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**Casualty Circular No. 6/2013**

**Case of missing Cadet from a bulk carrier**

**1. What happened?**

On 05<sup>th</sup> February 2012 at 1610 hrs, a Deck Cadet, 20 years of age, was reported missing from a bulk carrier, in location, 45 NM from the coast of Paradip, India. Vessel was en route from Paradip to Tuticorin at the time of the incident and the weather was light airs and calm seas.

**2. How it happened?**

**2.1** On the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> February 2012, the ship had completed loading at 0830 hrs after which, the Cadet had his breakfast and was given rest until 1600hrs. Vessel sailed out of Paradip port at 1030 hrs on 05<sup>th</sup> February 2012 for Tuticorin. The Cadet was woken up by his roommate for lunch and he had his lunch between 1230-1300 hrs, and was seen leaving his cabin, as per the other cadet who shared his cabin. When the other cadet questioned him, the Cadet informed that he was going to the CCR to fetch some papers, required for the deck office. The other cadet continued to sleep in the cabin until 1530hrs, after which he got up and went to the mess room for tea. Not finding the Cadet in the mess room and in the CCR, the other cadet informed the 2<sup>nd</sup> officer, as it was getting late for the missing Cadet to attend his bridge watch.

**2.2** A search was initiated on board at 1610 hrs, but the Cadet was not found. The vessel was turned to the reciprocal course at 1635 hrs to search for the missing Cadet. Subsequently, a Coast Guard vessel and a Coast Guard air craft also joined the search but it was unsuccessful. The search was called off at 1928 hrs on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

**2.3** During the investigation, it was reported that the missing Cadet was well regarded by everybody on board and there were no differences reported between him and any other crew member. He was reported to be hard working and for him the orders were never required to be repeated. He was also reported to be obedient and punctual. He reportedly came from a poor Hindu family and that his father was a carpenter. The other cadet has reported that the missing cadet used to read Bible.

**2.4** The missing Cadet had 6 SIM cards and two mobile phones and regularly called home when the ship was in port. His parents revealed that he would call them every time the ship was in port and confirmed that the last call they received from him was when the ship was in the previous port, Haldia. In the early hours of 5<sup>th</sup> February 2012, his phone was reportedly ringing very often and he was seen to be cutting it off. He was reported to have had his breakfast, slept and had his lunch, and nothing abnormal was observed by other crew members. One of the two mobile phones and a SIM card were not found during the investigation.

### **3. Why it happened?**

**3.1** The investigation did not reveal any foul play. Neither did the search of the vessel and the belongings of the missing cadet, reveal any suicide note. The missing cadet was not given any job during the period that he was last seen, till he was reported missing. However, analyzing all the statements given by the officers and the crew of the vessel, it would emerge that the missing cadet may have gone on deck for a good telephone signal, however, no one has reportedly seen him going on the deck.

**3.2** The investigation report is inconclusive. The only possible inference, however, could be that he probably fell overboard, with his mobile phone, while making the call, due to a momentary lapse in concentration. Though, this inference is not supported by any evidence

**3.3** Despite the repeated calls on the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> February 2012, which the Cadet was seen to be cutting off, he was seen to have had his meals and slept peacefully in the morning. Although, not appearing to be greatly

) disturbed, he may have been in an agitated state of mind which others may not have noticed. The reasons for cutting the calls may have led to an occupied state of mind, leading to lack of concentration on deck.

### **3. Lessons learnt.**

**4.1** ship masters/owners/managers/operators should evolve procedures for not allowing use of mobile phones on deck and during working hours, particularly near the ship's side.

**4.2** Several accidents and near misses have been reported due to loss of concentration and lack of awareness of hazards, in the vicinity, while talking on mobile phones. The shipboard environment is a hazardous environment and crew on board are required to have high situational awareness which could be greatly compromised when conversing on the mobile phone.



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