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Tensions rise as charterers refuse to fix ships with crew-change commitments

CHARTERERS are refusing to fix ships with imminent crew-change requirements or demanding that crew changes are postponed in order to avoid costly disruption to voyages.

The trend, confirmed by several shipowners, brokers and senior industry sources, has been exacerbated in recent weeks by the emergence of new strains of coronavirus, rapidly changing port requirements and widespread concerns from both charterers and shipowners that seafarer vaccination requirements will create supply chain logjams and long delays for ships.

Industry officials now fear that charterers' attempts to avoid additional costs will worsen the crew-change crisis, now in its 11th month, just as industry collaboration was beginning to ease some of the pressure on crew.

"We are seeing increasing instances of some charterers wanting to know before fixing if we are planning to do a crew change during the voyage or when the last crew change was done," the chief executive of one major shipowner told Lloyd's List. "In the case of one ship we have on a short time charter, the charterers are asking us to delay crew change until the time charter is over," he continued.

While shipowners have been complaining about such cases for several months, the problem has reached crisis point for several owners in the dry bulk sector, where charterers are now routinely insisting on "no crew change" commitments from owners before a fixture is confirmed.

Previous complaints, raised by the International Maritime Organization and the International Maritime Employers' Council, that certain charterers were demanding the inclusion of specific "no crew change" clauses in charterparties, have now been replaced by less direct methods of avoiding crew change delays.

"They are not necessarily putting no crew changes in writing, but they are saying it more subtly," said one senior chartering broker with many years of experience in the dry cargo market. "They just won't fix you. There is no humanity among the charterers, no exceptions.

"No matter what [the large dry bulk charterers] say, nobody cares. In fact, often it is the big boys who insist on some of the worst clauses. Nobody, but nobody, is showing any respect for the seafarer."

According to the well-connected broker, "there is not a single company amongst the chartering fraternity that stands out for its humanitarian efforts in this respect.

"A straw poll of over 100 owners and operators has yet to yield one name to add to the list of sensitive charterers," he said. "A sad indictment."

Lloyd's List approached several major charterers for comment and most declined to respond directly to questions of fixtures being declined.

One of the few to respond directly was Rashpal Bhatti, BHP's vice-president for maritime and supply chain excellence.

"There is absolutely no truth in vessels not being fixed if they have crew whose contracts are expired and need to be changed," he said in an interview. "BHP is very concerned about seafarers' wellbeing, specifically as it applies to restrictions imposed by many jurisdictions globally in [not] allowing seafarers to recrew at their ports, for the fear of infection."

"Vessel owners, technical managers and charterers have come together to find solutions so that no vessel in the BHP supply chain breaches the 11 months Maritime Labour Convention. BHP works very closely with each of its strategic partners to ensure seafarer rights are not only met but also surpassed."

Rio Tinto said in a statement that it aims "to support the shipping industry and the human rights of the seafarers on which it depends".

It added: "This requires collaboration between ship owners, who employ the seafarers, charterers and regional port authorities around transparency of information and flexibility on schedule which facilitates the safe rotation of crews within the 12-month period and as per the guidelines endorsed by the IMO."

Off the record, however, several chartering sources conceded that they were aware other charterers had been deliberately avoiding vessels that had not changed crew recently and acknowledged that the situation had recently been exacerbated by the new virus strains and rapid changes to port restrictions.

One official working with a major charterer speaking to Lloyd's List on condition of anonymity pointed out that shippers and receivers were also adding pressure to avoid crew change disruptions, adding that "nobody wants to idle time at ports".

Grant Hunter, head of contracts and clauses at industry association BIMCO, said reluctance from some charterers to engage vessels that were increasingly likely to be subject to lengthy crew-change delays was understandable in some cases given the short time period of some charterers and existing contractual obligations from the charterers to deliver goods within a specific timeframe.

"I can understand the tension here — from a charterers' perspective contractually speaking crew changes have never been their obligation — it's an operational matter... And now the charterer is being told if they don't contribute [to costs] and accept long delays they are the bad guys," he said.

Despite the official statements from charterers supporting owners in crew-change logistics, the issue of ships now being routinely shunned has repeatedly been raised as a major concern by owners' associations during the now regular industry crew-change meetings involving unions, owners' associations and various international bodies.

