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AN IRRESPONSIBLE SKIPPER

LOSS OF "KILLINDINI"

CERTIFICATE SUSPENDED FOR 12 MONTHS

The enquiry was concluded to-day into the sinking of the s. s. "Killindini" by the Marine Court, presided over by Mr. S. S. Rangnekar, Chief Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, assisted by Captain E. J. Tornton, master of the s. s. "Devanha," and Captain J. MacKee, master of the s. s. "Sunheath".

It will be remembered that the "Killindini" left Badagara on February 5 with a cargo of copra, cocoanut and ginger and carried 10 passengers and a crew of 28 persons. At 1 p.m. on the following day she listed a little to the starboard, then took a heavy list and sank by the stern within a minute and a half near the Mulki Rocks. The s. s. "Oostacapelle" arrived on the scene of the disaster at 9 p.m. that night and rescued 21 men, including one passenger while 17 lives were lost. The "Killindini" was a screw steamer belonging to Messrs. Mulji Ruttonsey and Company of Bombay and was bound for Bombay.

EXCESSIVE DECK CARGO

The Court reviewed the evidence in detail and came to the conclusion that the ship carried an excessive deck cargo, which was responsible for the sinking. It was on record that on the complaint of the master, Captain Kassum Nur Mahomed, the ship was inspected by the Government Marine Surveyor, Mr. Borner. His complaint was that the owners were in the habit of overloading the ship and making her top heavy and dangerous for passengers and crew whenever the ship listed. The ship was detained at Bombay owing to the complaint of the master and was only released after the defects were put right. The owners were also warned against carrying excessive cargo. As a result of his complaint Captain Kassum Nur Mahomed was dismissed from service by the owners and he was replaced by Captain Moosa Haji Fakira.

On the voyage from Badagara, the ship carried 3,739 bags, i.e., nearly 1,439 bags were stowed outside the holds. According to the evidence of Captain Andrade, who was formerly in charge of the ship, only 2,300 packages could be carried with safety under deck. The Court held that Capt. Andrade's estimate was a fair indication of the ship's carrying capacity. There was also evidence to the effect that soon after leaving Badagara the ship listed a little and the fact was brought to the notice of the master and the listing was corrected.

WARNINGS UNHEEDED

The Court held that the master of the ship, Moosa Haji Fakira, failed to realise that the ship was rolling and pitching more heavily than usual and paid no heed to the warnings he received from the Chief Engineer and the crew. He also failed to realise how near the safety margin he was running. The Court further held that the master was responsible for the improper stowage of cargo and for overloading the vessel on the deck thereby reducing the stability to a dangerous degree. The vessel was not seaworthy and in a safe condition for voyage. It was not navigated with proper and seamanlike care.

The Court held that the sinking and the loss of the vessel was caused by the incompetency of the master. The owners were to blame for engaging a man, who knew nothing of the vessel and if they had any consideration for the lives of those on board, they should have warned him to be very careful and to take proper precautions on his first voyage especially with reference to the amount and weight of cargo to be taken on deck.

DESIRE TO PLEASE OWNERS

On the other hand, the Court observed, the master had been at sea for many years, as an officer for 11 years and as a master for 15 years. His record was clean and excellent and he was a man of 59 years of age. The Court considered that although he was clearly to blame for the accident, there was some excuse for him as he obviously wanted to please the owners who, it appeared from the evidence, had made a habit of bringing more cargo than the vessel could carry with safety.

Taking all the circumstances into consideration the Court suspended the certificate of the master for 12 months.



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