LNG Unlimited

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Indian and Japanese imports of LNG rebound - led by Australian volumes

Spot shipments and those from new plants revitalize developing market in Asia region

Our Asia-Pacific editor

Imports of liquefied natural gas by India and Japan increased last month as the market continues to evolve in the Asia region with more cargoes available from Australia.

The Indian inflow increased by more than 19 percent last month, bolstered by shipments from Australia and Nigeria as well as Qatar.

India's receipts last month amounted to 1.57 million tonnes compared with 1.32MT in the same month a year ago.

Requirements

At the same time, Japanese LNG imports jumped for a second straight month in 2017, increasing by 4.8 percent in February with prices also rising for both long-term contracted cargoes and spot shipments.

More cargoes to Tokyo Bay and other terminals were shipped from Australia and the spot market while volumes imported from Asia and the Middle East dropped compared with the same month of 2016.

Japan's LNG imports last month amounted to 7.79MT compared with 7.43MT in February 2016.

The nation's shipments of the fuel had jumped 14.6 percent in January to 8.30MT after falling in the December peak winter season.

The latest LNG imports cost Japan 359.16 billion yen ($3.21Bln), a rise of 1.6 percent versus February 2016 when the cost was 353.48Bln yen ($3.16Bln).

Energy import data from the Indian Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas showed cumulative LNG imports for the fiscal year to date of 11 months from April 2016 to February 2017 were 16.4 percent higher at 16.6MT compared with the previous fiscal year when they were 14.3MT.

Import terminal on Tokyo Bay maintaining LNG cargo flows

India's LNG shipments gathered pace after falling in January as global spot prices began to rise and fewer additional shipments were available at affordable prices for gas-fired power and industrial use.

During February cargoes arrived in India for its three main regasification terminals on the West Coast near Mumbai mostly from Qatar, though also from Australia and Nigeria.

For example, the 155,000 cubic metres capacity vessel "British Emerald" delivered an Australian shipment on February 14 to the Hazira import terminal, operated by Shell India.

The cargo had been lifted from the Dampier facility in Western Australia, operated by Woodside Petroleum.

The 145,700 cubic metres capacity "LNG Benue" delivered a shipment on February 28 to the Dahej terminal, operated by Petronet, from the Bonny Island plant in Nigeria.

Unlike Japan, India also has domestic natural gas production amounting to more than its LNG requirement.

Gross production of Indian natural gas for the month of February amounted to 2.52 billion cubic metres, a fall of 1.7 percent compared with the 2.56 Bcm in February 2015.

On a cumulative fiscal year basis, gross production of natural gas dropped 1.9 percent to 29.14 Bcm from April 2016 through February 2017 versus 29.71 Bcm in the same period of the previous year.

India is coming to terms with the fall of domestic natural gas production, meaning that LNG imports are certain to rise once more regasification infrastructure is in place.

The country has plans to double its nationwide import terminal capacity to around 50MT per annum by 2022.

However, this would require significant developments in LNG import capacity to take place before 2020. ■

UNLIMITED AGENDA

RasGas oversees delivery of 500th cargo to Italian Adriatic terminal before merger is completed

Our Middle East editor

Qatari liquefied natural gas production company RasGas, which is in the process of being taken over by Qatargas, has recorded one of its last separate corporate events, the shipping of the 500th cargo to the Italian offshore terminal, Adriatic LNG.

RasGas said the cargo was recently delivered by the carrier "Al Marrouna" to Adriatic LNG, a joint venture terminal developed by Qatar Petroleum, ExxonMobil Corp. and Italian energy company and utility Edison.

Unique venture

The facility on the northeast coast of Italy is located 14 kilometres offshore the town of Rovigo and is the world's first offshore concrete-based regasification terminal.

RasGas said a celebratory event was held to mark the occasion of the landmark cargo with Adriatic LNG Managing Director Suresh Jagadesan boarding the "Al-Marrouna" with the terminal team to meet with the vessel's crew.

'Al-Marrouna' arrives with shipment at floating island

The Italian import terminal had received its commissioning cargo in August 2009 on board the 135,000 cubic metres capacity carrier the "Dukhan", a Qatargas-chartered vessel.

