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Latest shipping news

NSA to test legality of tax proposal

SSG-TØNSBERG. The legality of the Norwegian government's new tax proposal is to be tested by top lawyers engaged by the Norwegian Shipowners' Association (NSA). The lawyers have been asked to look at two aspects of the proposal. Firstly, if the proposal were to be regarded as retroactive and as such would be un-constitutional and, secondly, if the proposal contravenes the preparatory documentation leading up to the existing tax law passed in 1996. The NSA Director General Marianne Lie also talk of the government's breach of an agreement with the shipowners who chose to stay loyal to the tax system. Lie says that there is very little understanding in other European countries for the new tax proposal, which are part of the 2008 state budget to be presented to parliament on October 6th.

Published: 12.09.07 14.55

BW Shipping assess CO2 tanker design

SSG-TØNSBERG. BW Shipping tries to design a carbon dioxide (CO2) tanker to transport the gas from where it is produced to where it can be used or stored, according to the BW Shipping managing director Andreas Sohmen-Pao. The CO2 ship plans are part of a medium term objective and part of a number of environmental business projects. Among these is a plan to convert old gas ships to catch the excess gas, now burnt off from oil and gas installations, and sell it.

Published: 12.09.07 14.55

Seafarers disappointed of the government

Around 7,000 Danish seafarers on ships registered in the DIS registry, (Dansk Internationalt Skibsregister), are disappointed of the government because of a new tax proposal. The government has introduced a general income tax reduction, but this will exclude seafarers as they are taxed in a net wage system, reports Jyllands-Posten.

The union Søfartens Ledere now expects that affected seafarers will be compensated.

Published: 11.09.07 11.11

New Russian oil export routes in the Arctic

SSG-TØNSBERG. Russia wants to convert a number of northern ports into new oil hubs and export points. So far ports like Archangel, Naryan-Mar, Tiksi and Salekhard as well as ports on the Yamal peninsula have been inspected and are likely to have priority, according to RosbaltNord. The plan is to increase capacity at these ports beyond the around 20,000 DWT vessels serviced today. Archangel clearly has high priority and the port should be able to load tankers of 50,000 to 60,000 DWT by 2012. The most important oil ports in the area are the Archangel and Varandey, but they can only accommodate 20,000 DWT tankers.

Published: 11.09.07 11.11

Pride of Telemark grounded at Hirtshals

SSG-TØNSBERG. Kystlink's passenger/car ferry the Pride of Telemark grounded in strong winds on entering the Danish port of Hirtshals just after midnight this morning. The ferry of 28,727 gt and built in 1983 was holed and took in water. Divers are currently assessing the damage. The Kystlink managing director Jarle Dragsten, says that all the water is now pumped out and the vessels is stabilised alongside in Hirtshals. No one was hurt in the accident. The ferry had 150 passengers and a crew of 64 onboard and will be taken out of service for an unspecified number of days. The Pride of Telemark was en route from Langesund in Norway when the accident happened while manoeuvring to dock the ferry at Hirtshals.

Published: 11.09.07 11.11

Norwegian owners would rather retain the present tax system

SSG-TØNSBERG. The Norwegian government proposal for a new shipping tax system

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will severely undermine shipping companies' balance sheets and reduce their ability to compete internationally, according to several leading shipping companies. The Norwegian Shipowners' Association (NSA) has sent a letter to Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg pointing out the consequences should the new proposal become part of next year's state budget. NSA also wants a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss the proposal, which was launched last Friday. The Government has proposed to cancel the current tonnage taxation system, which was entered into by Norwegian shipping companies in 1996. The present system levies no tax on operating profit unless taxable dividends are paid to the shareholders or if assets are moved out of Norway. The purpose of the 1996 shipping tax system was for Norway to retain shipping companies and remain competitive as a location from which to conduct international shipping activities. This system was proposed by the Government and supported by the Parliament. The Government now proposes to tax at 28 per cent over a ten-year period the undistributed profits kept in the system and not previously subject to taxation. It comes to NOK 14 billion, i.e., NOK 21 billion less 1/3 to put into an environmental fund. In effect, this means a back-tax on the shipping industry from 1996. According to the NSA president Trygve Seglem most of the amounts now liable for tax are locked in ship investments and are not available as cash. One serious consequence will be a weakening of Norwegian shipping companies' equity base. Seglem says that Norwegian owners would rather retain the current tax system and implies that the government has not understood the owners' point of view.

