new ships' deliveries +++ terminal news +++ service updates +++ casualties

The Containershipping -Newsletter

by Jan Svendsen & Jan Tiedemann

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Hefty Rate Increase to Fund Panama Canal Extension

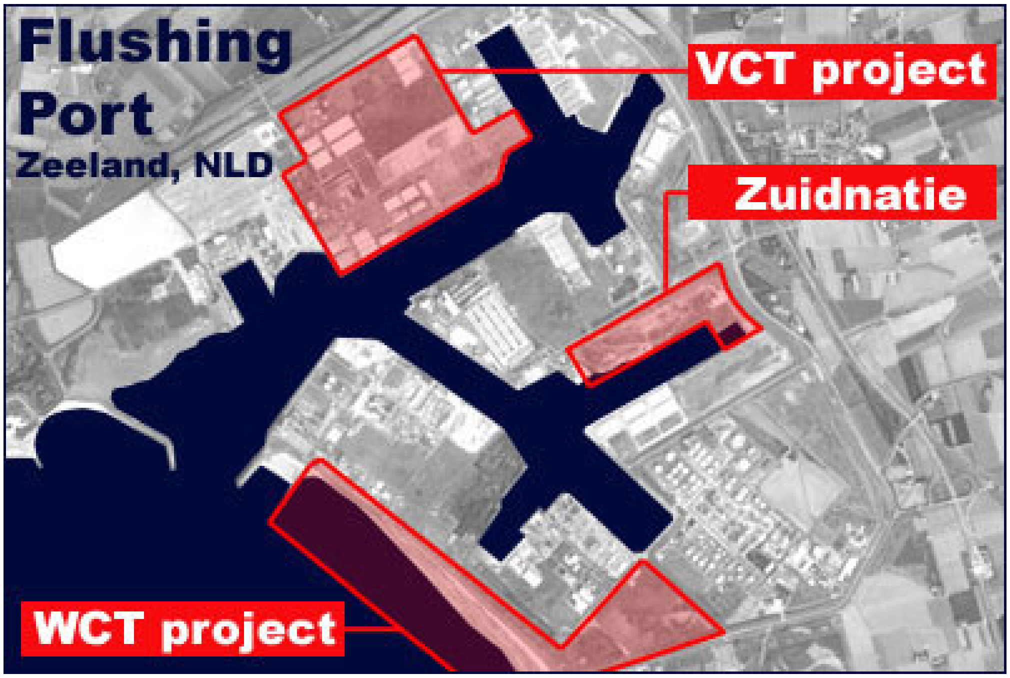
The Panama Canal Authority's recent announcement of a rate increase for passages across the isthmus does not come as a real surprise: The money is urgently needed to fund the canal's large-scale capacity expansion scheme. The mere dimension of the rate increase has nevertheless caused quite some stir among shipping lines. Average passage tolls for container ships, tankers and cruise liners will rise by more than twelve percent per annum until 2010. As a consequence of the price increases, many shipping lines might rethink their vessels' routings. For some services it will actuelly make sense to link Asia and the US east coast via the Suez and the Atlantic. In order to free capacity in the canal and get rid of smaller vessels, the new tolls will follow a tapering scale: The highest rate is applied to first 10,000 gross tonnes. The next 10,000 tonnes are less costly and so on. Last year, the Panama Canal Authority stated that passage tolls could eventually double by 2025. That would mean an average annual rise in cost of 3.5 percent. Thus, the present twelve-percent rise is a rather front-loaded toll hike.

PSA Signs Gwadar Port Concession

Temasek-owned PSA International of Singapore has now signed a 40-year concession agreement with the Pakistani Gwadar Port Authority to operate a combined multi-purpose and container terminal. The facility will be operated jointly with the local Aqeel Karim Dhedhi Group. Gwadar port is situated in Pakistan's western province of Balochistan. The port aims at the region's land-locked central Asian hinterland. The new terminal was built with financial and technical support from China. It cost a reported USD 200 million and provides a quay length of 600 metres with a depth of 14.5 metres alongside. This can be dredged to 16 metres, if necessary. The terminal will be operational in March. The new port was subject of some recent controversy. Lately, it even came under missile attacks by (suspected) local militant groups opposing foreign investment in Pakistan.