The Adriatic terminal is still unique in the industry. It uses ExxonMobil's proprietary technology and houses two LNG storage tanks, a regasification plant and facilities for mooring and unloading vessels.

While most countries have opted for floating storage and regasification units (FSRUs) for their offshore import facilities, Adriatic LNG is an artificial island built in shallow water.

The terminal structure was constructed from concrete in a dry dock in Spain and the caisson was floating to its subsequent location in the Adriatic Sea.

It has capacity to receive six million tonnes per annum of LNG, about 10 percent of Italy's natural gas requirements.

Prior to Adriatic LNG being commissioned Italy had just one small onshore terminal, the long-established Panigaglia facility near Genoa, in operation since 1969 and owned by Snam Rete.

Italy added a third terminal in 2013 when the "FSRU Toscana" was moored off the west coast of Italy between the cities of Livorno and Pisa and connected to the Italian national gas transmission network by a pipeline.

ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum also own the UK South Hook import in Milford Haven as well as the Golden Pass terminal on the US Gulf Coast, which is being transformed into an export plant. ■

Sovcomflot posts profit drop as it marks French LNG industry ties to Russia and Yamal project

Sovcomflot, Russia's largest shipping company with a growing LNG fleet and a new vessel marking French LNG industry ties to Russia, posted a more than 40 percent drop in annual net profit dropped to $206.8 million from $345.5M the previous year in the depressed spot and time charter markets.

The company said its gross annual revenue was just 7 percent lower at $1.38 billion as the tanker spot market dropped by more than 40 percent and time charter market was down 25 percent.

Among its LNG highlights at the end of 2016 was the completion of a 172,600 cubic metres capacity Arc7 LNG carrier designed to serve Russia's Yamal LNG project.

The vessel is named "Christophe de Margerie" after the late Chief Executive of French energy company Total and was built at the South Korean shipyard of Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering.

The Total CEO De Margerie was killed in October 2014 when his corporate jet collided with a snow plough at an airport near Moscow. All four people on board were killed.

De Margerie was aged 63 at the time and had been CEO of Total since 2007.

At the company, where he spent his entire career, he was nicknamed "Big Moustache" because of the large whiskers which made him an instantly recognisable character within the industry where he was highly regarded.

After his death, Total appointed Patrick Pouyanne as his successor and the new CEO pledged to continue with Yamal LNG and its partnership with and shareholding in Novatek, the Russian natural gas company developing the plant, set to come on stream by early 2018.

"With our commitment to operating in some of the world's harshest environments, we were particularly pleased to see the launch of 'Christophe de Margerie', the world's first icebreaking LNG carrier," said Evgeniy Ambrosov, Senior Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer in the Sovcomflot earnings report.

"Together with other developments, it has strengthened Sovcomflot's reputation as an owner and operator of some of the most advanced vessels afloat," added Ambrosov.

Sovcomflot also noted in the report that all fleet technical management operations were now within a single governance structure under the new uniform brand of SCF Management Services.

The Russian company raised $1.26Bln of debt capital, including $750M of unsecured public debt and $512M of bank loans to fund the SCF fleet renewal programme and for the refinancing of maturing debt.

"Sovcomflot has delivered a solid set of results for 2016, despite market volatility in a year that has severely tested our industry," said Sergey Frank, President and Chief Executive of Sovcomflot.

"As growth in oil refinery throughput and up-front demand ran ahead of end-consumption underpinning tanker rates in 2015, so 2016 witnessed a material softening in demand that impacted negatively spot tanker freight rates, albeit with some respite in the final quarter," added Frank. ■

Bear Head LNG export project given Transport Canada technical review

Our North America editor in New York

LNG Ltd, the Australian developer of the Canadian Bear Head export project in Nova Scotia, has completed Transport Canada's technical review of marine terminal systems and trans-shipment sites.

The Bear Head liquefaction plant is to be constructed on the shore of the Strait of Canso on the Atlantic Coast in Richmond County, Nova Scotia.

Capacity

The proposed facility will comprise an initial development of an 8 million tonne per annum facility, with the capacity and approvals for further expansion.

