

Race to assess damage to 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

An international team of salvage experts arrived in Sri Lanka Sunday to assess damage to a fire-stricken oil tanker off the east coast, officials

said, as fear mounted for 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.

The Sri Lankan navy and Indian coastguard got the blaze under control on Friday, preventing it from spreading to the flammable cargo.

"Ten British and Netherlands professionals with expertise in [rescue operations](#), disaster evaluation and legal consultation will be arriving in the island this morning," the navy said in a statement.

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 has deployed numerous 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 continued to douse the blaze with water Sunday as a large plume of smoke rose from the ship.

The 330-metre (1,000-foot) vessel was Saturday towed to [deeper waters](#) some 75 kilometres (46 miles) away from the island's coast.

Sri Lanka



Map locating a burning oil tanker off the coast of Sri Lanka

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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