"It's not universal — there are good charterers out there, but this is now a serious concern for everyone in these meetings," said International Chamber of Shipping secretary-general Guy Platten. "This crisis can only be solved by everyone working in partnership, but many of the charterers don't seem to be following the spirit of the agreements we had discussed."

Later this month the Global Maritime Forum, which includes many of the world's largest charterers as members, will formally unveil the Neptune Declaration, which is intended to facilitate crew changeovers just as coronavirus restrictions are globally tightening again.

One of the key aims of the declaration, which will be signed by several major charterers as well as most major industry bodies, is to increase collaboration between shipowner and charterers in facilitating crew changes.

“The Neptune Declaration is great, but we need all parties to live up to the spirit of the declaration and work together,” said Mr Platten.

“Are we really arguing in the second year of Covid that contract is more important than morality?” said Stephen Cotton, general secretary of the International Transport Workers’ Federation.

“This behaviour is unacceptable,” he added. “The charterers need to meet the owners halfway or the seafarers will continue to suffer as a result of their lack of consideration.”

WHAT TO WATCH

Record LNG prices and rates won't last, say analysts

THE jury is out on whether the liquefied natural gas trade, which staged a dramatic comeback this winter, will outperform pre-pandemic levels, with much dependent on weather conditions in Asia in the months ahead.

The analytics arm of pricing agency S&P Global Platts held that Asia LNG spot prices should ease to a fraction of record levels seen this week as weather warms up in the north.

Asia JKM benchmark LNG prices were assessed at $32.50 per million British thermal units this week, setting a new high within days from the start of the new year.

Jeffrey Moore, manager of Platts Analytics for Asia, suggested however, that this unusual rise is likely to be brief and that high prices would not last beyond March, barring an extension of the cold snap currently hitting North Asia.

Platts Analytics projected that prices may fall towards $6 per mmBtu to trend below 2018 but above 2019 levels from the second quarter, barring among other factors, an uncharacteristically hot summer.

Asia spot market prices crashed to a record low of just over $1.80 per mmBtu during the summer following the economic lockdowns.

The record LNG prices nonetheless, reflect stronger than expected winter demand in North Asia, particularly in Japan and China.

Amid an ongoing supply outage at key plants in the region, importers there have turned to purchasing cargoes from the Atlantic basin.

That has boosted shipping demand and resulted in a further tightening of LNG tanker supply.

Lloyd’s List highlighted earlier this week one charter fixed at a record rate of $350,000.

Japan and China posted the highest month-on-month increases in imports for December, ranging above 1m tonnes, Lloyd’s List Intelligence data showed.

Kenneth Foo, who heads up Platts LNG pricing team in Asia, flagged two indicators of strengthening LNG demand in China.

Day ahead Japan electricity prices surged past ¥150 per kilowatt hour over the past three days, having mostly traded at below ¥20 per KWh earlier this month.

China’s trucked LNG prices more than doubled from third-quarter levels to almost touch Yuan6,700 per tonne on trades reflected by Shanghai Petroleum Gas Exchange.

These prices are not likely to hold after the peak gas heating season runs its course by March.

Shipping rates are expected to slide if commodity demand eases from the second quarter.

But these unusual winter market forces may well hold more far-reaching consequences for the complementary shipping market.

"The whole of 2021 could look very different if the cold weather [in the north] carries on for another month," shipbroker Simpson Spence Young's LNG director Toby Dunipace said. "If this spot market continues as is, we may see 2021 beat 2020."

On the other side of the equation, Mr Dunipace noted that record LNG fleet addition this year may possibly suppress rates, especially for older tonnage.

A total of 52 newbuilding tankers are due to join the working fleet, 20 of which are expected to come into operation in the first three months of the year, SSY data showed.

This is up from the previous record high of 49 newbuilds back in 2008.

Meanwhile, shipping rates are still benefitting from increasing tonne-miles, partly resulting from a diversion of east-west cargo flows due to congestion in the Panama Canal since October.

LNG tankers have spent over seven days making their way through the Panama Canal, going by SSY's observations.

Some ships have resorted to sailing via Cape of Good Hope to reach markets in Asia.

On average, about 1.3 LNG cargoes transited via the Cape of Good Hope in December, up from 0.35 the year before, according to Platts Analytics.

China reaffirms attempt to curb box shipping rates

CHINA said it is planning to release measures to tackle the thorny supply issues for shippers in the container shipping market, raising concerns about another round of clampdowns on freight rates.

