

Grounding of BULK CARRIER in the approaches of Indian ports

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CASE HISTORY:

A handy size bulk carrier registered with Panamanian Authorities having cargo of Sugar for one of the Indian ports ran aground in the approaches of port, while the vessel was approaching the pilot boarding ground with the pilot launch along side in the process of providing pilot to the vessel. The incident occurred in the afternoon because of pilot's refusal to board the vessel without manropes. The vessel had good headway and both Master and pilot were engaged on the issue of rigging manropes, perhaps, forgetting the main issue of safety of Navigation in restricted waters. The vessel was drawing draft of 10.3 Meters and ran aground in 10 Meters depth contours nearby the landfall mark buoy. The vessel was refloated with the support of port tugs and the advise of 2 number of pilots on board in the early hours of next day morning.

Attributing factors to the occurrence of this marine casualty in the approaches of Indian ports:

a. EXTERNAL INFLUENCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:

1. The vessel was entering the approaches just after the high water falling tide encountering northeasterly wind force BS5 drift current of about 1.0. kts. with main propulsion in stationary state.
2. The combined effect of wind current on the stationary vessel in laden condition near the approach of channel had pushed her in ashore into the shallow water (in less than 10 mtr. Contour line)
3. Neither the master nor the pilot initiated any corrective measure in controlling this natural drift.
4. The duty officer failed to plot the position of the vessel during the approaches.
5. The port neither has VTS system or other mechanical techniques for monitoring the movement of the vessel.
6. The pilot launches tug were reported to be too slow to cope the speed of incoming vessel especially large laden deep drafted vessels.

b. SHIP FACTORS:

1. The navigational procedures as per the STCW 95, bridge procedure guides were not adhere to during the approach to the port.
2. The passage plan from anchorage to berth was not implemented by the Master and duty officer.
3. The emergency plan for grounding was not implemented in systematic manner.

4. The exchange of information between Master and Pilot did not take place.
5. Master did not make the manropes readily available as required vide SOLAS Chapter V.

c. PORT FACTORS:

1. Poor communicating skills of the duty pilot during the boarding process.
2. Poor reporting skills of this incident to the signal station as well as higher officials of the port.
3. Poor implementation of port emergency plan for grounding.
4. Inadequate awareness of the Crisis Management Plans amongst the port signal station staff.
5. The signal station was ill equipped to handle such situation because of in operational signal lights and shapes.
6. Signal station was not equipped with charts or binoculars.
- 7 Navigational aids for the port were inadequate and poorly maintained.
8. Speed of the pilot boat was reported to be very slow vis-a-vis speed of the ships calling in the port.

Based on these findings the comments of the Nautical Adviser to the Govt. of India are enumerated below for strict compliance of all concerned in the safe operation of ships in Indian ports:

1. To prevent re-occurrence of such situation, an effective communication between the Ship Master and Port Duty Pilot/ Port Control Station's Staff during such special operations is essential.
2. The Master of arriving ship and Duty Pilot attending to the ship must observe practice of good seamanship and professional judgment during transfer of pilot for safety of navigation.
3. The bridge team (Master, Duty Officer, look out seamen helmsman etc.) during such operation must adhere to the passage plan as required under the regulation 34 chapter V of SOLAS.
4. The Master of arriving vessels to Indian ports shall comply with the provisions of regulation 23 of SOLAS Chapter-V of pilot transfer arrangements for the safety of the pilot as well as the vessel.
5. The Master and the Pilot should be very well conversant with the effective implementation of emergency plans of their respective units.

Safe Ships, Safe Ports and Safety of Seafarers is the motto of the Directorate General of Shipping

**Sd/-
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