



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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DGS Circular 10 of 2025

Casualty Branch Circular – 02 of 2025

Sub: Collision between merchant vessel and Indian fishing vessels on the West Coast of India

1. Background: This circular is issued considering the increasing frequency of collisions between fishing vessels and merchant vessels along the west coast of India, which requires urgent and effective attention.

On 12 May 2024, at 2210 hours, an Indian-registered merchant vessel (GRT-1220 & Lenth-72 Meters) on a voyage from Kochi to Beypore, Calicut, had a head-on collision¹ with an Indian fishing vessel (engaged in fishing²), approximately 12 nautical miles west of Chavakkad (approximate position: 10°38.8'N, 075°48.64'E) on the West Coast of India. (See Figure 1)

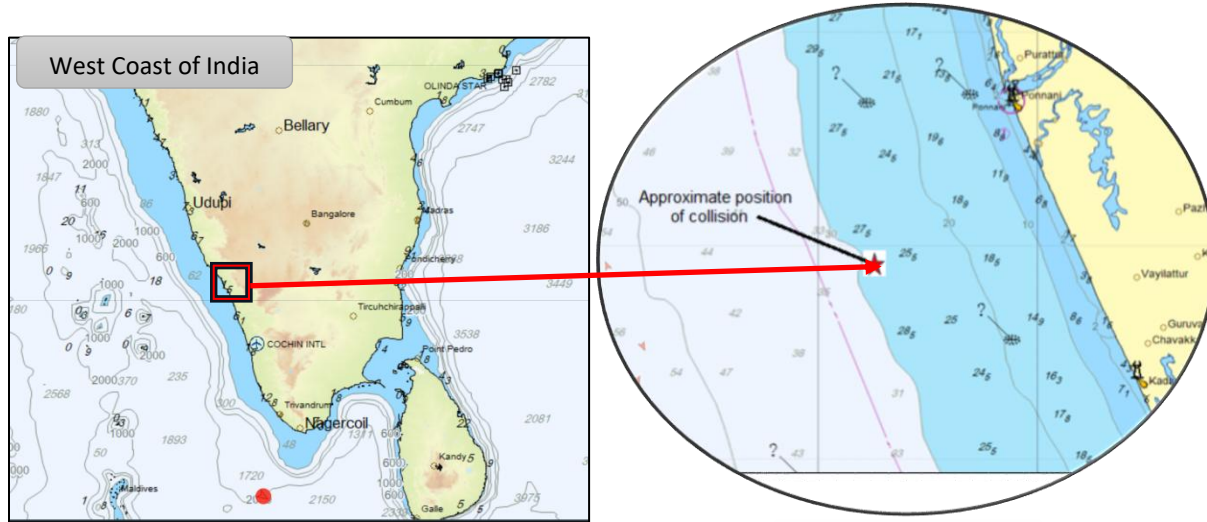


Figure 1: Location of incident

¹ As per Comité Maritime International (CMI), the term “Collision” means any accident involving two or more vessels which causes loss or damage even if no actual contact has taken place.

²As per COLREG Rule 3 The term “vessel engaged in fishing” means any vessel fishing with nets, lines, trawls, or other fishing apparatus which restrict maneuverability, but does not include a vessel fishing with trolling lines or other fishing apparatus which do not restrict maneuverability.

The incident caused the fishing vessel to split into two halves, resulting in the total loss of the vessel. Only four out of the six fishermen were recovered from the water. The merchant vessel sustained damage to the starboard side bow and paint damage along the forward part of the hull.

2. Incident Description

The merchant vessel (Length 72 meters) was underway on a voyage from Kochi to Beypore, Calicut. The fishing vessel (Length 15.75 meters) was reported to be at anchor and engaged in fishing activity.

According to the merchant vessel's statement, the fishing vessel was first noticed on starboard side when it was already very close. Master of the vessel and look out man was on the bridge at that time. The merchant vessel attempted to alter course to port, but the delayed response resulted in a head-on collision with the fishing vessel at 2210 hours, splitting it in two. The vessel slowed down quickly and stopped for search operation. The larger portion of the boat was dragged along the port side, where peeling paint marks were observed. The collision caused damage to the starboard bow and paint scraping on the forward port side hull. (See *Figure 2*)

As per the fishing vessel's statement, one crew member in the wheelhouse noticed a ship approaching. They started the engine and attempted to move, intending to release the anchor, but inadvertently steered toward the approaching vessel. Unable to raise the anchor, they slackened the anchor line, leading to the collision with the merchant vessel.

