

Casualty Circular No. 31 of 2009

(Regulatory/Guidance/Information)

NO: 9-NT(10)/2009

Dated: 23.09.2009

Subject: Sinking of Self Propelled Barge in Indian waters on 19.04.2009

NARRATIVE

A self propelled barge registered under Inland Vessel Act, while operating with 8 crew members in an Indian port sank within the jurisdiction of port on 19.4.2009.

The barge was being used for loading cargo of iron ore to other vessel at anchorage. The barge loaded 550 tons of this cargo and departed from the jetty towards the mother vessel anchored off the port on 18.4.2009 at 2350 hrs. At about 0105 hrs. on 19.4.2009, the Master suddenly heard a cracking sound from the ship's hull. Within few minutes, he observed break down in the bottom plate of the barge and eventually the barge sank off the port. The location of the casualty was about 1 NM South West of nearby light house on prominent rock. The Master immediately notified all concerned about the casualty. Out of the 8 crew members, 7 were rescued by another barge, which was also carrying same cargo for the mother vessel. The search for one missing crew member was made by the port authority. On 20.4.2009 at around 1230 hrs., the body of this missing crew was found near the break water of the port. The 7 survivors were brought ashore safely. An appropriate buoy has been positioned to mark the position of the wreck.

OBSERVATIONS/ANALYSES

- This vessel was loading iron ore from a jetty in port, which was being used by the ship breaker to discharge the wreck pieces of another wreck under demolition in the same port.
- It was observed that the retrieved pieces of the wreck had fallen in the water along side the berth, where these barges were loading iron ore for the transshipment purpose.
- There have been reports that on falling tide the barges have sustained damages with cracking noises due to some under water obstruction in the proximity of the jetty, where the barges were loading the shipments from the jetty.
- In all probability, these pieces of iron protruding from the sea bed have caused extensive damage to the barges in the past.

- The Port Authority conducted diving operations in the proximity of the jetty and salvaged piece of iron angle 2 mtrs. in length, 10-16 mm in thickness 300 mtrs breadth that was reported to be standing vertical embedded in the sea bed approx. 30-35 cm above the surface. This piece was found about 8 mtrs. away from the berth.

RECOMMENDATIONS/LESSONS LEARNT

- The Port Authorities should be aware of such hazards which may threaten the safety of vessels in operations
- The Port Authority's survey department should carry out periodical maintenance survey of the area which is extensively used by the maritime traffic
- The Port Authorities should publish such information through an up-dated navigational chart or by announcing dangers through notices to mariners
- The Master and the crew of the inland vessels should exercise diligence and skill during loading operation at berth by verifying under keel clearance prior to arrival and after completion of loading
- The owner of the barges should ensure that the Master and the crew are well trained in all aspect of safety, cargo, pollution prevention and emergency preparedness and made conscious of their responsibility to report navigational hazards to port authority and Chief Hydrographer
- Port authorities should notify all users about their obligations to report navigational danger to and Chief Hydrographer.

Sd/-

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