

BALLAST WATER THREAT? WHAT'S THAT



What is ballast water threat?

Ballast water is carried in unladen ships to provide stability. It is taken on board at the port before the voyage begins. Tiny stowaways, in the form of marine organisms, are also taken on board with it.

At the ships' destination, the cargo is loaded and the ballast water, with its stowaway organisms, is pumped out. Some of these organisms

then establish populations in the surrounding waters.



Hundreds of such species of marine organisms are known to have been introduced by ballast water. While some appear benign, others have become pests, threatening the local marine ecology.

Worldwide, marine bioinvasion of a wide spectrum of organisms including plants & animals have been reported.

India's coastline spanning over 7500 kms and housing 12 major ports may serve as gateways for marine bioinvasion. In addition to introduction of alien species, the threat of its dispersal to neighboring environments poses a serious challenge. The precious coral reefs of Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands could be severely threatened by this. One species of mussel has been found to have invaded and established on a large scale at Vizag and Mumbai ports. This species is a native of tropical & sub tropical Atlantic waters and is believed to have invaded the Indian waters sometime during 1960's.

How does it threaten you?

The overall impact can be broadly categorised under three major areas:

Ecological

Some introduced species severely deplete native populations or deprive them of food thus resulting in restructuring of the food web. Others form colonies which can smother existing fauna, disrupting & changing native bio-diversity & restructuring the food web. It is estimated that, every nine weeks, new marine species is invading a new environment somewhere in the world.

Economical

Coastal industry and other commercial activities and resources are affected by the invading species. In the USA alone, the economic losses due to this are reported to be billions of dollars each year.

Health

When toxic organisms, diseases & pathogens are introduced through ballast water, it spreads illness in human beings. Such introduction may also affect shellfish, fish, sea birds etc.

What action is being taken?

1. Awareness Campaign started for the following:
 - Shipping industry
 - Local marine biology experts
 - Coastal residents
 - Fisheries & allied industries
 - Port authorities
 - NGOs
 - Educational institutes and government bodies
2. Ballast Water Risk Assessments Program initiated
3. Port Baseline Surveys & Research undertaken
4. Compliance & Monitoring by the port authorities
5. Legislative Implementations by the administration

For more information on this issue, contact:

Mr. Sanjoy Chakrabarty, Country Focal Point, India.

Dr. (Mrs.) Geeta Joshi, Country Focal Point Assistant, India.

Global Ballast Water Management Programme,

Jahaz Bhavan, Walchand Hirachand Marg, Mumbai - 400 038.

E-mail : sanjoy@dgshipping.com, geeta@dgshipping.com

Website : globalballastwaterindia.com

