



LP Bulletin

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Bulletin 650 - 8/09 - Difficult Port Approach - Surabaya

The Club has recently been informed of the difficulties encountered by some vessels when approaching the International Container Terminal at the port of Surabaya, Indonesia.

It is understood by the Association that the entry to the terminal is made difficult by a combination of factors which are discussed in this bulletin.

Entry Channel

The channel is known to be shallow and narrow with a maximum draft given as 10.2m in the "Guide to Port Entry". Additionally, it advises that "vessels with draft over 9.5m up to 10.2m must be escorted by tug through the access channel, and will only enter on High tide". Some reports have suggested that this advice may be ignored locally and that masters should keep a close eye on the tide, vessels draft and under water clearance at all times whilst approaching the port.

A large number of vessels are known to be anchored in the port approach and inner roads with the channel often blocked and congested; those vessels wishing to enter or leave the terminal are required to sail very close to the anchored vessels. In addition to the larger anchored vessels, the area can become confused by the presence of small boats which move freely throughout the port, this situation is even more precarious considering the drift caused by the current within the port.

Where available, the local British Admiralty chart is not in a suitable scale for port entry and the local authorities do not appear to issue information regarding corrections meaning that the charts are often incorrect; vigilance is required throughout.

Tug and Pilot

Due to amount of activity in the port it is important to monitor the actions of the pilot who can become distracted whilst manoeuvring the vessel between the larger anchored vessels in the roads. Some Pilots have been noted to have a poor level of English which makes communication difficult as the pilot may not fully understand the vessel's characteristics and may find it difficult to judge the drift, squat and other factors which may influence the vessel's safety. When using tugs in the port Members are urged to be cautious; the tugs operate in a routine manner and may not pay significant attention to the developing situation in the port. Pilots appear to have very little control over the tug's actions.

Conclusion

The Association would advise its members to be extremely cautious when entering the port of Surabaya. A berth to berth passage plan should be drawn up and approved prior to arrival and all navigational officers should be briefed on the situation. Extra look-outs should be posted where possible. The pilot should be monitored throughout and he should be questioned when any doubt arises over his actions. It is important to remember that the Master is responsible for the overall safety of the vessel and not the pilot.