Flushing Container Terminal Proposals

One of the most discussed port developments in the Benelux countries is Flushing's Westershelde Container Terminal project in the province of Zeeland, Netherlands. The final go-ahead for this large-scale development is still pending and the project is heavily criticised by environmental groups. The WTC plan foresees the construction of an entirely new container terminal in front of Flushing's existing port, on the northern banks of the outer river Scheldt. The proposed terminal would provide 2,000 metres of quay wall with five large berths for container ships. In what could be described as a surprise move, Overslagbedrijf Verbrugge, Flushing's largest stevedore and warehousing company has now launched an alternative proposal for a container terminal in the port. The company claimed it intended the conversion of one of their multi-purpose terminals – the Zeeland Terminal – into a dedicated container handling facility. The new 190-ha-terminal, dubbed VCT, would eventually provide a 1,400-metre-quay with a clearance of 15.5 metres.



terminal projects in the port of Flushing
map: Jan Tiedemann

Compared to the WTC project, Verbruggen's proposal has one strategic advantage: Converting an existing port area avoids the lengthy and potentially risky approval process that is needed to built an entirely new terminal on land claimed from the sea. VCT would be built entirely within the limits of the present-day port. The area's existing facilities would be relocated to the eastern part of the inner port. With a building time of about three years, the VCT could be operational by late 2010, some two years earlier than the rivalling project. Verbrugge also claims, a terminal within the existing port would perform better in severe weather conditions, when a rather strong swell can build up on the river. The conversion of today's Zeeland terminal into the VCT would cost an estimated USD 323 million. The WTC's cost estimate is USD 810 million. Independently from the abovementioned plans, another container terminal will open at Flushing next year: The so-called Scaldia provides 900 meters of quay with a water depth of 14 meters. It covers an area of 53 hectares. The terminal will be owned and operated by Ghent-based Sea-invest and the Zuidnatie group. It will be equipped with three container gantry cranes and two mobile 100-tonne cranes.

Brunei's Port Plans Are Taking Shape

The wealthy sultanate of Brunei on the island of Borneo presently does not have a particularly large port. The local facilities at Bandar Muara are mainly laid out to cater for the needs of the small nation and its 375,000 inhabitants. Mainline container services by-pass the ports and head for the southwest Asian transhipment hubs of Singapore, Tanjung Pelepas or Port Kelang. Some years ago, Brunei announced plans to launch a large-scale port development scheme and become a container transhipment hub. Located on the northern coastline of Borneo, Brunei lies conveniently close to the main container shipping routes between Europe, Australia and East Asia. Brunei's plans foresees the construction of a container terminal on the island of Palau Muara Besar. This flat and uninhabited island is located a few miles east of Bandar Muara, Brunei's present port. It is surrounded by a sheltered lagoon. Access to the new port would be dredged to 16 metres. The port masterplan, which also includes the erection of a bridge between the island and Borneo's mainland, calls for the construction of a 1,300-metere-quay wall. This first phase would cost some USD 450 million. It could be operational by 2010. Industry rumours suggest that PSA, who recently pulled out of a terminal at Bandar Muara, plan to join the project development consortium and eventually become the terminal's operator.

Maersk to Streamline North American Rail Services

After a very poor financial result in 2006 – a hefty loss – Maersk Line of Copenhagen continue to streamline there operations. The shipping company lately announced numerous changes to most of its liner services. Furthermore, the inland transport sector will be subject to changes too. Due to the recent cost and price increases in intra-American rail transport, Maersk is expected to scrap services to 18 inland destinations, including some major cities like Denver, Kansas City, Salt Lake

City, Calgary, Edmonton and Alberta. Like with most other carriers, a great deal of Maersk Line's problems is worsened by the growing imbalance between imports to and exports from North American inland destinations.