Li Xingqian, head of foreign trade department at the Ministry of Commerce, told a press conference that solutions are being "brewed" in relation to the shortage of containers and the logjam in shipping and logistics.

"Our ministry is in talks with the Ministry of Transport and other related departments to adopt measures to increase shipping capacity and stabilise freight rates," said Mr Li.

The stock price of Cosco Shipping Holdings, the box shipping and port arm of state conglomerate China Cosco Shipping Corp, tanked Friday morning following the remarks.

Its Shanghai- and Hong Kong-listed shares slumped by more than 9% and 5%, respectively, before the noon break.

A Shanghai-based equity analyst said the ministry's statement apparently had a negative impact on CSH's investors, adding there has been talk that Beijing is poised to hold another discussion with box shipping carriers to curb rates increases, especially on the transpacific trade.

But he said the downtick was also an expected correction to the previous bullishness. Before the latest turnaround the company, which controls the world's third-largest containership fleet, had seen a five-fold boost in share value since mid-2020.

Lloyd's List has approached CSH for comment.

Chinese regulators held a meeting participated in by a slew of container lines in September last year, in an attempt to curb freight rates. This effort largely failed amid a pandemic-disrupted market.

Shippers have said they continued to face a lack of carrying capacity to haul their cargo, and the resulting rocketing freight rates as well as prolonged slot booking periods

Container line shipping companies, however, have argued that many of the factors leading to such results, including the congestion at ports, are out of their control, and the current robust freight market is largely driven by consumers' demand.

That has been partly reflected in China's stronger-than-expected exports in December, which jumped 18.1% year on year to $281.9bn, according to the latest official statistics.

Exports to the US led the growth momentum, having surged 34.5%, despite the trade dispute between the two major economies.

In a recent response to a Guangzhou-based exporter's complaint, the transport ministry said it would step up efforts to examine whether carriers have performed their rate reporting duties properly, while also pledging to prompt them to further increase vessel supply and container availability.

This response came after a joint letter sent to the commerce ministry, in which the China International Freight Agency Association and the China Shippers' Association said carriers' illicit pricing measures have "significantly affected and disrupted" the country's foreign trade and the international logistics markets.

The two suggested government authorities should launch an antitrust investigation into such practices.

Piracy threat may be greater than the numbers suggest

THE International Maritime Bureau's annual report gives some idea of the scope of the west African piracy problem, but there is also much it leaves out.

It showed 130 people were kidnapped in 22 incidents last year, compared with 121 crew in 17 incidents the year before.

The bureau recorded 195 incidents worldwide in 2020, up from 162 – though this includes everything from petty overnight robberies from anchored vessels in the Singapore Strait to violent kidnaps in the Gulf of Guinea, where even failed attacks can traumatise seafarers.

Incident tallies vary between piracy reports.

Ambrey, a UK security firm, said west Africa kidnappings fell from 159 people taken in 29 kidnapping incidents in 2019 to 142 crew kidnapped in 26 attacks in 2020.

Dryad Global, a consultancy, puts it at 138 crew kidnapped in 27 incidents last year, down from 177 crew in 28 incidents in 2019.

Piracy statistics can be confusing and do not tell the whole story.

Small changes in incident numbers can lead to big changes in percentages, which make for alarming headlines, but can make the situation look better or worse than it is.

Ian Ralby, chief executive of I.R. Consilium, a consultancy, said the IMB report did not delve into some of the key trends separating "red-herring issues versus matters of serious concern".

Ambrey prefers to gauge the problem by the number of crew kidnapped per event: 4.5 was the median this year, with 14 crew the most taken in a single kidnapping.

But despite the statistics, the piracy threat is clear. On Wednesday, the Singapore-flagged, 4,500 teu *Maersk Cardiff* (IMO: 9529255) was attacked twice overnight off Bonny, Nigeria. The crew hid safely in the citadel.

"It is unacceptable in this day and age that seafarers cannot perform their jobs of ensuring a vital supply chain for this region without having to worry about the risk of piracy," Maersk said in a statement.

Ambrey analyst Robert Peters said pirates' increased range of attacks in the past two years was "a game changer".

"Pirates are now operating in areas where security isn't legally available," he said. "There are fewer options for shipping companies to combat this and it has become more unpredictable."

Route risk assessments can quickly go out of date, making it harder to decide whether to use security escort vessels or local armed guards (most Gulf of Guinea states prohibit foreign private guards).

