

MEMBER ALERT



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PERILS OF ANCHORAGE AT CHITTAGONG, BANGLADESH

The risk of collision at anchorages outside the port of Chittagong, Bangladesh, has recently increased, owing to strong spring/flood/monsoon tides and silted shallows. A Member's vessel, while safely anchored, recently suffered minor damage after being struck by another vessel underway within the Chittagong anchorage. Being very active and densely populated, the anchorage presents many navigational challenges as vessels wait to berth, or undertake cargo operations with lightering vessels.

Strong underwater currents can cause anchors to drag. In consequence, vessels with obstructed views forward, or from the starboard side of the port bridge wing, are not allowed to navigate in the Karnapuli River channel.

Most collisions in the Chittagong anchorage result from manoeuvring vessels failing to take account of the variability and strength of the tide and currents, leading to contact between anchored and embarking vessels. Masters should be cognizant of these conditions on entering and leaving the port. Bridge watch should be continuously maintained, and a vessel's position accurately monitored in order to check whether the vessel is dragging anchor.

In addition, the position of vessels surrounding a Member's vessel should also be closely monitored to determine whether any of these vessels might themselves be dragging anchor. Main engines should always be on standby, for immediate use, should need arise. Windlasses should be kept ready, with power available at short notice, should anchors need to be raised quickly. Anchor chains should not be over-extended, to avoid the swinging of the vessel over a greater-than-normal arc, increasing the risk of collision.

It is strongly advised that particular account be taken of tides, currents, weather conditions, and wind directions and speeds in the area. Vessels engaged in lightering should meet draft restrictions in port and ensure they use proper fendering equipment. Crews should be knowledgeable and familiar with casting off the lightering vessel quickly in the event of emergency.

Main engine readiness is also crucial for a quick response to potential emergency during a spring tide. Slow-steaming, or underpowered, vessels should take extra precautions and care while moving through relevant anchorages.

Members and their Masters are advised to treat the Chittagong anchorages much as a motorist would a busy intersection of a congested urban area. Contact should also be maintained with the Chittagong Port Authority to view the latest advisories and updates regarding tide, current and wind conditions. Specifically, Masters are advised to not anchor southward of Patenga Lighthouse at less than 55 degrees, especially during spring tides. The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS) 1972, should be strictly followed at all times while navigating through the channel in and out of Chittagong anchorages.