

Circular From LONDON**Date: 23 November 2017****Chittagong: Outer Anchorage STS operations**

There has been a considerable increase in the number of ships calling at the port of Chittagong in Bangladesh. As most of the bulk carriers discharge into lightering barges by STS, congestion is increasing at the Chittagong Outer Anchorage.

Last year, the average number of ships lying at anchor at any time was between 60 and 90. The increase in the number of ships in the anchorage open to SW Monsoon, where strong prevailing currents (between four and six knots) and poor holding ground have contributed to many accidents.

In the last year, the Club has experienced a rise in incidents in the anchorage, but at the same time, historically no P&I year in recent memory is free of incident in this location. With this in mind, it becomes paramount that mariners remain vigilant while operating in what could reasonably be considered an international 'hotspot' for anchor dragging incidents. Consequences of such incidents range from minor contact damage with other ships, to groundings with the associated pollution risks.

The Club therefore considers that a reminder of the Chittagong Port Authority guidelines for masters anchoring at Chittagong Outer Anchorage is appropriate.

The following is an extract from those guidelines which along with local sailing directions and other salient port information should be considered during the passage planning stage:

Bangladesh correspondent provides guidance

Extract from the Chittagong Port Authority Guidelines for Master's anchoring at Chittagong Outer Anchorage:

1. Anchor at a safe distance from other vessels in the anchorage.
2. If the under keel clearance is less than 2m, there is a possibility that the ship will drag anchor. This is more prominent during spring tides and monsoons. The tide can be strong as six to seven knots. The ship's draft should ideally be reduced to less than 10.5 m at Kutubdia before she arrives at the Chittagong Outer Anchorage, if safe conditions are to be maintained throughout. UKC will be minimum and risk of dragging greatest while the tide changes from low water to high water until the ship is sufficiently lightened.
3. In the case of ships with lightering vessels alongside, the chance of dragging anchor is even greater. As a precaution, use more chain (at least nine shackles in the water), keep main engine on standby throughout and keep the number of lightering vessels alongside to a minimum.

4. When manoeuvring for dropping anchor or for picking up a pilot, never attempt to cross another ship's bow at close range. Please remember the current is very strong. You may ride on another ship's cable.
5. Deep draft ships lightering at Alpha Anchorage should shift to Bravo or Charlie once they attain the required draft to make sufficient sea room for safe anchoring of newly-arrived deep draft ships.
6. Masters are required to anchor clear of the prohibited anchorage.
7. Masters must not anchor near the river entrance.
8. Masters must manoeuvre with great care while embarking and disembarking a pilot.
9. Ensure that the lightering vessels provided for the STS operation have adequate fenders and Moorings, which should be attended regularly. Lightering vessels should be cast off immediately if the weather deteriorates.

Source of Information: London P&I Club