Even ships with security escorts could be vulnerable outside their contracted security windows.

Ambrey said adherence to Best Management Practices did not prevent pirates boarding ships – those with freeboards under 9m were particularly vulnerable – but they bought crews more time to hide in the citadel, which prevented kidnappings.

"Ambrey found the median number of crew members kidnapped could be halved when the criminals were detected early and when nonessential crew mustered in the citadel," the firm said.

But it noted that ship protection measures treated the symptoms, not the causes of piracy and armed robbery.

"Continued efforts to combat organised crime, strengthen governance, build inclusive societies and redistribute resources are necessary to address these causes in the medium and long term," Ambrey said.

Jakob Larsen, head of maritime safety and security at BIMCO, said Nigeria had made good steps toward improving its antipiracy capabilities in the short term, but these would not be enough to do the job alone.

"We need Nigeria to welcome international antipiracy efforts even in their exclusive economic zone as mandated by international conventions," he said. "And we need international navies to deploy with 1-2 frigates, competent boarding teams, helicopters and not least robust antipiracy mandates."

Mr Larsen said Denmark's defence minister had spoken honestly about what was needed and he hoped other countries would "join the fight, take responsibility and stop the pirates now".

John Stawpert, manager for environment and trade at the International Chamber of Shipping, said he was encouraged by Nigeria's efforts.

"A combination of Nigerian counter-piracy activity, deployment of non-regional forces in the Gulf of Guinea, and industry proactiveness in applying BMP mean that this should be the year where we see a reversal in the trends in piracy that have persisted in this region for far too long," he said.

OPINION:

Regulators' distrust of container lines puts lives at risk

THE risks inherent in misdeclared and undeclared dangerous goods cargoes are well-rehearsed and strongly evidenced.

One need only look at significant casualties such as *Maersk Honam* (IMO: 9784271) and *MSC Flaminia* (IMO: 9225615), or the events at Tianjin in 2015, to see the consequences to lives, vessels and infrastructure of dangerous goods being shipped illegally.

Yet across the world harmful substances and products are still being put in containers either by shippers who are ignorant of the rules, or intent on criminal fraud.

Carriers, shipper organisations and insurers have made valiant efforts to prevent dangerous cargoes getting on board ships.

Whether by information programmes such as those backed by the Cargo Integrity Group, industry bodies such as the Cargo Incident Notification Service, or the efforts of individual lines to inspect individual containers, steps are being taken to weed out customers that ship mis- or undeclared DG cargoes, either intentionally or accidentally.

Despite these best efforts, there are still bad actors in the supply chain.

Maersk's head of cargo management Uffe Ernst-Frederiksen has called for greater enforcement of existing regulation and for better communication between carriers to prevent these shippers plying their trade.

When DGs are found, it is easy enough to refuse to take that container on board. But doing so simply pushes the problem down the chain. There is nothing stopping a shipper simply rebooking a rejected cargo with another carrier.

Moreover, due to vessel sharing agreements, a cargo refused by, for example, a Hapag-Lloyd vessel, could be rebooked through alliance partner Ocean Network Express and still be loaded onto a Hapag-Lloyd ship.

Cargoes turned away by a carrier could end up going through a forwarder and slipping through the approval process, increasing the risk to other lines.

Mr Ernst-Frederiksen called for better communication between carriers over potentially high-risk customers, insisting that the industry should consider a "mindset change" in relation to sharing shipper information.

Where boxes are checked, and misdeclared cargoes are found, there should be a mechanism available for alerting other carriers that the shipper in question should not be trusted. But doing this is easier said than done.

Strict antitrust rules in Europe and the US make this impossible, with companies facing fines of up to

10% of turnover if they breach competition regulations.

There have been talks among senior container line executives about finding a mechanism to overcome misdeclarations.

A new agency, which would encompass shippers, forwarders, ports, terminals, insurers, and other stakeholders, as well as container lines, is thought to be one idea under consideration.

The idea is thought to have been discussed at a meeting of the influential Box Club but nothing further has emerged, and it appears that fear of an antitrust probe has so far prevented further action being taken.

For the idea to take off would require a concerted effort by the industry to convince regulators that any collaboration between lines for safety purposes was not anti-competitive.

Any move would need industry-wide support, particularly from responsible cargo interests and their industry bodies. There is form for this.

