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Circular for P&I Clubs

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Correspondents for:

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Sudden rise of the Caroni River level (Orinoco) at Venezuela

There's a developing situation at the Caroní River in Venezuela which is affecting navigation and vessel operations particularly related to the Ferrominera Terminal.

From the 24th of this month CORPOELEC the state owned company running the nation's hydro-electrical system has opened the Macagua Dam floodgates altogether at the Caroní River, something that was not seen in several years, rising the water level up to less than 60 cm (23 inch) from the berth top at Ferrominera.

There are no reports of damages but as the floodgates are now full open the full discharge cannot be stopped until the dam achieves a safety level, so there is the certain risk of the water level surpassing the berth top, if this happen all vessel operations would be eventually stopped at this terminal.

The Macagua Dam, officially known as Antonio José de Sucre, is an embankment dam with concrete gravity sections on the Caroni River in Puerto Ordaz, Bolivar State, Venezuela. It is 10 kilometres (6.2 mi) upstream from the confluence of the Caroni and Orinoco rivers. The Caroni is one of the rivers with the highest discharge rates in the world, with respect to the area of its basin with an average maximum discharge is 6,260 cubic metres per second (221,000 cu ft/s), the Caroni supplies 15.5 percent of the discharge of the Orinoco river.

The Ferrominera terminal is located in Puerto Ordaz near the confluence of both rivers but still inside the Caroni, reason why is being directly affected by this problem.

We suggest members which vessels are calling soon or already trading in the Orinoco River to keep in close contact with ship agents to get updated reports about the situation. We will continue monitoring the matter and revert as needed.

Should you need any assistance or further information regarding the topic stated above, please feel free to contact:

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