

# INDIAN COAST GUARD CONDUCTS 9TH NATIONAL LEVEL POLLUTION RESPONSE EXERCISE (NATPOLREX-IX) OFF VADINAR, GUJARAT

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Defence related developments

The 9<sup>th</sup> National Level Pollution Response Exercise (NATPOLREX-IX) was conducted by the Indian Coast Guard on 25 Nov 2023 off Vadinar, Gujarat. DG Rakesh Pal, Director General Indian Coast Guard, and the Chairman NOSDCP reviewed the preparedness of all agencies during the exercise. Representatives of various ministries and departments of central and coastal state governments, ports, oil handling agencies, and other stakeholders participated in the exercise. More than 31 foreign observers and 80 delegates participated in the exercise.

The NATPOLREX-IX accomplished its objective of testing the level of preparedness and coordination between various resource agencies to respond to a marine oil spill invoking provisions of the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan or NOSDCP.

The ICG deployed surface as well as air platforms including Pollution Response Vessels (PRVs), Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), indigenous Advanced Light Helicopter Mk-III, and Dornier Aircraft configured for marine pollution response. The event also showcased India's industrial prowess in terms of the 'Make in India' thrust under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. The stakeholders like major ports also deployed their maritime assets for showcasing synergized efforts in combating marine pollution.

Indian Coast Guard assumed responsibilities for protecting the marine environment in the maritime zones of India on 07 Mar 1986, when these responsibilities were transferred from the Ministry of Shipping. Subsequently, the Coast Guard prepared the NOSDCP for combating oil spill disaster at sea, which was approved by the Committee of Secretaries in 1993. Apart from drawing up the NOSDCP, the Coast Guard has established four Pollution Response Centers at Mumbai, Chennai, Port Blair and Vadinar.

A robust national system for oil spill response is critical to India's preparedness for oil spill disasters in Indian waters. Indeed, 75 percent of India's energy requirements are met by oil that is imported into our country by sea. Oil transportation by ships is fraught with inherent risks and requires preventive measures to be taken, both, by the ship owners as well as the oil receiving facilities inside the port. However, the threat of oil pollution through maritime accidents and unforeseen perils of the sea is omnipresent.

The Indian Coast Guard functions as the Central Coordinating Authority for response to Oil spills in Indian waters.



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