building in 2013.

Technically, a free-trade zone is exempted from customs inspections. Customs authorities in Shanghai have also streamlined the clearance process to just two hours from a day.

Efforts are also being made to quicken cargo flows to attract more international container shipping companies.