

## Rescue operation at South China Sea by Master and Crew of M.T. Ashley Lady

M.T. Ashley Lady en-route to Tokuyama from Ruwais loaded with cargo of Naphtha received a distress alert relay transmitted by MRCC Hong Kong on 27 Nov around 1100 hours LT. At that time the position of the vessel was around 150 NM west of Philippines coast near Vigan city. Weather conditions were severe with gale force wind and heavy swell (wind was Beaufort force 8 and swell height was estimated 5 metres). It was established that distress location was about 22 NM South South East (SSE) of Ashley Lady.



**Location of the incident**

Upholding the long-established tradition of the sea, Master immediately decided to extend assistance in search and rescue operation for the distressed vessel. MRCC Hong Kong was informed. MRCC conveyed that the Panama registered cargo ship “M.V. Fortune Life” (built 1991 DWT 8037 MT) EPIRB transmitted the distress alert and it was believed that the ship has foundered.

Along with Ashley Lady, several other vessels also responded to the distress alert. Master of Ashley Lady contacted other vessels participating in Search and Rescue Operation (SAR) and within two hours reached the distress location to commence SAR operation.

No lifeboats were sighted, but some liferafts were seen. Meantime, MRCC despatched a spotter aircraft to aid the SAR operations. Liferafts were found empty, but survivors were sighted in water, few in lifejackets, some were just floating using logs or other flotsam.

The weather conditions were prohibitive for launching of the rescue boat from Ashley Lady. With great determination and patience Master commenced manoeuvring the fully loaded Aframax tanker (DWT 113000 MT) close to the survivors. His objective was to bring them within reach of crew standing by on deck to throw lifebuoy to the persons in water. For about six hours, crew braved the inclement weather, heavy rolling and pitching movement of the vessel, with improvised arrangements to continue the rescue operation. Unfortunately, some of the persons in water did not respond, presumably too weak or unconscious, but eventually five crew members of “Fortune Life” was rescued and brought on deck. They were given dry clothes as well as first aid administered as required.



**M.V. Fortune Life**

By the time five were rescued, it was evening and MRCC decided to release the vessel from SAR duties as further search was impeded by darkness and poor weather conditions. Within an hour of resuming passage towards Tokuyama, lookout on board Ashley Lady reported seeing lights on the water. On closer approach, it was realized that lights are from a group of survivors huddled together. MRCC

was informed promptly and Master resumed another rescue operation. Under darkness with limited visibility, crew managed to rescue one man. Sadly for others either they were too weak to respond or unconscious and eventually, lookouts lost sight of them. However, Master and crew did not give up, under direction from MRCC Hong Kong, Ashley Lady continued the search operation throughout the night. Meantime Owners of Ashley Lady was informed and whole-hearted support was extended by the owners to carry out this arduous and prolonged SAR operation.

28 Nov Morning did not bring any good news, weather remained same and along with other vessels, Ashley Lady continued the search until evening without further success. Chinese coast guard rescue vessels arrived in the afternoon of 28<sup>th</sup> Nov to continue the search supported by aircraft. There was an attempt to transfer the rescued personnel to Chinese coast guard ship. Considering the weather condition and safety of the survivors, Master declined. Finally evening of 28 Nov, MRCC released Ashley Lady from SAR operation and was told to proceed with six survivors to the next scheduled port.

Though minor injuries were suffered by all survivors, one of them was unable to walk and injuries looked serious. Medical assistance was sought from CIRM Roma. At the same time our crew extended a caring hand; with food, clothes and medicine rescued crew members recovered from the trauma quite

quickly. Six rescued seamen were disembarked under care of Chinese consulate at Tokuyama.



**Capt. Igors Tjagnirjadko**  
**Master of Ashley Lady**

We salute Master and crew of Ashley Lady for their display of courage, perseverance and fortitude. They reinforced the sacred tradition of extending assistance to another seaman in distress irrespective of nationality and language.



**Rescue operation in progress**



**Officers & Crew of Ashley Lady with rescued seamen**