Published: 10.09.07 15.15

Shipowners and managers calls for more seafarers

SSG-GÖTEBORG. At the conference of Maritime Manpower Singapore 2007, both shipowners and managers called for prompt moves to educate more seafarers – they warned that shortage of officers may get worse very soon. Pradeep Chawla, director of quality assurance and training for Anglo-Eastern Ship Management commented:

“Two cadets per ship is the minimum intake required to sustain the supply of human resources in the maritime industry, and perhaps the only way to prevent future shortages is to make two cadets a mandatory requirement in the manning scales of ship”, reports Lloyd's List.

Chawla believed the harsh situation would continue to 2008 and 2009, for shipowners this will end up with higher costs for recruiting crew – the wages might rise with 15 percents.

During the same conference Jon Whitlow from the Seafarers section of International Transport Federations (ITF) warned that the growing criminalisation of seafarers frightens potential aspirants to jobs on board ships, reports Fairplay.

“Seafarers are being made scapegoats for politically sensitive cases involving environmental damage”, he said.

Published: 10.09.07 15.15

SSN gets 120 million to survive

SSG-KOŁOBRZEG. Polish SSN shipyard's largest owners Korporacji Polskie Stocznie (KPS) and ARP Agencja Rozwoju (Przemysłu Industry Development Agency) has decided to strengthen the yard's equity with PLN 120 million to make sure it survives until it can be privatized. In October Ernst & Young will choose five candidates for further negotiations on the privatization of the yard. Inofficially eleven candidates have showed interest in taking over, among others Zlomorex and a Norwegian consortium from the offshore industry.

Published: 10.09.07 15.15

ex-Norway closer to be scrapped

SSG-GÖTEBORG. Cruise vessel Norway, ex France and now Blue Lady, might be ready for scrapping. The Indian government has told the Supreme Court that all requirements regarding hazardous material has been met, writes Tradewinds.

Environmental pressure groups engaged in the case has however not given up. The Supreme Court has been petitioned to declare the vessel radioactive. The petition refers to the smoke detectors, which are claimed to contain the isotope Americium-241. It is said that 60 kilos of this is enough to make a dirty bomb. This is rejected by the authorities that claims that the amount of the isotope in a smoke detector is tiny. The American Nuclear Regulatory Commission the amount is so small that a smoke detector can be handled as ordinary garbage.

Published: 07.09.07 14.35

Risk of 20 per cent premium increase at renewals

SSG-TØNSBERG. Owners could risk premium increases of perhaps as much as 15-20

per cent on their P&I cover at renewals in February 2008 after a more modest rise this year. The rationale now coming from the P&I clubs is that claims have soared and there is a need to preserve a healthy solvency rate in the clubs. A hefty rise in premiums is also needed to meet increased reinsurance rates. Also, the pool claims through International Group of P&I Clubs run rampant in 2006. There are many explanations for the surge in claims. Lloyd's List cites the North of England P&I Club: "We believe that the rapid growth of the world fleet coupled with a severe shortage of experienced seafarers is one key factor," said North of England managers. "Poor standards of maintenance and consequent mechanical breakdowns are also key causative factors." The Skuld president and chief executive Douglas Jacobsohn puts it this way: "Unfortunately, the political and regulatory response to a number of these threats from national and regional players is also becoming increasingly complex, often generating reactions that with all the best intentions appeal more to emotion than fact."

Published: 07.09.07 14.35

DFDS hires British catering crew for Queen of Scandinavia

SSG-RINGKØBING. DFDS Seaways is about to change crew on the Queen of Scandinavia on the Bergen-Newcastle run. A mainly British crew will replace a staff of 71 Danish and Swedish citizens in the catering crew. The original crew is not sacked, but is offered similar positions on other DFDS vessel closer to Denmark and Sweden. The main purpose with the manoeuvre is to cut costs as the running from Norway to England hasn't developed as expected economically. Travel expenses are higher for the Danish/Swedish crew when leaving or joining the vessel.

Published: 07.09.07 14.35

Whole marine team leaves Codan in Bergen

SSG-GÖTEBORG. The Codan Marine Services team in Bergen has decided to leave the company and join the newly established competitor Vega Marine. Codan has already initiated the process to recruit a replacement team to the Bergen office.

Codan Marine Services has more than 50 employees and offices in Norway, Denmark, Sweden and Finland and has a total gross premium income of more than USD 100 million.

Published: 06.09.07 15.36

Nato wants to protect tanker fleet

SSG-GÖTEBORG. According to NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer, his organisation should play a greater role in the protection of the world merchant fleet, and especially gas and oil tankers, writes Lloyd's List. Speaking at the 5th Annual Lloyd's City Dinner in London, he stressed that the security situation has changed radically and that global energy transportation has come more into focus. According to Lloyd's chairman Lord Peter Levene, around a quarter of the world's largest companies now think that an attack on their energy supply is a significant risk.

Published: 06.09.07 15.34

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