

LP BULLETIN

CHITTAGONG PORT GENERAL CARGO BERTHS- DRAFT AND FENDER ISSUES

Chittagong is the principal sea port of Bangladesh and handles more than 90% of the country's export trade and 70% of import trade. The port has seen good expansion in the last twenty years with new container terminal built down river of the old port that was built in late 1880s. The old port was mainly handling general cargo vessels and had 13 berths numbering 1-13. The port now has the dedicated container berths under New Mooring Container Terminal and Chittagong Container Terminal. Because of congestion, a number of GC berths are also used for container handling. The GC berths have been re-assigned as numbers 2 to 13 with adjustment of berth lengths.



DEPTHS AT GC BERTHS NO. 2 AND 3

The Chittagong Port Authority officially declares the depth at GC berths as 8.5m at low water. However it is common knowledge, and verbally conceded by port officials, that depth of water alongside GC berth no. 2 and 3 are only 6.5m at low water. Some agents hide this from the master and owner and bring vessels to these berths with draft of more than 7.0 m. Touching of bottom during low water is common under these circumstances. As the bottom is soft mud, no reported damage to ship's bottom is known. However, this often creates serious concern for master and owner. Ship owners and managers are to note the actual available depth of water at these berths.

CONDITION OF JETTY FENDERS

A more serious concern for ship safety are the condition of the GC berth fenders which are constructed as a composite structure of two vertical steel “I” connected by another transverse beam and supported by a rubber shock absorber connected to the pier. The flat faces of the steel “I” beams were clad with solid timber pieces to ensure that there would be no steel to steel contact between the ship’s hull and the steel “I” beams.



The timber claddings would also protect the ship’s hull from the sharp upper edge of the ‘I’ beams as vessels would move up and down with tide or during loading and unloading.

Owners and masters are to note that many of the jetty fenders are in poor state of maintenance. The timber protecting claddings are missing or broken on many fenders, leading the underlying steel “I” beams exposed for contact with the ship’s hull during berthing or during the period the vessel is alongside. This risk at berth is more for vessels having a jutting or protruding steel fender along the hull which may get caught by the upper edge of the steel “I” beam when the vessel falls with low water. Recently we have seen a vessel’s solid longitudinal half round steel fender to get caught by the upper edge of an exposed jetty fender during the ebb tide. This incident caused damage to both the jetty fender structure and the vessel.



This condition of the fenders exposes the vessel to risk of damage to hull and also to risk of claim from the port even when the fault lies solely with the port.



Mariners are advised to note the condition of the fenders and to take appropriate action during berthing and when alongside the pier. In the latter case tending/slackening mooring line may be needed to ensure that the hull is not pressed too tightly against the fender beams when there is a risk.

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