



Ship Type: All

Trade Area: India

## **Bulletin 93 - 05/99 - Non declaration of ship's stores, Fines, Delays, Confiscation - Cochin - India**

Local correspondents have reported a recent spate of problems at Cochin, India, involving undeclared or inaccurately declared ship's stores. Customs rummage gangs attend on board to check the declarations made in Stores Lists by the master. If the rummage gangs detect any discrepancies, this will lead to delays; confiscation of the stores involved or fines.

The number of ships trading to Cochin is not large, about 60-70 ships per month. This enables the Customs department to visit and search most visiting ships. The inspections are frequently made in an extremely diligent fashion. Ships are obliged to submit a Stores List on arrival declaring all the items held on board and invariably some items are overlooked or wrongly entered or an approximate figure is declared in the Store List. If the rummaging gang discovers any discrepancies, the Customs authorities are legally bound either to confiscate the goods or fine the ship/master in an amount equal to the value of the undeclared goods.

The ship's local agent or the Club's local correspondent may be able to intervene to achieve a reduction of the penalty. It would have to be shown that the master acted in good faith throughout, that he had no intention of smuggling the particular goods into the country and that the discrepancy simply arose from human error. The penalties imposed may be modest in monetary terms, but if the ship is detained the losses will increase significantly. Furthermore, the time that will be required from the master to resolve the problem could always be better spent on more important matters.

Examples of recent discrepancies raised against the master and shipowners include:

Inaccurate declaration of quantities of lube oils, particularly if the lube oils are in drums stored outside the engine room.

Paint drums incorrectly declared and stowed in unusual locations, e.g. in a cargo hold.

Engine room spares not declared.

Masters and the junior officers to whom such tasks may be delegated are advised to pay particular attention to accurate completion of documentary requirements. This is sound general advice and plain good practice, however it is especially relevant if the ship concerned is trading to Cochin.

It may also be remarked that simple, polite hospitality rather than an abrasive attitude will usually facilitate a smooth inspection.

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