



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:06.11.2023

Casualty Circular - 05 of 2021

Sub.: Loss of lives due to sinking of the accommodation work barge

The St. Kitts and Nevis flag accommodation work barge (AWB) was 17 years old and was designed to accommodate a total of about 300 persons. In May 2021, the AWB was stationed at Heera Oilfield of ONGC Ltd for life extension of well head platform project. At the time of the incident, a Anchor Handling Tug Supply vessel (AHTS) was the designated AHTS providing support to the AWB. The AWB was positioned in East-West direction with a total of 8 anchors and about 25 meters from the 'HT' platform so as to provide access using the gangway. Considering the approaching inclement weather due to cyclone Tauktae, the AWB only pulled out 175 metres from the platform on 14 May 2021. On 16 May 2021, the AWB due to severe weather conditions including extremely strong winds, very heavy swell, it started dragging its anchor around at around 2100 hrs, thereby causing its anchor wires to come in contact with HT platforms legs, and causing them to part. By 0400 hrs on 17.05.2021 all starboard side anchor wires ropes parted and by 0700 hrs all on port side also parted. Thereafter, the AWB started uncontrolled drifting. Thereafter the AWB collided with HC Platform, at a speed of about 7 knots, which resulted in flooding of the 'Aft Winch Compartment Store' which eventually led to the progressive flooding of the Engine Room and thereafter loss of its stability resulting in its sinking.

The AWB has activated the Distress alert when the anchors had started parting, further due to engine room flooding, the barge power was lost around 0936 hrs on 17.05.2021, further due to the weather conditions none of the life rafts of the AWB could be utilized. At around 1530 hrs, Indian Naval Ship was about 3 nm from the vessel, however the AWB begin to sink rapidly from stern area. At around 1630 hrs, as the AWB had almost sunk, the AWB was abandoned by personnel on board jumping into water, with majority of them having donned the lifejacket. A coordinated effort for search and rescue was carried out by Indian Navy and vessels in the region which resulted in saving the lives of 186 persons out of the full complement of 261 persons onboard the AWB.

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Causal Factors:

1. In adequate assessment of weather conditions due to the forecasted cyclone in the area.
2. Not clearing the vessel from the area in time
3. In adequate action taken in view of the upcoming cyclone
4. In adequate monitoring by the shore team / managers
5. Lifeboats were required as per the MODU Code, however same were exempted
6. Lack of availability of immersion suits

Action Taken:

1. In view of the upcoming cyclone, master had pulled out the barge by 175 m from the platform
2. Due to adverse weather condition, Indian Navy mobilized its assets to provide assistance and saving lives
3. Vessels in the vicinity were diverted by MRCC to provide assistance to the accommodation barge.

Lessons Learnt:

1. In case of cyclone, the operator of the oil field, owner, master, needs to ensure that all vessel(s) in the field depart in due time to be able to safely reach shelter / safer area in time.
2. High number of casualties were due to hypothermia, hence use of immersion suit could have saved more lives, hence dispensation for immersion suits would not be accorded.
3. In the prevailing weather conditions at the time of the incident, crew could not use liferafts, hence dispensation for lifeboats shall not be given for vessel operating in Indian waters.
4. Adequate shore support is to be ensured, hence for vessels operating in Indian waters ISM code is made mandatory even for non-propelled vessel.



(Capt. Vikram Singh Manhas)
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To,
All stakeholders through DGS website.