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UAE runs first intermodal transport under TIR

First ever intermodal TIR operation between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the EU was launched this week, with a container leaving the UAE bound for Europe under a single customs transit document and a single guarantee. Leaving from SAIF Zone in Sharjah, the container was bound for Olomouc in the Czech Republic via Jebel Ali Port in the UAE and the port of Hamburg, Germany. The goods are travelling by land and sea using TIR, the global customs transit and guarantee system. TIR offers huge potential for improving transit connectivity between ports and borders with free zones and integrating them into the global logistics chain. The UAE's strongest trading partners are India and China – both part of the TIR network – reinforcing the potential for the transit tool to transform trade along these corridors. Mohammed Jumaa Busaiba, director general of the federal customs authority in Dubai, said, "Using TIR in our intermodal transport increases substantially the UAE's global competitiveness." The first TIR intermodal transport operation is the result of cooperation across the public and private sectors, with work from IRU together with UAE member ATCUAE, Federal Customs Authority (FCA), German member BGL, Czech member CESMAD Bohemia and the Czech customs administration.

DP World-NIIF set to win warehousing deal at Jawaharlal Nehru Port

A joint venture of DP World Ltd and India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund Ltd (NIIF) has outbid four other groups to develop a free trade warehousing zone (FTWZ) on 44 acres at the special economic zone (SEZ) being developed by Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT). Hindustan Infralog Private Limited (HIPL), the JV floated by Dubai-government owned port operator DP World and NIIF, quoted INR12.8 crore per acre (total INR 563.2 crore) to emerge the highest bidder for the FTWZ, a Shipping Ministry official told, asking not to be named because the bid results have not been made public yet.The other bidding groups included Foxconn Technology Group, the world's biggest electronics contract manufacturing company, Ascendas-Singbridge, LOGOS, and Everstone. This will be the second deal for the DP World-NIIF combine after it acquired a 90 per cent stake in multi-modal logistics firm Continental Warehousing Corporation (Nhava Seva) Ltd (CWCNSL) earlier this year. That deal will help the Dubai government-owned firm enter related logistics segments, complementing its core business and boost volumes. The SEZ has received the key environment clearance from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

New law will help put UAE arbitration on the map

The new UAE's new Federal Arbitration Law passed in June is expected to help it rival London, Paris and Singapore as an international arbitral seat. Legal experts have spent the summer pouring over the details of the new law, which was passed on 16 June. Federal Law No. 6 of 2018 repealed the previous provisions contained within the Arbitration Chapter of the UAE Civil Procedures Law No. 11 of 1992, and applies to all existing and future arbitration cases. The general consensus is that the new regulations will inspire greater investor confidence in the UAE as the law is based on the tried and tested UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration. "Overall, the law has been modernised," said Gordon Blanke, partner, international commercial and investment arbitration at DWF, addressing a recent seminar on the new legislation organised by Emirates Maritime Arbitration Centre (EMAC) in Dubai. "A lot of the previous case law precedent formed under the UAE arbitration chapter has been codified in the form of positive law and that obviously helps to consolidate the body of binding arbitration case law in order to give investor confidence and confidence to practitioners to conduct an arbitration process."

Gulftainer seals 50-year Port of Wilmington concession deal

UAE-based Gulftainer has finalized a 50-year concession agreement with the state of Delaware to operate and develop the Port of Wilmington, significantly expanding the company's global footprint and reach. The deal will see an expected investment of up to $600m in the port to upgrade and expand the terminal and to turn it into one of the largest gateways on the US Eastern Seaboard, including $400m on a new 1.2m teu container facility at DuPont's former Edgemoor site, which was acquired by the Diamond State Port Corporation in 2016. The Port of Wilmington is already the top North American port for fresh fruit imports and has the largest dockside cold storage facility in the US. Plans for the port also include development of all cargo terminal capabilities at the facility and enhancement of its overall productivity. Gulftainer will also establish a training facility at the development site specifically for the ports and logistics industries that is expected to train and upskill up to 1,000 people per year. The port deal represents the largest operation ever run by a UAE company in the US, as well as the largest investment ever by a private UAE company.