Other LNG export projects in Nova Scotia could also move forward given its potential excellent links to North American gas pipelines, gas fields and shale-gas resources.

LNG Ltd explained that its most recent review was mandated under the separate environmental assessment process to identify navigational and marine transportation-related recommendations to support a safe shipping environment.

Greg Vesey, LNGL's Managing Director and Chief Executive, said the review was "an important regulatory component" that furthers Bear Head LNG's goal to be the leader in helping Nova Scotia realize the LNG opportunity, benefiting the province and community.

The company said these recommendations and observations relate to the future operations on the maritime routes by LNG carriers and tugboats around the approaches to the terminal and the facility itself.

"Bear Head LNG will address and comply with all recommendations throughout the life of the project," said Vesey. "Our focus is to provide overseas markets with access to North America's natural gas resources based on competitive economics," he added.

"Bear Head is uniquely positioned to provide liquefaction services to Western Canadian, the Northeast US and offshore Nova Scotia resource owners desiring to sell natural gas to the global LNG market," added Vesey.

LNG Ltd is also developing the Magnolia liquefaction plant in Louisiana on a 115 acres site next to the Calcasieu Shipping Channel. ■

Nova Scotia can be export gateway for North American gas

British Columbia lauds TransCanada decision on Montney shale project

The Canadian province of British Columbia welcomed the decision by pipeline company TransCanada Corp. to inform the National Energy Board it was proceeding with the construction of the North Montney Mainline project to transport shale-gas to North American markets.

If the NEB application is approved, TransCanada will be able to move forward with the construction of the pipeline, an estimated $1.4 billion investment.

The North Montney pipeline was previously mostly linked to a final investment decision, still being considered, on the Pacific NorthWest LNG project of Malaysia's Petronas and to other plans for liquefaction plants on the coast.

The Petronas partners in its proposed LNG venture are China's Sinopec, Japan Petroleum Exploration Co., Indian Oil Corp. and Petroleum Brunei.

Canadian Federal approval of the TransCanada pipeline had originally been conditional on the entire Pacific NorthWest LNG venture moving forward, though now it can be a standalone project.

TransCanada said it had secured new 20-year commercial contracts with 11 commercial producers and shippers for approximately 1.5 billion cubic feet per day of firm service.

"This project adds significant pipeline capacity that connects new gas supplies from the prolific Montney basin to the Nova Gas Transmission Ltd (NGTL) system and will provide access to markets across North America," said Karl Johannson, TransCanada's Executive Vice President and head of natural gas pipelines. ■

BC investment plan for utilities in building LNG fuel stations

The Canadian province of British Columbia is calling for investments by Canadian utilities and others to build liquefied natural gas fuel infrastructure to help establish BC as a marine bunkering centre on the Pacific Coast capable of providing LNG to an increasing number of vessels.

The provincial government said this was one of its objectives in calling for support from natural gas utilities to increase the use of LNG and fuel made from bio-methane in the transportation, marine and other sectors to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions.

"We're working with utilities to stimulate the use of LNG as a marine fuel in large, ocean-going ships, and to increase the supply and use of renewable natural gas," said Energy and Mines Minister Bill Bennett.

"Building the market for BC's abundant supplies of natural gas offers the opportunity to achieve significant GHG emissions reductions and supports jobs and economic opportunities in British Columbia's natural gas sector," added Bennett.

"Amendments to the Clean Energy Act will enable utilities to increase incentives provided to shipping companies for the conversion of vessels to run on LNG, invest in LNG bunkering infrastructure and increase the supply and use of renewable natural gas (RNG)," said Bennett referring to bio-methane and made from waste.

