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Casualty Circular No. 02 of 2013

Sub: Damage to ship's hull during berthing.

1. What happened ?

An oil tanker of Indian flag, while berthing at Haldia, India, sustained damage to ship's hull resulting into minor oil pollution.

2. How it happened ?

2.1 The vessel, loaded with crude oil cargo of 31678.64 m/t, was proceeding to pick up pilot at Upper gasper. The vessel, in her approach, maintained a distance of 1.5 nm from another vessel ahead, as per the instructions of the VTMS. Pilot boarded the vessel at 0526 hrs. Thereafter, the engines were worked on full ahead till 0754 hrs. Closer to the intended berth, tugs 'Parsuram' and 'Shiromani' approached the vessel for pushing and assisting in berthing the vessel on starboard side alongside on HOJ 3. The speed of approach of the vessel to the jetty, was normal, with the tugs pushing on the port side. Once the jetty was almost on the port bow, the vessel was made to turn.

2.2. At 0805 hrs, the vessel started turning, at a normal rate, towards starboard, through 180 deg, with both the tugs on 'full push' throttle. When the vessel in the process of turning, the master realized that the rate of turn was quite faster than usual and the tugs, 'Parsuram' was on port bow and 'Shiromani' was on port quarter. The intension appeared to be to get the vessel parallel to the jetty and then utilize both the tugs to push together.

2.3 As the bow was moving quite faster than the stern toward the jetty, the port anchor was 'let go' to control the bow. The port anchor chain was initially dropped to two shackles 'on deck' and then slowly 'checked' and finally held on to 5 shackles in water. This could not arrest the fast movement of the astern and the vessel made contact with the fender at 0820 hrs. The fender was rusted and had no rubber or wooden packing/protection. The contact with the fender resulted in breach of hull, at about 5 mtrs above the water line, in way of slop (S) tank resulting in escape of small quantity of oil, overboard.

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2.4 The Master in his statement stated that he had informed the pilot that the rate of turn was too fast and it would become difficult to control, given that that tugs could only push and could not pull inherently as they were not made faster to the vessel. The pilot had been on the vessel on an earlier occasion for un-berthing. The Master also reported to pilot that the athwartships approach was about 3 knots as against 1-1.5 kts on previous occasions.

2.5 Immediate actions were initiated by ship staff for transfer of cargo to a slack/empty tank to arrest the spillage. Vessel was listed to 2.5 deg to port side and Inert gas was continuously pumped into the slop tank to prevent formation of flammable atmosphere. One spillage was arrested, the vessel was brought to upright condition.

2.6 Considering the lack of repair facility at Haldia, the vessel sailed, in ballast condition, to next port of call for effecting the repairs.

3. Why it happened ?

The tugs used for assisting while berthing of the vessel alongside HOJ 3 terminal needed to be utilized for both, 'push' and 'pull' operation so as to timely arrest the bow and stern movements.

4. Lessons learnt

4.1 While berthing at HOJ 3 at Haldia for such type of vessels, only very well experienced and trained pilots may be utilized.

4.2 Tugs utilized to assist berthing / unberthing of vessel should be available for both push and pull operation and needs to be made fast to the vessel as required as recommended.

4.3 Masters need to ensure that a proper Pilot – Master exchange of information takes place prior to commencement of pilotage operations so that the entire bridge team has understood each leg of the operation.



(Capt. Harish Khatri)

Dy. Director General of Shipping (Tech.)