Bangladesh ports to give Northeast new avenue

With the Bangladesh cabinet on Monday approving an agreement in principle allowing India to use Chittagong and Mongla ports for the movement of goods, the Northeastern states are set to benefit the most. With access to the sea in Chittagong, the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram will have another mode of transport, making the region more accessible. As per the agreement, India will have access to the Chittagong and Mongla ports for the transportation of goods to the Northeastern states via Bangladesh, shaving off travel time in return for charges under the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade principles. The agreement, effective for five years initially, will be renewed automatically for another five years. Either country can cancel it on a notice of five months. The four routes that come under the agreement are the Chittagong-Mongla Port to Agartala via Akhaura, Chattogram-Mongla to Daouki via Tamabil, Chattogram-Mongla to Sutarkandi via Sheola and Chattogram-Mongla to Bibek Bazar via Srimantapur, said a Bangladeshi official, adding only Bangladeshi vehicles and vessels will be allowed to carry the goods.

Shipping lobby proposes phased start to historic fuel change

The shipping industry is pressing for a phased start when tough new rules governing vessel fuel get under way in fewer than 16 months' time. Three trade groups and four countries where thousands of ships are registered made a joint proposal to the International Maritime Organization on Aug. 31 for what they called an "experience building phase," according to a copy of the document obtained by Bloomberg. The suggestion, if adopted, would avoid individual ships being "unduly penalized" if they can't get the right fuel. The IMO rules will restrict the amount of sulfur permitted in the fuel that ships burn from Jan. 1, 2020. While the measures are designed to make the industry less polluting, questions remain as to whether enough of the correct types of fuel will be available. A hard start to the rules could lead to safety issues as ships rush to ensure they have compliant fuel on board, according to the submission. The industry proposal amounts to "yet another attempt to delay IMO 2020," said Nevyn Nah, a Singapore-based oil analyst at Energy Aspects Ltd. "If it is delayed, the IMO will lose credibility and it will be unfair to the refiners and shipowners who have already taken actions to prepare for IMO 2020."

APM Terminals calls for greater container weighing accuracy

APM Terminals (APMT) has warned that despite apparent verified gross mass (VGM) regulation compliance in the industry, the accuracy of recorded weights still needs to be addressed to ensure safety. The verification of a container's gross weight has been a requirement under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) since July 2016. In the view of Praful Waghela, global product manager of VGM services at APMT, an additional validation step prior to final loading could help. He stated: "These inaccurate VGMs can lead to serious safety issues if not corrected early on in the supply chain." Most of APMT's facilities are equipped with calibrated and certified facilities to record and transmit accurate VGM to shipping lines but many containers weighed at factories or on the way to terminals fail to comply with local regulations and tolerance levels. Over 135m containers each year are estimated to enter the global supply chain and the terminal operator noted that even a small proportion of containers with inaccurate weight estimates could pose a significant safety risk. To confirm that VGMs supplied by a third party are within an acceptable tolerance level, APMT carries out random checks and corrects them where necessary.

Georgia Ports plan 8 million Teu capacity by 2028

The Georgia Port Authority (GPA) has unveiled a $2.5 billion plan to expand the capacity at the Port of Savannah to 8 million TEUs by 2028. GPA Executive Director Griff Lynch at the Savannah State of the Port detailed GPA's 10-year, $2.5 billion plan to expand the capacity of the nation's fastest growing and single largest container terminal from 5.5 million twenty-foot equivalent unit containers (TEUs) to 8 million, said a press release. "We're preparing to redefine the Port of Savannah as not simply the load center for the Southeastern U.S., but as the port of choice for major inland markets east of the Mississippi River," Lynch said. During his presentation to nearly 1,400 people, including Gov. Deal, Georgia House Speaker David Ralston, Congressman Buddy Carter, other elected officials and business leaders from across the state and nation, Lynch detailed projects that include the Mason Mega Rail facility, which will double the Port of Savannah's rail capacity to 1 million lifts per year by 2020; new equipment purchases including eight additional ship-to-shore cranes and 64 additional rubber-tired gantry cranes; gate and container storage expansions, berth improvements and off terminal road additions.