When the International Maritime Organization introduced its rules on the verification of gross mass, shippers were supportive of the process and actively involved in drawing up the regulations.

Now, unfortunately, is possibly not the best time for carriers to be asking favours of regulators. Soaring freight rates and massive disruption in the supply chain have brought carriers into the spotlight for all the wrong reasons.

Container lines have had a difficult relationship with regulators in Brussels, Washington and Beijing stretching back for several decades, but competition authorities should understand that cooperating on safety is not the same as unlawful collusion, and that it would be wrong to maintain the status quo.

People are dying from criminal actions that could be prevented.

Regulators need to see past fears of anti-competitive behaviour and instead support lines in their efforts to protect lives, assets and the environment.

ANALYSIS:

P&I clubs face post-Brexit hoops to write in London

EUROPE's P&I clubs are having to reapply for standing as regulated insurers in the UK if they wish to continue writing business London after Brexit, it has emerged.

While the process is likely to prove a formality, and operations will continue uninterrupted under a temporary permissions regime giving a two-year grace period, the issue is nevertheless regarded as an expensive and time-consuming headache, sector sources said.

The news comes after Britannia, the UK marine mutual, said it would redomicile in Luxembourg as a result of Britain's departure from the European Union, at a cost of more than £1m ($1.4m).

Other UK-based clubs have already set up subsidiaries in continuing EU member states as a fallback against Britain's failure to secure ongoing 'passporting rights' for financial services concerns in its post-Brexit free trade deal with Brussels.

In the event, Standard and North chose Dublin, the UK Club Rotterdam, and the London Club went for Cyprus, while West of England had been domiciled in Luxembourg even prior to the Brexit referendum anyway.

London remains one of the world's major marine insurance centres. Given the Scandinavian clubs' strategy of providing commercial hull cover on a large scale in order to subsidise mutuality, not maintaining a presence is not a realistic option.

Stale Hansen, chief executive of Norway's Skuld, said that his club is currently looking to establish a third-country branch in London to facilitate its UK operation.

"Basically, it is a lot of administration. I have no concerns we won't get it done, we are already having dialogue with the Prudential Regulation Authority," he said. "What we will spend some time on is defining what can be written out of the UK branch post-Brexit, and what can be written at Norwegian headquarters or other branches.

"My concern is that this will take some time, because I guess the PRA is quite busy these days."

Gard is the biggest player in the Nordic hull market, which is now the largest hull market in the world, and has two branch offices in London, one writing marine and energy and the other writing P&I.

It too is now operating under the post-Brexit temporary permissions regime and is in the process of becoming a regulated insurer.

"London is a very important centre for financial and marine services. UK law is central to marine business," said Bjornar Andresen, its chief underwriting officer. "I don't think you'll see a big shift, but this isn't helping."

Shipowners fared rather better than shipping services under the post-Brexit trade deal, with British and EU vessels getting unrestricted access and equal treatment in each other's ports.

MARKETS:

Container spot rate highs hold firm

CONTAINER shipping freight rates on major east-west routes have held firm at near record highs without any hint of the supply/demand imbalance that has driven up prices easing.

The latest Shanghai Containerised Freight Index, forecasting spot exchanges for the coming week, showed spot rates on the China-Northern Europe trade falling 0.9% to $4,413 per 20 ft box and almost unmoved at $4,296 on services to the Mediterranean from China.

On the transpacific trade, rates on eastbound services crept up 0.9% to $4,054 and 1.1% to $4,800 per 40 ft unit on the China-US west coast and China-US east coast, respectively.

The latest pricing signals once more that carriers have still to get a grip on the equipment shortage plaguing the market, as volumes shows no let-up ahead of the Chinese New Year with newly enforced pandemic lockdowns driving further demand for containerised consumer goods.

The Shanghai Shipping Exchange noted that headhaul services on both the transpacific and Asia-Europe trades have sailed close to full over the past week, with cargo rollovers increasingly common.

What started as a lack of empties and equipment on the transpacific trade has since spread globally, but even here there is little sign of a reprieve anytime soon with vessels still queuing outside San Pedro Bay terminals with congestion on the quayside at alarming levels.

This week, German carrier Hapag-Lloyd even made the unprecedented decision to drop one of its backhaul calls into Long Beach on the US west coast until further notice, such is the level of congestion hampering operations at ports on the Pacific seaboard.

Terminals in San Pedro Bay continued to be congested due to the spike in import volumes, which is expected to last until February 2021, it said.

