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Case of passenger jumping overboard from a passenger ship

1. What happened?

On 2nd August 2011 at 1513 hrs, a passenger, 40 years of age, jumped overboard from a passenger vessel in the Bay of Bengal. Vessel was en-route from Port Blair, Andaman to Vishakhapatnam, at the time of the incident. Search and rescue was attempted but it was unsuccessful, due to inclement weather.

2. How it happened?

2.1 Vessel had sailed out from Port Blair on 31st July and was bound for Vishakhapatnam. On 2nd August 2011 at 1513 hrs, when the vessel was in the Bay of Bengal, one of the passengers jumped overboard, willfully, in the presence of other passengers and some of the ship's staff working in the vicinity. The ship's staff, who witnessed the incident, threw a lifebuoy at the passenger immediately and also informed the bridge about the man overboard. The 2nd Officer, on the bridge, informed the Master and emergency stations were called. Vessel was maneuvered and the passenger was observed to be floating with a lifebuoy, which had been thrown at him. A messenger line was thrown at the passenger but he could not catch the line due to heavy swell. Further attempts were made and finally a gant line was passed to the

passenger when he was near the ship's starboard quarter. The passenger caught hold of the gant line but let go of the lifebuoy. When he was being hauled in on the port quarter, a big wave hit him due to which he could not continue to hold on to the gant line. Thereafter he was noted to be drowning and could not be located after 1629 hrs. The search was called off at 2110 hrs. Due to the rough weather, launching of the rescue boat for a search was not considered safe by the Master.

2.2 Investigations carried out on board revealed that the other passengers who saw the passenger jumping off the vessel, had tried to prevent him from jumping overboard but could not succeed. The said passenger was travelling in the bunk class and appeared to be alone as no one came forward to identify him. No foul play was suspected but reasons because of which the passenger jumped overboard could not be ascertained. The inventory of the passenger's belongings did not reveal any evidence /reasons which may have influenced him to jump overboard.

3. Why it happened?

The results of the investigation are inconclusive as the search of the passenger's belongings did not reveal any suicide note or reasons for suicide. The passenger was apparently travelling alone, as none of the passengers came forward to acknowledge his identity. Information regarding the passenger's behavior, prior to the incident, could not be established with certainty, although, nothing unusual was reported by any of the other co-passengers. Foul play was not suspected as the passenger jumped overboard, willfully, in the presence of several passengers and staff members.

4. Lessons learnt.

Although the vessel tried to rescue the passenger and the efforts of the Master and crew on board cannot be disregarded, they could not rescue him due to the inclement weather. It is possible that the release/inflation of one of the liferafts, when the vessel was maneuvering close to the passenger, may have given him an additional chance of survival.



Capt. Harish Khatri

Dy. Director General of Shipping [Tech]