The minister explained that programs under the greenhouse-gas reduction incentives are funded by utilities not the Province. ■

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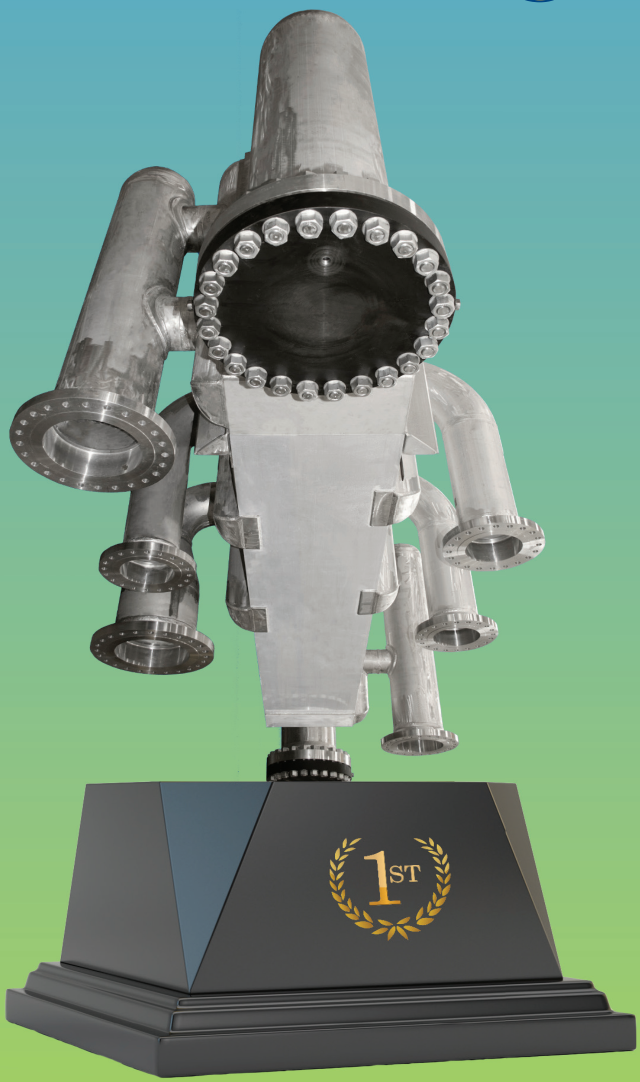

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NEWS NUDGES

GTT storage tanks order

GTT, the French maritime LNG storage technology company, said it received an order from Hyundai Heavy Industries to equip a new LNG carrier with its Mark III Flex containment system. The Hyundai's shipyard based in Ulsan, South Korea, will build the vessel of 180,000 cubic metres capacity on behalf of Norwegian shipping company Norspan LNG (Knutsen). Delivery is scheduled in 2019. “Knutsen is a long-standing owner of LNG carriers equipped with membrane technology. With 10 vessels of this type, Knutsen is renewing its confidence in GTT technology by choosing Mark III Flex for this new vessel,” GTT said.

TechnipFMC contract

TechnipFMC, the energy and LNG project engineering company, was awarded a contract by a venture comprising Eni of Italy, Ghana National Petroleum Corp. and commodities company Vitol for the onshore part of the development of the Sankofa natural gas field. Under this contract, TechnipFMC will perform the project management, engineering, supply, construction and commissioning for the Onshore Receiving Facilities to be located in Sanzule as part of a gas-to-power venture. The contract will be mainly executed by a team of TechnipFMC staff in Ghana.

US futures in May

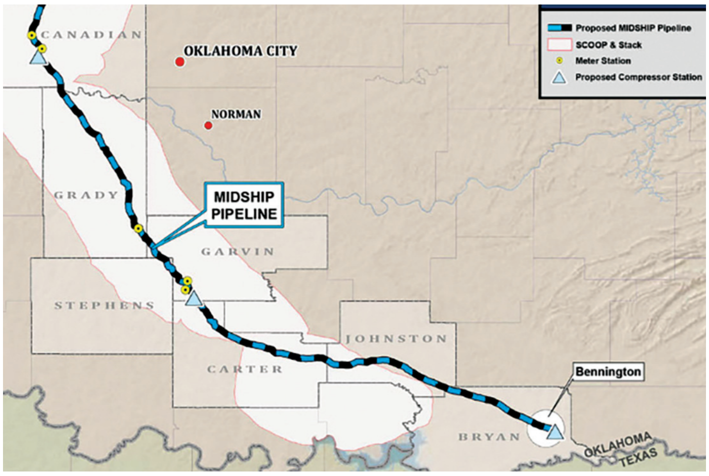
The Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) will launch the first US LNG futures contract in May 2017. In an exchange note to customers, ICE said it planned to list the new contract on May 4, subject to completion of necessary regulatory processes. The LNG contract will be settled against the assessments made by US pricing firm Platts. ■

