



भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
पत्तन, पोत परिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
नौवहन महानिदेशालय, मुंबई
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SHIPPING, MUMBAI

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Date: 15.12.2025

DGS CIRCULAR NO.58 OF 2025

Subject: Advisory and instructions on Safe Voyage Planning for General Cargo ships Operating between Mainland and A&N islands and within the A&N islands in Monsoon and Rough Weather Conditions – reg.

1. **Introduction:** The Directorate General of Shipping issues this advisory to all Indian shipowners, operators, and masters of vessels **engaged in cargo transportation between mainland India and A&N islands and within A&N islands**. This directive specifically addresses operations involving General Cargo ships that are over 20 years of age and operate during the foul weather season in Bay of Bengal and in conditions of rough weather. This is in response to recent incidents and continuing safety concerns related to **structural integrity, overloading, improper cargo handling, and voyage planning during adverse sea conditions**.

2. The maritime sector has witnessed multiple incidents in recent years involving aged cargo vessels facing catastrophic failures at sea, especially in challenging weather. Notably, in **2024, MV ITT Puma**, a 41-year-old general cargo vessel operating between the Indian mainland and Port Blair, sank after encountering severe weather conditions. Investigations revealed several shortcomings, including improper stowage, carriage of unauthorized bulk cargo (sand and gravel), and loading beyond the permissible limits. Similarly, in **2017, MV ITT Panther**, also over 40 years old, ran aground near the Andaman Islands due to structural fatigue and inadequate voyage planning during rough weather conditions. These incidents have emphasized the urgent need for strict safety compliance, particularly for General Cargo vessels operating in this sector.

3. Accordingly, it is now directed that all General Cargo Ships over 20 years of age operating in this corridor must comply with stringent loading, inspection, and operational protocols during the foul weather season (1st May to 30th November) and any period of forecasted rough weather/cyclones. All general cargo vessels of 20 years of age or more operating in the said corridor are hereby directed to comply with the following safety protocols:

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a. Prohibition on Carriage of Certain Cargoes

It is hereby mandated that **no vessel** within the scope of this advisory **shall carry bulk cargo** such as sand, gravel, cement, or any other free-flowing material during the foul weather season or at any time that adverse weather is forecasted by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD). Such materials, by their nature, increase the risk of cargo shift and vessel instability, which is further exacerbated in older vessels with potential structural fatigue. However, General Cargo Ships should meet the requirements of IMSBC Code if such vessels will be involved in carriage of such bulk cargoes during the foul weather season.

b. Cargo Securing and Lashing

Loose or unpackaged cargo loaded on deck and inside the cargo hold must be properly secured using approved and tested lashing systems. The use of makeshift or unapproved lashings, unsecured containers, or open stowage of heavy items is expressly prohibited, as such practices materially elevate the risk of capsizing or water ingress under rough sea conditions. All the securing shall be done in accordance with the duly approved Cargo Securing Manual of the vessel.

c. Compliance with Seasonal Load Line Regulations

Vessels falling under the purview must **strictly adhere to the seasonal load line regulations** as prescribed under the *Merchant Shipping (Load Line) Rules*. The maximum permissible load line during the foul weather season shall not be exceeded under any circumstances. The total weight of all cargo loaded on board must be determined using standard draft survey and independently verified by an independent third-party cargo surveyor authorized or recognized by the Directorate/MMDs. The surveyor's certificate verifying cargo weight and quantity shall be kept on board and a copy retained at the company's office, both available for inspection by Port and MMD officials.

d. General Stowage Plan and Surveyor Certification

Prior to commencement of each voyage, the vessel must also prepare a **General Stowage Plan** detailing the nature, weight, and stowage position of all cargo—both in hold and on deck. The stowage plan and actual loading and stowage of cargo must be physically verified and certified by an independent third-party cargo surveyor recognized by the Directorate and must include photographic evidence of the cargo securing arrangements. A final cargo securing and stowage report shall be submitted to the respective Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) prior to the vessel's departure for information and record. MMD may carry out random verification of actual loading and stowage condition based on the documents submitted by the company, as appropriate.



