

Casualty Circular No. 12 of 2009

(Regulatory/Guidance/Information)

NO:11-NT(32)/2005

Dated: 17.07.2009

Subject: Grounding of passenger vessel in the proximity of Islands in Indian waters.

NARRATIVE

A passenger vessel, flag - Indian, GRT 3725t. carrying capacity - 230 passengers, age - 23 years (approx) was on a regular voyage from the main land to the group of islands in the Arabian Sea. The vessel sailed from the main land on 31.3.2005 to reach one of the islands on 01.4.2005 A.M. The vessel then sailed from island to island and arrived at the last island port to embark and disembark passengers on the same day. The vessel was carrying out this operations barely 0.25 NM from the entrance mark on the reef. At 1600 hrs. on 01.4.2005, the main engines were stopped and kept on 5 minutes notice. During this operation of transfer of passengers the vessel was drifting as there was no anchoring depth available. The drift was about 1 knot in the south westerly (SW) direction. At 1635 hrs strong southerly current swung the vessel's head in southerly direction making the vessel come closer to the reef. The Master gave orders for engine movement, un-fortunately this maneuver further drifted the vessel towards the reef and resulted in grounding. At the time of grounding embarkation and disembarkation was in progress. At 1640 hrs. on 01.4.2005 the vessel touched bottom with slight jerk on her port side. On completion of the sounding of the tank, the Master observed the hull integrity was intact. The Master sought the assistance of the tugs from the Island port control but failed in that attempt. The owner of the vessel advised the Master not to initiate any measure to re-float the ship till the arrival of their Anchor Handling Tug. The naval crafts in the vicinity offered help but the Master declined to accept it. The expert team of the owner arrived on board at 1145 hrs. on 03.4.2005. The vessel was re-floated at 2140 hrs, on 3rd April, 2005 at high tide with the assistance of Anchor Handling Tug and other vessels arranged by the owner. The vessel performed her voyage from island to main land under her own propulsion system. No loss of lives, no oil pollution reported. Extent of damage could not be assessed after re-floatation.

OBSERVATIONS/ANALYSES

- The vessel had completed her earlier voyages successfully between main land and islands.

- The vessel's position was not continuously monitored in spite of its proximity to shore reef by the Master and the watch keeping officer.
- Gyro compass of the vessel was not operational.
- The magnetic compass had large deviation.
- Maneuvering data diagram was not available on bridge.
- The main engine was kept in 5 minutes notice, which is considered to be unsafe, when navigational hazards such as reef was only 2.5 cable away from the vessel.
- The Master's approach to the island was very casual and necessary precautions as required for such maneuver were not taken, which was evident from the reports of Technical Officer of the company.
- Barges secured to the ship for the purpose of embarking/disembarking of passengers were posing hindrance in the maneuvering of the vessel.

RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNT

- The Company Safety Management System should incorporate the procedure for such maneuvering and clearly identify the consequences of neglect to take precautions for the identified hazards.
- The Master should exercise extreme caution, while approaching the navigational hazards as in this case.
- The Master should make sure that all its navigational equipments are functional and relevant information required to conduct safe maneuvering is available on bridge.
- The Master is the ship board training officer nominated by the company and has the over riding authority given under the National/International regulations, should exercise due diligence in assessing the situation and take positive action in ample time with due regard to observance of good seamanship.
- The Island Port Authority should demark safe place of embarkation/disembarkation of passengers so that barges and other crafts used during such operations can be quickly cast off in case of emergencies.
- The Island Port Authority should have effective Vessel Traffic Services to monitor the movement of ships calling their Islands.
- The Island Port Authority should be equipped in terms of adequate Navigational Aids for safe navigation.
- The Island Port Authority should have facilities for Salvage Services including adequate emergency repairing facilities.

Sd/-

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