LNG producer Cheniere advances with plan for Midship pipeline from Oklahoma

Our North American editor in New York

Cheniere Energy, the owner of the sole operating US export plant on the Gulf Coast at Sabine Pass in Louisiana, has signed agreements with foundation shippers to support construction of a 200-mile interstate natural gas pipeline from Oklahoma to southeast markets.

Cheniere’s subsidiary, Midship Pipeline Co., has also launched a binding open season to solicit additional long-term commitments from natural gas producers and volume owners who wish to transport their resources to Louisiana and Texas.



Tapping gas resources plays like state’s Anadarko Basin

Rising demand

The company has already commissioned three liquefaction Trains at its Sabine Pass plant, each unit with a capacity of 4.5 million tonnes per annum. A total of six are planned for a total nameplate capacity of 27 MTPA.

It is also developing a second export facility at Corpus Christi on the Texas Gulf Coast to produce an initial 13.5 MTPA of LNG. Cheniere unlike most other US LNG export plant developers produces its own cargoes for long-term customers - as well as volumes to market itself - rather than using the tolling method of selling liquefaction capacity to third parties for fixed fees.

The Midship pipeline is being developed to create capacity connecting production from emerging resource plays in the Anadarko Basin in Oklahoma to the growing Gulf Coast markets. This will include Cheniere's own increasing requirements for LNG production.

Midship will have a pipeline diameter of 36 inches and will have several laterals, compressor stations and interconnects that will provide receipts from processing plants and provide deliveries to Bennington, Oklahoma, the TexOk hub near Atlanta, Texas, and the Perryville Hub near Tallulah, Louisiana. ■

Philippines plans shortlist for floating import terminal in Batangas province

Philippine National Oil Co. said it would be drawing up a short-list by the end of April for the development of a floating liquefied natural gas import terminal.

The facility will be deployed at Mabini in Batangas province of Luzon Island in the north of the Philippines.

The planned floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) would be the second import terminal for the country after the mechanical completion of an onshore terminal at Pagbilao in Quezon province by Australian-listed Energy World Corp.

The EWC terminal is part of a project linked to a power plant and has yet to begin imports though it has completed the building of a concrete storage tank with a capacity of 130,000 cubic metres, a jetty and other marine unloading facilities.

EWC, whose headquarters are in Hong Kong, is also constructing a gas-fired combined-cycle power plant adjacent to its LNG terminal with capacity of 650 megawatts.

Executives of Philippine National Oil have said that companies from countries such as Australia, China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Spain had expressed initial interest in the Mabini project.

The FSRU for Mabini is also part of a larger plan to supply more gas for power in the region where a major gas field is running down.

The new facility is required to meet the region’s initial need after the depletion of the offshore Malampaya gas field which has enough gas left to supply power stations in the area until 2024.

Analysts say that several FSRUs could eventually be chartered to meet the region's imported natural gas needs by 2024.

The Malampaya field currently provides more than 95 percent of its production for electricity generation, supplying five gas-fired power plants in Batangas province amounting to more than 2,700 MW.

The field was brought on stream by Royal Dutch Shell in 2001 to supply the northern region with gas from proven reserves at the time of around 2.7 trillion cubic feet. ■

French LNG player and utility Engie given heavy fine for abusing natural gas market position

Our Europe editor

Engie, the French LNG player and utility, was fined 100 million euros ($108M) by the national competition authority for abusing its dominant position by using an historical data file to convert its customers on regulated gas tariffs to market-based contracts.

Furthermore, in another case regarding Engie pricing practices for market-based gas contracts, it is submitting to public consultation its commitment to resolve other problems identified by France's Autorité de la Concurrence.

France's Autorité de la Concurrence ruled on two counts

Complaints

The decisions follow a complaint by competitor Direct Energie and another from the French consumer association UFC-Que Choisir.

