

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 44
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21.07.2025

Environment Impact of Sinking of Hazardous Cargo in Indian Sea

44. SHRI HIBI EDEN:
SHRI ANTO ANTONY:
ADV DEAN KURIAKOSE:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the potential leakage of hazardous cargo, chemicals, or oil from sunken or damaged foreign-flagged container vessels in Indian waters, including the MSC Elsa 3 and MV Wan Hai 503, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has conducted or initiated a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) following the sinking of a container vessel MSC Elsa 3 off the coast of Kochi and the fire on a container ship MV Wan Hai 503 off the coast of Kannur, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for dealing with environmental emergencies resulting from maritime accidents such as oil spills, chemical leaks, and plastic pellet dispersal, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether the Government has invoked the polluter-pays principle to ensure that the responsible shipping companies bear the full cost of environmental restoration, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) the total number of cases, such as oil spills, chemical leaks etc. registered under the Environmental Protection Act in the country during the last three years and the current year?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

- (a) On 25 May 2025, MSC ELSA 3 carrying 643 containers including hazardous materials and marine fuels sank off the coast of Alappuzha. The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is Central Coordinating Agency for Combating of Oil Pollution in the coastal and marine environment of various maritime zones. Light oil sheen noticed at the surface has been dispersed by the standby vessel at the site and due to natural phenomenon of wave action. Total of 66 containers washed ashore and have been recovered by the agency appointed by the Ship owners. None of the 66 containers were having hazardous cargoes hence there is no damage or hazard reported. Around 540 MT of plastic nurdles have been collected from the Kerala Coast and South Tamil Nadu coast.

In the case of MV Wan Hai 503, the container vessel suffered fire and explosions approximately 44 nautical miles off the coast of Azhikkal on 09.06.2025. The Indian Coast Guard, Indian Navy, DG Shipping and other concerned authorities have taken proactive measures to contain and mitigate any potential environmental risks.

- (b) The Ministry has requested National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), Tamil Nadu to undertake a comprehensive Environment Impact Assessment in coordination with State Government of Kerala for MSC ELSA 3 incident.
- (c) The Directorate General of Shipping has issued a Standard Operating Procedure titled “SOP to Handle Marine Casualty 2021”, which outlines the response framework for incidents involving shipwreck, oil spills, and other marine casualties. The Indian Coast Guard has developed a National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP) for responding to Oil Spill accidents. The NOS-DCP is a comprehensive tool, which provides a framework of co-ordination for integrated response by various government agencies to protect the environment from deleterious effects of pollution.
- (d) In the case of MSC ELSA 3, the Kerala State Government has filed Admiralty Suit No. 12 of 2025 before the Hon’ble High Court of Kerala, seeking recovery of ₹9,531 crore from the vessel owners.
- (e) The Ministry has authorised the State Governments viz. the Government of the State (represented by the Secretary to the State Government incharge of environment), Chairman and Member Secretary State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and Collector etc. for the purpose of the Section 19 of Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986 to register a case under EPA, 1986.
