

## Ship fire off Colombo: Indian Coast Guard rushes assets, more on standby

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On the basis of Sri Lanka's request, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has set off offshore patrol vessels ICGS Vaibhav and Vajra towards Colombo in Sri Lanka to extinguish fire, strengthen pollution response efforts on MV X-Press Pearl, a container ship. Is assigned to work. A massive fire broke out in the ship on Tuesday morning following an explosion, which was allegedly caused by the collapse of containers due to inclement weather. The container ship which was going from Hazira to Colombo was anchored about nine nautical miles (about 16 km) away from Sri Lanka's major port city.

The ship carried 1486 containers and about 25 tons of hazardous nitric acid and other chemicals. So far, 25 crew on board including five Indians have been safely evacuated. The first vessel caught fire on Thursday, May 20, after which it was brought under control by Sri Lankan port authorities the next day.

However, on Tuesday morning, about 10 containers exploded due to bad weather and were reported to have fallen into the water after the fire. The 325 metric tonnes of fuel kept in the tanks of large container ships is expected to pose a risk of oil spills in the region.

Apart from the two ICG vessels going to the site of the blaze, their structures at Kochi, Chennai and Tuticorin are ready for immediate assistance towards the pollution response. The ICG is in constant coordination and communication with the Sri Lankan authorities for the operation. ICG aircraft from Chennai and coaches are also being brought to Tuticorin for air surveillance and pollution response.

In the last ten days of the week, the Indian Coast Guard and the Indian Navy have been engaged in surveillance, search and rescue operations on the west coast of India, which was affected by a very severe cyclone 'Taukta'. The effects of this cyclone were felt in the Lakshadweep Islands, Kerala, South Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa and

Gujarat, where it knocked. Currently, ICG assets are also deployed for search and rescue, any event that may have arisen from the impact of Cyclone Yas, which was predicted to make landfall between Odisha and West Bengal on the east coast of India. is.

In September 2020, a fierce fire broke out at MT New Diamond, which was carrying around 2.7 lakh metric tons of oil and was located on the east coast of Sri Lanka. The vast efforts by the Indian Coast Guard in coordination with other agencies ensured that the fire could be controlled without any instances of oil spills. The ICG has stated that, as an active member of the South Asia Cooperative Environment Program (SACEP), it is committed to its responsibilities of protecting the marine environment in the region.

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