Indeed, rates specialist Xeneta said that such is the battle among shippers to ensure cargo is loaded onto ships, it is noting surcharges of more than $1,000 per box.

"In short, and in reality, the market is 20% higher to move cargo on the transpacific eastbound than reported," it said.

Xeneta added that shippers are also being charged premiums on Asia-Europe services, where prices have eclipsed $10,000 per feu in some instances. Furthermore, capacity constraints here are now causing shippers issues in moving intra-Asia cargo.

The knock-on impact of the equipment shortage on the principal east-west trades has led to rocketing rates on other deepsea routes, as carriers look to address the shortfall.

The SCFI showed rates on the China-East/West Africa trade at a record $6,630 per teu, more than double its year ago value.

Spot rates on the China-South America routing, which uses Santos as a base destination port, climbed to yet new highs this week of a staggering $8,907 per teu, an eightfold increase on what shippers would expect to pay in early 2020.

Eytan Buchman, chief marketing officer at freight digitalisation and rates specialist Freightos, told Lloyd's List's sister publication Lloyd's Loading List there is at least some encouraging news for shippers that carriers are looking to remedy the situation.

"So far carriers have announced far fewer than normal blanked sailings around the Chinese New Year lull, which may indicate they will use that time to help relieve the empty container imbalance."

European shippers recently called on regulators to step in to scrutinise box carrier pricing amid the continued disruption of the global supply chain.

But while waiting for a response, shippers will take heart from the news that the Chinese government has reaffirmed its commitment to tackling the issue of spiralling freight rates.

Head of foreign trade department at the Ministry of Commerce Li Xingqian told a press conference that his ministry is in talks "to adopt measures to increase shipping capacity and stabilise freight rates".

IN OTHER NEWS:

Maersk calls for military action after pirate attack

MAERSK has added to calls for international action to tackle the piracy threat off West Africa after one of its vessels was targeted.

Pirates attempted to board the Singapore-flagged, 4,500 teu *Maersk Cardiff* (IMO: 9529255) this week off Nigeria while it was headed from Ghana to Cameroon.

Maersk said it called a guard vessel to the scene, which confirmed there were no criminals nearby, and the crew and ship were safe. Early reports said the ship was approached twice, four hours apart.

Crime at sea across Asia increases by almost a fifth

SEA robbery and piracy incidents across Asia rose by almost one fifth last year, with the highest number taking place in the Singapore Strait, according to latest data.

There was a total of 97 incidents of piracy and armed robbery reported in Asia in 2020, comprising 95 actual incidents and two attempted incidents, the Regional Co-operation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery said.

That was an increase of 17% in the total number of incidents and a 32% increase in actual incidents, compared with 2019. Of the total number, 93 were armed robbery against ships, while four were piracy.

OOCL reports fourth-quarter boom

ORIENT Overseas Container Line, a unit of state conglomerate Cosco Shipping, reported a sharp increase in the top line and cargo volume in the fourth quarter.

The Hong Kong-based company's revenue increased 51.2% year on year to $2.4bn in the three months to December 31, while liftings jumped 23.7% to more than 2.2m teu, according to an exchange statement.

Boosted by a sector-wide surge in freight rates, the results can be seen as a precursor to the stellar performances expected to be posted by other container line shipping carriers in the coming months.

Carriers call for collaboration during health crisis

THE World Shipping Council, the lobby group representing the major container lines, has called for co-operation and collaboration to solve the current supply chain crisis.

"All parties are doing what they can to manage their way through this unprecedented pandemic," it said. "Unfortunately, they may unknowingly cause issues for other parties in the chain. Closer dialogue is necessary for us all to better understand how to support each other and collaborate for better outcomes."

Container turnaround times must increase, forecasting must be more accurate and transparency must improve across the supply chain in order to remove bottlenecks, it added.

Vale reports blaze at Ponta da Madeira terminal

BRAZILIAN mining giant Vale has said that its iron ore terminal in Ponta da Madeira remains operational after a fire hit a ship loader on one of the four berths early on January 14.

Although the miner gave no information on the potential effect on shipments from the fire nor whether any vessels were affected, it confirmed that the blaze was brought under control by the fire services without any casualties or environmental damage.

The causes of the incident are under investigation and the site will be evaluated, Vale said.