New Ship: Ital Liberia

Delphic Shipping of Greece has lately taken delivery of their second 5,060 TEU panamax container ship ordered from Hanjin Heavy Industries. The vessel is the second of four units Delphic has signed from the Pusan-based shipbuilders. The series' vessels are the largest ships in their owner's fleet. All four ships have been chartered out to Evergreen. They were originally intended to operate for Evergreen's subsidiary brand Italia Marittima. Since the Taiwanese carrier announced to drop the Hatsu, Italia, and Lloyd Triestino branding this spring, your editors are surprised to learn that the new ship was actually named Ital Liberia and left the yard in the blue house colours of the Trieste-based Italia Marittima. The ship is to be phased into Evergreen:s fast Shanghai to California loop, dubbed CES. The service's port rotation only includes Shanghai, Ningbo, Oakland and Los Angeles. Presently, the CES employs a mixed fleet of 5,300 TEU U-classes and some 3,000 TEU sub-panamaxes.

Beyond Containers: Cruisers, Bulkers, Reefers and Tankers at Hamburg

please note: this banner is not a commercial advertisement

OOCL Newbuilds: Seattle and Tokyo

Koyo Dockyard has again competed the construction of one of their 5,900 TEU standard post panamax ships. The vessel has now been delivered to the ship management company Shoei Kisen. Like Koyo Dockyard, Shoei is a member of the Japanese Imabari Group. The new ship will follow its earlier sisters into a long-term charter with Hong Kong's OOCL. The vessel will carry the name OOCL Seattle. It will enter OOCL's Central China Express, the CCX service loop that connects the ports of Shanghai and Ningbo-Zhoushan with Los Angeles. Another new OOCL vessel premiered in northern Europe last week: The 8,063 TEU OOCL Tokyo. The ship had been delivered from Samsung Heavy Industries in January. Please turn to our vessel database for vessel particulars and more photos of this new ship.

OOCL Tokyo at Hamburg
photo: Jan Tiedemann

MSC Boxship Collides on Maiden Voyage

The 2006-built 9,178-TEU container vessel MSC Roma was involved in a collision with a French trawler. The 337-metre MSC Roma was underway from Le Havre to Felixstowe, when the accident happened on an early Saturday morning, the tenth of February. According to Fairplay's news, the incident occurred in the English Channel, some twenty nautical miles off Fecamp. No person was injured and there was no pollution of the environment. After the crash, the trawler started leaking. French coast guard vessels were sent out as well as a helicopter. Pumps were placed onto the trawler and the vessel could eventually be stabilized. It was later towed to Fecamp by another fishing vessel. MSC Roma was allowed to continue its voyage. The ship is owned and managed by Hamburg-based Claus Peter Offen. It is operated by MSC and trades in the company's Silk Express service between Europe and the Far East. It was delivered by Samsung Heavy Industries late in December 2006 and was on its maiden voyage.

PIL Goes Trans-Pacific

Singapore's Pacific International Lines has finally ventured into the trans-Pacific trade. The carrier will start a new joint service with Wan Hai Lines of Taiwan. Wan Hai already operate one stand-alone container service on the Pacific. For the time being, PIL will contribute one ship to the new sling. Operations are scheduled to commence late in March. The new loop will employ five ship of 2,500 TEU. The loop's port rotation will include Xiamen, Yantian, Hong Kong, Kaohsiung, Long Beach and Oakland. Both companies offer a significant number of Asian regional trades and together are looking now looking to expand their global network. The two liner companies already jointly operated a weekly Asia_Europe service with 4,200 TEU ships.

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This Newsletter is edited and compiled by Jan Svendsen and Jan Tiedemann. This pdf-file is available for download at "www.jantiedemann.de" and "www.containership-info.net.tc". Feel free to contact the editors by e-mail at jantiedemann@hotmail.com and jan.svendsen@gmx.net. We greatly appreciate your feedback and your input. More contact details can be obtained from the above websites. Please note the disclaimers displayed on the download pages. All information given in this newsletter is believed correct, but not guaranteed.

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