In a first, Indian Railways commence RO-RO service on Central and Western Railways

In an eco-friendly initiative organised by the Indian Railways to check pollution, reduce fuel consumption and road congestion, the Roll On-Roll Off (RO–RO) service on Central and Western Railway has commenced on a commercial basis. The first rake started its journey on September 20 from Konkan railway's Surathkal goods shed in Karnataka and reached the Western Railway's Karambeli goods shed in Gujarat on September 21, late evening. The RO-RO rake consists of 25 trucks loaded with an approximate haulage charge of Rs 1.81 lakhs. The rake will be unloaded and be reloaded with trucks from the Karambeli goods shed. It will cover a total distance of 290 kilometres. This service, which allows trucks to be loaded onto railway wagons from the outskirts of large cities and be deposited at ports and industrial hubs, is expected to help decongest traffic and reduce pollution in Mumbai Metropolitan Region's (MMR) Thane and Bhiwandi. Chief Public Relations Officer of Konkan Railway LK Verma said, "The first ever RO-RO service in India was run by Konkan Railway in 1999. The service is currently operational between Kolad and Verna in Goa and Kolad and Suratkal in Karnataka. Now, it enters in the Indian Railway territory."

PSA's JNPT terminal winning business on productivity

Ocean carriers offering regular calls at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) - India's busiest container harbor - are slowly but steadily building up their interest in PSA International's Bharat Mumbai Container Terminals (BMCT), after "testing the waters" with ad-hoc calls at the new concessionaire that opened in February. A six-vessel India-Middle East-East Mediterranean consortium - comprising CMA CGM and Cosco Container Lines - has shifted operations from APM Terminals' Gateway Terminals India (GTI) to BMCT. That gain brings the number of regular/weekly calls at the new terminal to three. BMCT's other two fixed-day, weekly services are: the Europe-Pakistan-India Consortium 2 - a vessel-sharing agreement between Hapag-Lloyd, CMA CGM, and Hamburg Sud - and the Swahili Express - a VSA between CMA CGM and Emirates Shipping Line in the India-Africa trade. The IMED has four vessels from CMA CGM and two ships from Cosco, operating on a 42-day round-trip voyage. The IMED rotation is as follows: Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates; Hamad, Qatar; Port Qasim, Pakistan; Mundra, Hazira, and JNPT, India; Djibouti; Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Damietta, Egypt; Piraeus, Greece; Malta (Freeport); Aliaga Izmir and Mersin, Turkey; Port Said, Egypt; Aqaba, Jordan; and back to Jebel Ali.

Dubai-Panama maritime tie-up potential explored

The Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry's representative office in Panama recently hosted an event which explored potential for enhancing cooperation between maritime and logistics companies in Panama and Dubai. The event was attended by Ibrahim Mohammed Al Mansouri, UAE Ambassador to Panama, and representatives from the Panama Canal Authority, Panama Chamber of Commerce, Agriculture and Industries, Panama Pacifico Special Economic Zone and key stakeholders from Panama's maritime and logistics sector. Attendees were briefed on the advanced infrastructure, logistics services and expertise that Dubai offers as a leading maritime and logistics hub, in addition to the advantages that the emirate can provide to Panamanian companies. During the event, Mohammad Ishtiaq, head of Dubai Chamber's Panama office, pointed out that Dubai's logistics sector was a major contributor to the emirate's GDP in 2017, and noted that sector growth is being driven by Expo 2020, a fast-growing population and major infrastructure investments. Ishtiaq explained that Dubai was recently named as one of the world's top five shipping hubs in the International Shipping Centre Development Index, making it the first Arab city to achieve this level of international recognition.

China overtakes Japan as second largest shipowning nation

Greece is still by some way the largest shipowning country, but the gap is closing as China's fleet expansion continues at a rapid rate as it overtakes Japan for the number two position. China has just become the world's second largest shipowning country and the numerous giant ore carriers, tankers and containerships scheduled for delivery to Chinese owners in the months and years ahead mean it is on course to further boost capacity. Strong and accelerating growth in the China-owned merchant ship fleet has unfolded says Richard Scott, md, Bulk Shipping Analysis and associate, China Centre (Maritime), Solent University. In 2017 an increase exceeding 9% was seen in the Chinese fleet says Scott and signs suggest this year's annual rise could be similar. "The extensive orderbook for new vessels due to be delivered through the next two to three years will add substantial tonnage, but other less predictable influences also will determine fleet growth," said Scott. He said, many new ships will be employed in long-haul international trades where China is the cargo importer or exporter. For containerships, cargoes both to and from China are likely to provide employment while, for bulk tonnage in the biggest size categories, import trades will be most prominent.

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