"In particular, Engie used its file of customers eligible for regulated tariffs on gas (Tarifs reglementes de vente du gaz - TRV), which it holds in its capacity as the incumbent operator, as well as its dedicated TRV business infrastructure to sell its market-price gas and electricity supply contracts to private individuals and small business customers," according to the rulings.

"Engie also used a misleading selling point to consumers, according to which it guaranteed a better security of gas supply than its competitors in order to incite customers to choose its contracts," it added.

Engie, whose Elengy subsidiary operates three of the country's four LNG import terminals, two near Marseilles and one at Montoir-de-Bretagne in Western France, did not contest the facts, though managed to make a deal with the authority to set the limit of the fine to 100M euros.

"Engie assumed Gaz de France's traditional role of selling natural gas to French business and residential customers under regulated tariffs, meaning tariffs set by the government," Engie said in a statement.

"Meanwhile, the natural gas supply market gradually opened to competition in both the business and residential sectors, which resulted in Engie's current situation where it sells natural gas both under regulated tariffs and at market rates," it added.

"In this regard, the Group points out that natural gas markets have become highly competitive since their progressive opening to competition, first in 2000 in the non-residential sector and again in 2004, and later in 2007 to competition in the residential sector," the company said. ■

International Group of LNG Importers releases Custody Transfer Handbook

The France-based International Group of Liquefied Natural Gas Importers (GIIGNL) has just released the latest edition for 2017 of its "GIIGNL LNG Custody Transfer Handbook", addressing new commercial and technical developments in the cargo delivery process.

The Handbook provides practical guidance on the equipment and methodology for determining the thermal energy of LNG transported by ship for the specific purpose of title transfer.

For this updated version, GIIGNL had mandated its Technical Study Group to consult with the LNG industry on a worldwide basis.

The goal was to respond to the rapidly changing market conditions and to address the latest commercial practices.

The GIIGNL has an international focus and its membership currently includes 78 member companies located in 25 countries, representing nearly all companies in the world active in the import, terminalling and regasification of LNG.

The new version of the Handbook includes measurement procedures and equipment in relation to new technical operations such as: partial (un)loading; reloading at LNG import terminals; ship-to-ship LNG transfer; and small ship-to-shore LNG operations.

The 2017 version provides answers and solutions for setting up slightly altered or new custody transfer procedures.

Stijn Maelfeyt, Plant Operations Manager at Fluxys LNG and leader of the working group of experts, said: "The reason for the proposed changes is of a truly technical nature and GIIGNL considers it as its duty to inform the LNG industry about this and its impact." ■

Japanese engineer Chiyoda pledges to train more Mozambicans for LNG

Our Asia-Pacific editor

Chiyoda Corp., the Japanese energy and LNG engineering company, has extended an agreement with the Mozambique national oil and gas company to continue training local engineers for future LNG projects, having already helped 70 Mozambicans acquire qualifications.

Mozambique is on track to develop at least two LNG projects, one onshore and one offshore from the Area 1 block and Area 4 block of the Rovuma Basin offshore Mozambique, turning the southeast African nation into one of the biggest global LNG producers.

The Area 1 licence is held by US company Anadarko Petroleum and the Area 4 licence is controlled by Italian energy company Eni.

Partners of the licence holders include LNG players from the US and Europe and Asian companies such as China, Japan, India and Thailand.

The holder of two stakes in both blocks is Mozambique's oil and gas company Empresa Nacional de Hidrocarbonetos (ENH).

Ceremony attended by Mozambique and Japanese officials

Chiyoda and ENH have just signed a memorandum of understanding witnessed by Mozambican President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi to train more engineers ahead of the LNG plant build-out.

"Chiyoda has educated hundreds of engineers from many different countries in the design and engineering of hydrocarbon processing plants," said the Japanese company.

It has provided training programmes for approximately 70 engineers since executing the first Mozambique MOU on training in 2014 and in concluding this new MOU the Yokohama-based company pledged to continue the training.

"Chiyoda will utilize its extensive experience to support Mozambique's sustainable development by allowing ENH engineers to acquire the knowledge and practical skills required for the future," the company stated.

