

India dispatches additional dry chemical powder to douse oil tanker blaze

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The Indian Navy and the Coast Guard have been helping the Sri Lankan Navy to douse the fire in Marine Tanker New Diamond since September 3.

New Delhi | By Press Trust of India | Posted by Niyati Singh

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The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has sent additional dry chemical powder on a request from the Sri Lankan Navy as part of efforts to douse the blaze on board an oil tanker off the island nation's coast, the maritime agency said on Tuesday.

The Indian Navy and the Coast Guard have been helping the Sri Lankan Navy to douse the fire in Marine Tanker New Diamond since September 3.

The fire, which killed one Filipino crew member and injured another, was extinguished completely on Sunday but a new fire broke out due to extreme heat, which has also been curbed considerably.

Indian Coast Guard ship Abheek was sent with 1,500 kilograms of the dry chemical powder (DCP) for the Sri Lankan Navy at the Trincomalee harbour. A Coast Guard Dornier aircraft was also dispatched to Trincomalee, it added.

“In order to supplement the surface firefighting efforts with the aerial dropping of Dry Chemical Powder (DCP), the Sri Lankan Navy had requested ICG for additional DCP.

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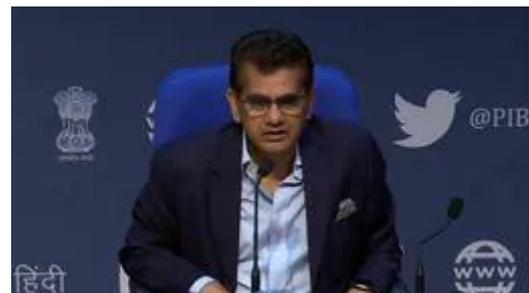


“ICGS Abheek with 1,500 kgs of DCP was diverted from on scene to enter Trincomalee harbour for handing over the DCP to Srilankan Navy.

“CG Dornier 770 with 700 kgs DCP was also dispatched from Chennai to Trincomalee. Sri Lankan ships, Indian Naval ships are also operating in the area,” the Coast Guard said in a statement.



Being the competent national authority under South Asian Co-operative for Environment Protection (SACEP) for responding and coordinating pollution response in the South Asian Sea region, the ICG launched an operation towards fire-fighting and consequential pollution response since September 3.



A bilateral MoU also exists between ICG and the Sri Lankan Coast Guard (SLCG) covering cooperation in the marine pollution response domain.

The fire, which re-ignited late on Monday evening, increased drastically by midnight, with very high flames emanating from the funnel and aft section, reaching almost 50-60 metres from the weather deck.

The sustained firefighting efforts by ICG Ships Sujay, Shaurya, Sarang and specialised ICG Pollution Response Vessel Samudra Paheredar along with Sri Lankan ships and tugs ensured the intensity and magnitude of the fire were reduced considerably by daybreak on Tuesday.

The captain of MT New Diamond, onboard ICGS Shaurya, has intimated the Coast Guard that the fire appears to have been doused, it said.

The situation is being monitored closely and boundary cooling with seawater and application of foam has been enhanced to avoid re-ignition.

“The persistence of fire for eight days has weakened the accommodation superstructure. No significant list is observed. The vessel is trimmed by aft by about 3 feet,” the Coast Guard added.

MT New Diamond is being held by Tug TTT1 in position about 30 miles from the nearest coast of Sri Lanka for preventing drifting of the vessel ashore and facilitating fire-fighting operation both by ships and aircraft including logistics ease.

Continuous liaison and coordination are being maintained with Sri Lankan Navy and Coast Guard and other authorities for augmentation and effective response, the statement added.

The Sri Lankan Navy, in a statement, said the re-ignited fire on board the Panama-registered tanker, carrying nearly 2 million barrels of crude oil, has been curbed to an extent.

“There is no risk of the fire spreading to the oil storage or leaking oil from the ship into the sea as of now,” the statement said.

Ships, aircraft and tugs belonging to the Sri Lanka Navy, Sri Lanka Air Force, Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and other stakeholders are continuing their disaster management operations to suppress the fire caused by adverse weather, the Lankan Navy added.

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