

The Argus

40c

(36c + 4c G.S.T.)

TEL: 23-1163

CAPE TOWN, TUESDAY APRIL 23 1985

Man in ship sunk by Japanese sub meets rescuer after 43 years

Staff Reporter

A REPORT in The Argus has brought together a survivor of a World War 2 maritime disaster in which about 500 civilians died, and a former Royal Marine who helped in the rescue of hundreds of others from the sea.

They are Mr Ismail Cader of Rylands Estate — a passenger on board the SS Tilawa when it was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine in November 1942 — and Mr J G Metcalf of Edgemead, who served on the ship which rescued him, the cruiser HMS Birmingham.

The loss of the Tilawa was recalled by Mr Cader in the Supreme Court last week in an application by Mr Ebrahim Bawa Khalife of Cape Town to presume the death of his father — also a passenger on board SS Tilawa — when the ship was lost.

LOUD BANGING

After reading the report of the application last Thursday, Mr Metcalf telephoned The Argus and a meeting with Mr Cader was arranged.

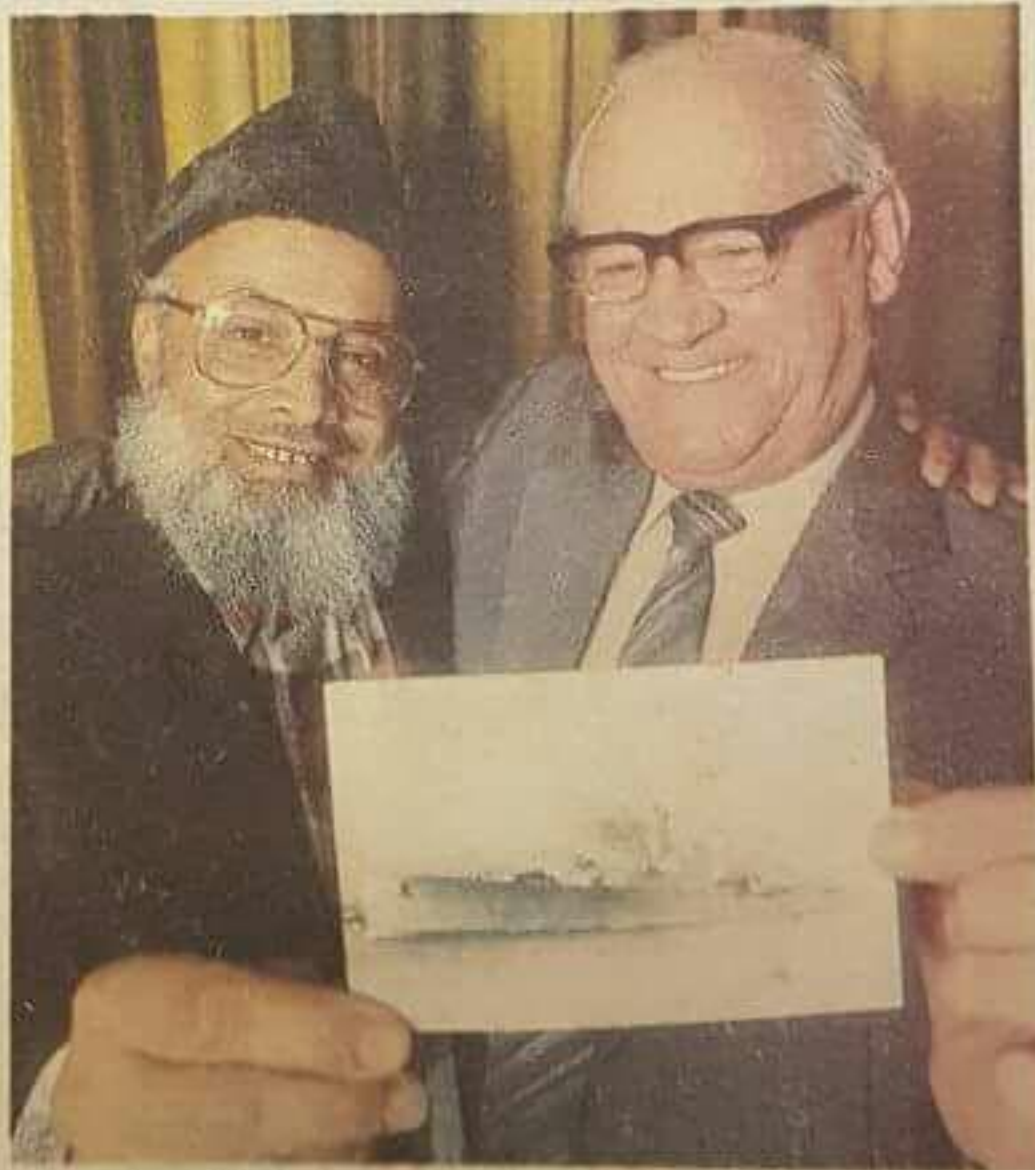
Last night the pair exchanged memories of the disaster nearly 43 years ago.

Mr Cader, who was 20, and his 58-year-old father were sailing with about 1 100 others in the SS Tilawa from India to South Africa.

"At about 1am on the fourth night of the 22-day journey we were woken by a loud banging," he said.

"Everyone panicked, including the crew.

"People crowded into the 22 lifeboats, which were sus-



Mr Ismail Cader of Rylands Estate, a passenger aboard the SS Tilawa torpedoed by a Japanese submarine and Mr J G Metcalf of Edgemead, who served in the rescue ship.

pended from the side of the ship with ropes.

"In the chaos, the crew cut the ropes holding some of the lifeboats, instead of lowering them gradually into the water.

"Most of the victims drowned after they fell out of the boats and the empty boats crashed on top of them.

"My father was among those who disappeared after falling out of a lifeboat.

"The survivors, in scattered lifeboats and rafts with

almost no food or water, drifted for about 48 hours until HMS Birmingham appeared," said Mr Cader.

Mr Metcalf, then 21, took part in the rescue.

"Small boats were lowered and our reconnaissance plane was used to spot lifeboats. I recall one man balancing on a piece of wood about the size of a door.

"The survivors were in a bad way. Some had been injured when the ship was hit, others had been bitten by barracudas," he said.