The signing ceremony was also attended by ENH Chairman Omar Mitha and Keiichi Nakagaki, Senior Executive Vice President and outgoing President and Chief Executive of Chiyoda. ■

EnerMech of UK is awarded some subcontract work on Prelude FLNG

EnerMech of the UK has been awarded a pre-commissioning subcontract by Technip Oceania, part of TechnipFMC, on the Royal Dutch Shell Prelude floating LNG project under development for offshore northwest Australia.

The work scope for EnerMech includes the pre-installation filling of the risers, riser leak testing, pressure monitoring of the umbilical and electrical steel flying lead during pipelay, and electrical flying leads and umbilical testing.

The group is headquartered in Aberdeen with bases in the UK ports of Great Yarmouth and Bristol and has operations in Norway and in other oil and gas centres worldwide. EnerMech specialises in providing lifting and cranes as well as core services in valves, hydraulic products, processing, pipelines and umbilicals.

The Prelude FLNG work will be conducted in-field, located approximately 230 kilometres from mainland Northwest Australia, with engineering and project management conducted from EnerMech's Perth Australia facility.

"Experience of similar pre-commissioning work scopes in Australia and the high calibre of our Perth Australia based staff who have strong credentials in process, pipeline and umbilical contracts, put us in a good position to win this contract," said Jamie McIntyre, EnerMech's Australia Manager for Process, Pipelines & Umbilicals.

"We are looking forward to continuing our relationship with TechnipFMC in Australia and to working for the first time in-region on a project with Shell Australia as the end-client," added Jamie McIntyre.

Shell's Prelude FLNG project will monetize the Prelude and Concerto natural gas fields located about 475 kilometres offshore the Western Australian city of Broome, producing 3.6 million tonnes per annum of LNG. ■

Mississippi shipyard Halter Marine LNG-powered Jones Act trading vessel launched for Crowley Maritime

Our North America editor in New York

US shipping line Crowley Maritime Corp. has launched its newbuild Commitment Class ship "El Coqui", one of the world's first combination container and roll-on-roll-off vessels powered by liquefied natural gas.

The launch took place at the VT Halter Marine shipyard in Pascagoula port in Mississippi.

The LNG-fueled "El Coqui" is part of Crowley's $550 million project to expand and modernize the company's shipping and logistics services between Jacksonville in Florida and the US territory of Puerto Rico.

Upgrades

Crowley pointed out that the vessel is named after a species of frog native to Puerto Rico and will now proceed through the final topside construction and testing phase before beginning service in the US Jones Act trade during the second half of 2017.

The Jones Act requires vessels in domestic waterborne trades to be owned by American citizens, built in the US and crewed by US mariners.

LNG-fueled 'El Coqui' part of $500M investment programme

Fueling the ships with LNG will reduce emissions significantly, including a complete reduction in sulphur oxide and the emission of less carbon dioxide compared with other fuels and in line with new requirements for expanding Emission Control Areas in North American and globally.

The Crowley LNG-powered ships will be part of only around 200 clean-fuel vessels in service worldwide and will be able to be re-fueled at a bunkering station currently under construction in Jacksonville.

The facility is at the Jaxport's Talleyrand Marine Terminal and will soon receive two 260-ton, cryogenic LNG tanks constructed in Europe by US equipment maker Chart Industries.

The Jaxport site is leased by Crowley and the bunkering facility is scheduled to be completed in several months and is adjacent to Crowley's operating terminal.

Tom Crowley, company Chairman and Chief Executive of the family-owned shipping line, said the launch of the "El Coqui" at the VT Halter Marine yard was special for all those who had designed and constructed the ship.

"We are extremely appreciative of all the work that has been accomplished so far and look forward to the successful delivery of 'El Coqui' later this year and her sister ship, 'Taino' in the first half of next year," said Crowley.

The company explained that the "El Coqui" and sister ship "Taino" will be able to transport up to 2,400 twenty-foot-equivalent container units (TEUs) and a mix of nearly 400 cars and larger vehicles in the enclosed, ventilated and weather-tight Ro/Ro decks.

