

Blaze extinguished on stricken oil tanker off Sri Lanka

September 6 2020



Fireboats battling to extinguish a fire on the Panamanian-registered crude oil tanker New Diamond off Sri Lanka's eastern coast

A massive fire on a stricken oil tanker off Sri Lanka's coast has been extinguished, the island nation's navy said Sunday, as international

salvage experts began to assess the damage over fears of an environmental disaster if there is a leak.

The Panamanian-registered New Diamond, carrying over 270,000 tonnes of crude and diesel, was en-route from Kuwait to the Indian port of Paradip when it issued a distress call Thursday after an engine room explosion that killed a Filipino crew member.

Sri Lanka's [navy](#) chief Nishantha Ulugetenna said the [fire](#) on the tanker, which the navy chief and the Indian coastguard got under control on Friday—had finally been put out.

"The fire has been completely doused," the vice admiral told reporters in Colombo.

"The tanker's (steel) plates are still very hot so there is a risk of reigniting new fires."

The Indian coastguard tweeted that "no flame & smoke" was visible from the vessel.

The announcement came as Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Centre said foreign salvage experts and insurance assessors had started examining the ship some 75 kilometres (46 miles) from the coast.

Ten British and Netherlands professionals with expertise in [rescue operations](#), disaster evaluation and legal consultation arrived earlier Sunday, the navy said.

Dutch firm Smit Salvage had commissioned the experts and was also sending two tug boats from Singapore and Mauritius, the navy added.

The Indian coastguard, which deployed six ships, an aircraft and a

helicopter, added on Sunday that its pollution control vessel had arrived at the site in the Indian Ocean.

The rescue vessels are still dousing the tanker with water to prevent fresh fires being ignited in heavy winds lashing the hot steel plates near the burnt engine room.

The tanker had suffered a crack of its hull some 10 metres (33 feet) above the waterline as a result of intense heat from the fire, officials said.

Authorities said there has been no oil slick and the crack was not considered a catastrophic structural failure.

Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Agency has said that [legal action](#) could be taken against the owners, Liberian-registered Porto Emporios Shipping Inc, "should the worst happen and the ship breaks up".

The vessel is larger than the Japanese bulk carrier MV Wakashio, which crashed into a reef in Mauritius in July leaking more than 1,000 tonnes of oil into the island nation's pristine waters.

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