e. Pre-departure Inspection and Reporting

Port authorities and pilots/harbour masters involved in the vessel's departure must verify the drafts and assess the prevailing weather conditions at the time of voyage commencement. If any anomaly is observed, including suspected overloading, signs of hull weakness, failure of bilge systems, improper lashings, or non-compliance with weather advisories, the matter must be immediately reported to the Directorate General of Shipping and the local MMD. In such cases, the voyage shall not commence until all deficiencies are rectified and duly verified by the Recognized Organisation and approved by the jurisdictional MMD.

f. Weather Forecast Compliance

No vessel shall be permitted to depart if the latest weather forecast issued by the IMD, obtained within six hours prior to the scheduled departure, indicates the likelihood of adverse or rough weather conditions¹, including but not limited to: wind speeds exceeding 25 knots, sea state of 6 or higher on the Beaufort Scale or issuance of any gale, or cyclone warning for the intended route. If such a forecast or warning is issued before the vessel departs, the voyage must be delayed or suspended until the conditions subside and a revised clearance is obtained. Any voyage commenced in defiance of this requirement shall be deemed non-compliant.

Further, in accordance with the IMO's MSC.1/Circ.1228 "*Revised Guidance to the Master for Avoiding Dangerous Situations in Adverse Weather and Sea Conditions*", voyages shall not commence if conditions are expected that may lead to parametric rolling, synchronous rolling, or excessive slamming—particularly in quartering or following seas—or if the vessel's course and speed cannot be safely maintained to avoid dangerous dynamic responses.


g. Annual Monsoon Fitness Survey

Each vessel falling under the purview of this advisory must undergo an additional fitness survey prior to the start of the foul weather season. The survey must be conducted by a Recognized Organization and must include, but shall not be limited to, inspection of the hull, rudder, decks, bilge systems, watertight doors, and assessment of the vessel's stability profile. The inspection shall also involve thickness gauging of suspect areas, corrosion checks, and testing of structural integrity, as applicable. General cargo ships shall be allowed to operate during the monsoon period only upon successful completion of this additional survey. If the vessel is due for Annual Survey/Renewal Survey within the four-month preceding the monsoon (Jan to April) then monsoon fitness survey can be completed along-with annual/renewal surveys.

h. Operational Readiness and Emergency Preparedness

Shipowners are advised to implement **enhanced precautions during the foul weather season**, including but not limited to ensuring that emergency pumps and bilge systems are functional; maintaining continuous navigational watch; monitoring the condition of lashings during the

¹ "*Revised Guidance to the Master for Avoiding Dangerous Situations in Adverse Weather and Sea Conditions*" MSC.1/Circ.1228)



voyage; and ensuring that communication systems are always operational for receiving weather updates and transmitting distress signals. Any occurrence of cargo movement or vessel list shall be promptly acted upon and reported to the nearest port and MMD.

i. Submission of Monsoon Season Compliance Checklist

Before commencement of each voyage, the **vessel shall submit a foul weather season Compliance Checklist**. The checklist must confirm compliance with all requirements enumerated in this advisory, including adherence to seasonal load line limits, independent stowage certification, possession of valid monsoon fitness certification, and weather forecast documentation. Port and maritime authorities are authorized to board and inspect vessels for verification of the checklist and all supporting records.

4. It is hereby notified that any **breach, omission, or contravention of the provisions set forth in this directive** by shipowners, operators, or masters **shall render the parties liable to penalties** as prescribed under Section 436 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 as amended, which may include imposition of fines, detention of the vessel, suspension or cancellation of the vessel's registration, and disqualification or blacklisting of the operator.

5. This advisory is issued in the interest of ensuring the safety of life at sea, preserving the marine environment, and preventing unnecessary loss of property and lives due to avoidable lapses during monsoon operations. All stakeholders are directed to disseminate this advisory across their operational teams, shipping agents, vessel crew, port agents, and surveyors without delay.

6. This Advisory is issued with the approval of the competent authority and shall come into force with immediate effect and shall remain binding until further notification.



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