It said a wide range of container sizes and types can be accommodated for customers on the Florida-Puerto Rico trade route, ranging from 20-foot standard, to 53-foot by 102-inch-wide, high-capacity units, as well as up to 300 refrigerated containers. "The launch of the 'El Coqui' is a strong indication of our commitment to the success of our customer Crowley," said Paul J. Albert, CEO of VT Halter Marine.

"Our thanks to both the shipbuilders of VT Halter Marine and the Crowley project team for all their hard work in delivering such a significant vessel.

"This is a great accomplishment for both teams. We very much appreciate this opportunity to build such a magnificent ship," stated Albert.

Leading LNG carrier flag state of the Marshall Islands is now second-largest in world in DWT after Panama

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) registered fleet, including a growing number of liquefied natural gas carriers, now stands at 223,262,177 deadweight tons (DWT), making it the second-largest registry in the world in terms of DWT after Panama and ahead of Liberia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Marshall Islands flags fly on the world's largest LNG carriers such as the 261,700 cubic metres capacity Q-Max "Al Ghuwairiya" and the 210,000 cubic metres capacity Q-Flex vessel "Al Aamriya", which transport the fuel for Qatar.

It also flies on many of the most modern LNG average-sized carriers owned by European shipping lines such as Greece's Dynagas and its ships like the 160,000 cubic metres capacity "Clean Ocean".

Additionally, the RMI flag is carried on floating storage and regasification units deployed as import terminals such as the "Hoegh Grace" FSRU chartered for the South American nation of Colombia.

The Marshall Islands is a wide spread chain of volcanic islands and coral atolls in the central Pacific Ocean and is located between Hawaii and the Philippines.

Its best known islands are Bikini atoll, used as a ship graveyard after the World War II and now a popular wreck dive site, and Majuro atoll, the largest settlement and the RMI capital.

International Registries Inc. has provided administrative and technical support to the RMI Registry since 1990.

"This is a very significant milestone for the RMI Registry," said Bill Gallagher, President of IRI.

"A strong legislative framework, customer driven service ethos, and a commitment to quality have all been key to our continued success," he continued.

"From long-standing traditional shipowners, particularly our standing as the number one flag for Greek owners, to a new wave of Chinese leasing companies, the RMI Registry is the registry of choice for owners looking for an innovative and quality driven partner," he stated.

"The RMI is not only the world's second-largest registry, but the Greek shipping industry's leading flag as well," he added.

Algeria names new CEO at state energy company Sonatrach and urges more quality and evolution

Our Middle East editor

The Algerian government has called on state energy company Sonatrach to move forward and adapt to changes after the appointment of a new chief executive three months after an unscheduled shutdown of liquefied natural gas production and as a venture to increase gas pipeline supplies to Europe is scheduled to come on stream.

Sonatrach has named Abdelmoumen Ould Kadour as the company's new chief executive, replacing incumbent Amine Mazouzi who had served in the role for two years.

Kadour is graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Minister

Algerian Minister of Energy Noureddine Boutarfa announced the change after a Sonatrach board meeting, though gave no specific reason why Mazouzi was departing and Kadour taking his place.

However, Energy Minister Boutarfa called on the new CEO of Sonatrach "to act responsibly and with full confidence to make quality changes allowing Sonatrach to evolve and flourish in a good business climate, conducive to initiative taking and decision making.

The minister also said the CEO and other senior executives of Sonatrach should "show an unfailing commitment to preserving the group's interests and managerial practices to allow it to adapt to changes."

While Sonatrach boosted overall oil and gas output in the first two months of 2017, there were unscheduled outages at its two LNG export plants on the Mediterranean Coast, which reduced deliveries to customers in France, Spain, Greece and Turkey during early January.

The Algerian energy company has the capacity to produce more than 20 million tonnes per annum from its Arzew and Skikda liquefaction plants, though rarely has the feed-gas on tap.

Newly appointed Kadour is described as holding a chemical engineering degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He had previously worked at Brown & Root Condor, an Algiers-based company which operates as a subsidiary of Sonatrach designing and constructing petrochemical and oil and gas production facilities in Algeria. ■