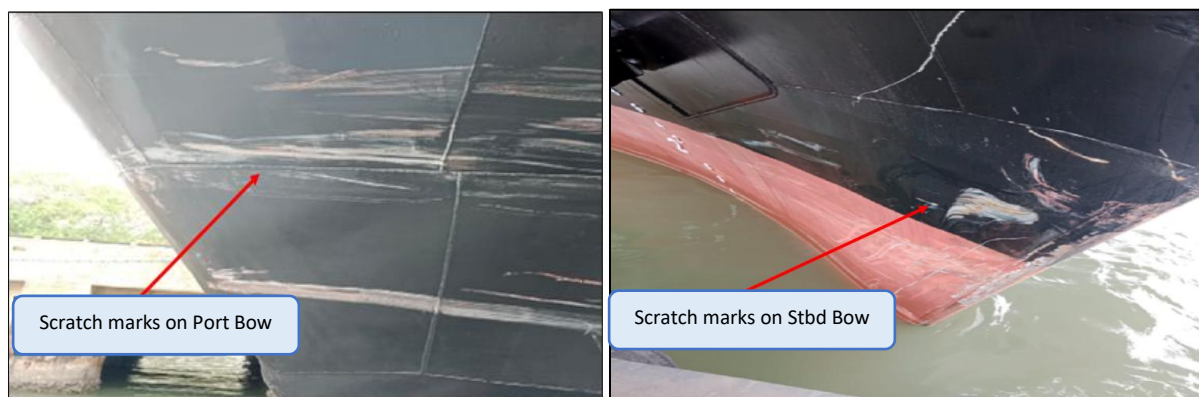


Figure 2: Scratches on port bow and starboard bow of merchant vessel.

The merchant vessel returned to the scene one hour later, rescuing the four fishermen with a rescue boat. The survivors reported that out of six fishermen, four had jumped into the water and stayed afloat for 2 hours and 10 minutes using debris for support. Two fishermen who went inside to retrieve life jackets remain missing. Worsening weather conditions, including heavy rain and strong winds, forced the suspension of further search efforts.

The Indian Coast Guard was notified of the incident at 0000 hours, nearly two hours after the collision which is a crucial time for survival. Other vessels in the vicinity were informed only after

the recovery of the four survivors, resulting in a delay of about 2.5 hours. However, during this time, the vessel conducted search and rescue operations and saved four fishermen.

3. Cause Analysis

1. Failure to maintain a proper lookout³ is likely the most probable reason for this incident.
2. Delayed notification to Indian Coast Guard and vessels in vicinity about the incident, which resulted in loss of critical response time in rescue efforts, reducing the chances of a successful recovery.

4. Lessons Learnt

- 4.1 The importance of maintaining a proper lookout and the serious consequences of failing to do so cannot be overstated. Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.
- 4.2 The Officer on Watch (OOW) must avoid engaging in any activity that could distract from lookout and watch keeping duties.
- 4.3 When navigating in fishing concentrated areas, the vessel should increase the navigation watch team with additional lookouts, maintaining safe speed and with all engines readily available. Extra attention should be paid to the signal lights of fishing vessels. In close quarter situation, the vessel should use ship's horn, signaling light, and any means of communication or navigational aid to prevent the situation from escalating. It is also important to note that small targets may not be detected by the vessel's radar.
- 4.4 As far as possible, vessels should alter course well in advance to avoid and maintain a safe distance from areas with a high concentration of fishing vessels. The vessel should not cut across areas where fishing vessels are congregated.
- 4.5 In the event of an incident, aside from reporting to the company's Designated Person Ashore (DPA), it is crucial to immediately inform the nearest maritime authorities to ensure a timely response and coordination for search and rescue operations, if necessary. The priority must always be to provide assistance and rescue human life.

5. Breach of Regulations and Other Issues

- 5.1 Non-adherence to the International Regulations for prevention of Collision at Sea pertaining to LOOK OUT (Rule-5).

³ As per COLREG Rule 5 “**LOOK OUT**” means every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.

- 5.2 The merchant vessel was maintaining rest and work hour logs in manual format, which does not comply with STCW and MLC requirements for accurately recording rest hours.

Manual records may not capture actual rest and work hours, leading to inaccuracies. The company has been advised to transition to electronic logging for improved accuracy.

6. Safety Recommendations

- 6.1 All vessels navigating in areas with fishing traffic on Indian coast are advised to maintain heightened vigilance, ensure compliance with safe navigation practices based on the above learnings from incident. Exercise caution, in areas with dense fishing traffic.
- 6.2 Fishing vessels & trawlers, especially those of more than 15 meters in length, should equip themselves with AIS to ensure their detection, even in poor visibility. Additionally, fit radar reflectors and high-intensity strobe lights to further enhance their visibility and detection by other vessels.
- 6.3 The Department of Fisheries should take steps to raise awareness among the fishing community about safety and legal requirements including fitment of AIS.
- 6.4 **Timely Reporting:** Vessel operators must prioritize immediate reporting to authorities following an incident to ensure prompt emergency response.
- 6.5 **Enhanced Lookout Measures:** Proper lookout practices must be strictly enforced onboard merchant vessels, especially when navigating near fishing zones.
- 6.6 **Improved Record-Keeping:** The Company is advised to transition from manual logbooks to electronic systems for recording rest and work hours to enhance accuracy and compliance.
- 6.7 **Fishing Vessel Compliance:** The Directorate of Fisheries must strengthen oversight mechanism and procedures to ensure fishing vessels maintain valid licenses, insurance, and adhere to safety standards.

These recommendations are applicable to all Indian fishing vessels, Fisheries department and merchant vessels in Indian waters navigating in and around areas of fishing vessel traffic.

This is issued with the approval of the Competent Authority.

(Capt. Harinder Singh)
Nautical Surveyor & Dy. Director General of Shipping

To,
All stakeholders through the DGS Website
Ship Owner/ Ship Operators/ Ship Manager/ Ship Masters