Yangzijiang Shipbuilding in joint venture to develop LNG terminal

YANGZIJIANG Shipbuilding is diversifying into the clean energy sector after signing a joint venture agreement to invest in a local liquefied natural gas storage project.

The move comes as China is opening up its domestic LNG market, previously dominated by state-owned enterprises, to the private sector amid rising demand for the super-cooled gas.

The new company, named Jiangsu Run Yuan Energy, will be 30% owned by Yangzijiang Terminals China Holding Pte, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Singapore-listed shipbuilder, and 50% owned by Wuxi China Resources Gas Co, a unit of state conglomerate and gas utilities major China Resources (Holdings), according to an exchange filing.

Awilco to net $14.3m from short-term LNG charter

AWILCO LNG could rake in over $14m from a single charter contract of its liquefied natural gas carrier as the LNG spot market remains tight.

The Oslo-listed company that owns two LNG carriers said its 156,000 cu m tri-fuel diesel-electric, membrane-type vessel *WilPride* (IMO: 9627966) has been committed to a two- to three-month time charter.

The expected gross revenue from the charter ranges between $10.3m and $14.3m.

Port of Los Angeles powers through erratic year

CONTAINER traffic through the port of Los Angeles in 2020 was the most erratic ever seen, according to executive director Gene Seroka, who nonetheless praised the workforce for adapting to the huge swings in volume.

"Our container business — the port's primary economic driver — was the most erratic we have seen to date," Mr Seroka said in his state of the port address on Thursday.

"By May 2020, our volume had plunged nearly 19%. Then, in the second half of the year, American consumer demand created a pandemic-induced purchasing surge that our economy has never seen before," he said.

Crew rescued from listing bulker off Philippines

A HANDYSIZE bulker was reported to be flooding and in danger of sinking after it experienced a cargo shift, according to a Lloyd's List Intelligence casualty report.

The 1984-built, Panama-flagged *Yong Feng* (IMO: 8401793) was said to still be afloat, and drifting in the Philippines Sea, 400 nm from Okinawa, with a heavy list.

While the Japan Coast Guard was en route in response to a distress signal on January 13, the 22 crew on board were rescued by a Taiwanese fishing trawler and are reported to be safe.

Wallem Group chief Frank Coles steps down

FRANK Coles has resigned as chief executive of Hong Kong-headquartered Wallem Group.

A statement said Mr Coles wishes to be become more involved in seafarer welfare, an issue he has been active in highlighting during the pandemic.

Norton Rose Fulbright to cut over 130 jobs

NORTON Rose Fulbright, the corporate law firm with strong shipping roots, is to shed 132 jobs as part of a restructuring.

But the axe is falling predominantly among support staff, and none of the small number of lawyers affected is part of the shipping team, according to sources close to the situation.

The firm has more than 7,000 staff worldwide and the numbers involved are small in relation to overall headcount, they added.

Total exits US oil lobby group over strategy differences

TOTAL, the French energy major, has severed ties with the American Petroleum Institute, citing the US organisation's misalignment with the company's environmental goals.

Total's decision identified the institute's support for the rollback of US regulation on methane emissions, which Total opposes, and API's participation in groups that oppose subsidies to electric vehicles.

Total, which reported that in 2019 it chartered almost 3,000 vessels to transport 140m tonnes of crude oil and refined products, said it differed with US body in its stance on carbon pricing principle.

Classified notices follow

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You will be an integral part of a multi-disciplinary team of inspectors responsible for investigating a wide range of marine casualties to determine their circumstances and causes.

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- conducting detailed analysis in order to identify safety issues and draft recommendations
- writing investigation reports and safety bulletins
- giving evidence at inquests and fatal accident inquiries

You will already have extensive senior management experience at sea and ashore in an engineering role.

You will be expected to apply sound judgement and strong leadership skills, and to be empathetic when dealing with next-of-kin or others seriously affected by marine accidents.

You will be highly motivated and assertive, inquisitive and a critical thinker. You must be able to work under pressure and be comfortable working in a team or independently. You will require considerable diplomatic skills and be able to engage colleagues and external stakeholders in the discussion of new, unfamiliar or controversial concepts.

You will have excellent verbal and written communication skills, be capable of producing accurate and clear written reports to challenging deadlines, and have good presentation skills. You must also be computer literate.

https://www.civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk/csr/jobs.cgi?vxsys=4&vxvac=90447

Closing date: 29 January 2021