

## **KISH P & I LOSS PREVENTION CIRCULAR KPI-LP-144-2013** **(A Bridge Too Close)**

### **► Description of the incident:**

After discharging a parcel of cargo, a tanker prepared for departure from her berth adjacent to a bridge across the harbour entrance. Tugs were secured forward and aft using ship's lines for each tug. Departure procedure, as agreed with the pilot, was to tow the vessel upstream against the current, then turn the vessel at a distance that would allow the vessel to gain minimum steerage speed while proceeding with the current for passage past the bridge.

Communication with the tugs was conducted in the local language due to the pilot's advice that the tug crews had a poor knowledge of English. The tug aft was reported to be placing excessive force on the lines and exerting this in a jerky manner, creating shock loads. While lining up for the transit through the bridge the aft tug lines parted, thankfully without injury to any crew at the aft mooring station. However, due to the aft tug becoming useless, several minutes later the ship landed against the northernmost bridge caisson leading to structural hull damage to the vessel.

### **► Lessons learned:**

While a situation of this sort remains impossible to predict until such time as it becomes fact, an agreement could be made with the Harbour Master to sail only on a flood tide. This would enable the ship to stem the current at all times while manoeuvring to pass through the bridge thus offering a much greater margin of safety, greater controllability of the vessel and more time available to assess an unplanned event.

*Additional note: There is some degree of debate in the maritime community about the advantages and practicality of a common language (English) to be spoken by pilots, tug crews and vessel crews when manoeuvring in ports. In this case it is doubtful a common language would have saved the situation. Practically speaking, it is also a tall order to require tug crews the world over to speak English. What is clear from BRM best practice is that the pilot should readily communicate to the bridge team what is being said to and by the tugs so the bridge team can become an integral component of the equation.*

