

NATPOLREX-VIII

'A MAJOR STEP TOWARDS CLEANER SEAS'

1. The Indian Coast Guard conducted the eighth edition of the National Level Pollution Response Exercise, codenamed NATPOLREX-VIII from 19-20 Apr 22 off Mormugao harbour, Goa. The unique marine spill preparedness exercise was inaugurated by the Dr. Ajay Kumar, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Defense, Government of India in the august presence of Dr.M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) and various senior dignitaries from MoPSW, NDRF, IMD, Indian Navy and State Pollution Control Board, Goa. The event was attended by more than 85 participants from 50 Agencies, which included 29 foreign observers from 22 friendly foreign countries and International Organisations and two Coast Guard ships from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

2. DG VS Pathania, PTM, TM, Director General Indian Coast Guard, who is also the Chairman, NOSDCP and the Competent National Authority for marine pollution at sea for SACEP MoU in the Indian waters, in his address, shared that ICG remains committed to understand and address the threats to the Region and its resources, including marine oil and chemical spill at sea. He stressed that as new vulnerabilities continue to emerge, the stakeholders must recognize the opportunity to enhance cooperation through stronger partnerships, effective coordination and exchange of best practices. It is worth mentioning that NATPOLREX VIII is being conducted congruent to marine pollution response training of 43 participants at Chennai from 18-29 April 22, bilateral dialogue between Director General Indian Coast Guard and Director General SACEP (South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme) along with participation of

ships and representatives from SACEP member States and the Colombo Security Conclave at Mumbai on 21 -22 Apr 22 wherein a dedicated, two day workshop, for representatives of member States is being scheduled.

3. Presently, as the third largest importer of crude, India receives large volume of oil through ships. Similarly, India stand sixth in the world as major chemical importer country. Both oil and chemicals if spilled pose inherent risks to the Maritime Zones of India and the connected coastlines housing large coastal population, Marine eco-system, industries and various installations along with supporting tourism industry. Preventive measures, by the Central Coordinating Agency, Ship Owners, Oil Handling Facilities and other concerned stakeholders are thus, required to be taken to prepare for combating any likely Marine Spill.

4. NATPOLREX VIII aims at validating the procedures and guidelines as contained in the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP) at the National and also at the Regional level under the aegis of SACEP MoU to which India is a member State. During the Exercise various components of NOSDCP were invoked to validate and improve the contingency plans and to evaluate preparedness of the resource agencies as well as stake holders to meet any marine spill disaster at sea. The exercise is coordinated by Indian Coast Guard encompassing assets from resource agencies and stakeholders including Ports, Oil Handling Agencies (OHAs), Coastal States/ UTs and other resource agencies. The exercise consisted of a two-day programme featuring table-top exercise, pollution response workshop on marine Oil and HNS spill followed by exercise at sea , which was reviewed by Chairman NOSDCP in presence of National and International Observers.

5. Dr. Md. Masumur Rahman, Director General of SOUTH ASIA CO-OPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (SACEP) and DG VS Pathania, PTM, TM, Director General Indian Coast Guard, who is also the Chairman, NOSDCP and the Competent National Authority for marine pollution at sea for SACEP MoU in the Indian waters, were also present at the occasion. Since, the Indian Coast Guard draws its mandate for response to marine spills from the Ministry of Shipping which was represented by the Additional Director General Shipping at the forum.

6. During the sea exercise 13 ships and 10 aircraft from Indian Coast Guard and 01 aircraft from IAF (C-131), 02 ships from SACEP members states viz Sri Lankan Coast Guard and Bangladesh Coast Guard and 01 OSV from ONGC, assets from SCI and tugs from Mormugao Port Trust demonstrated containment cum marine spill recovery by side sweeping arms, deployment of booms and skimmers, streaming of single ship operated containment cum recovery system, firefighting drill, rescue operation, and demonstration of surface and air oil spill dispersant systems.

7. The exercise comes at a time when there is an increase in maritime trade due to government's initiative. Consequently, more and more vessels are handling Oil and HNS in our ports to provide for the increased demands. NATPOLREX-VIII is a Regional step in the right direction and enhances preparedness and response capability of all the stakeholders in combating marine spills. Through NATPOLREX VIII, Indian Coast Guard has once again dedicated itself to the protection and preservation of marine ecosystem for our future generations. The DGICG thanked all the international observers, national stakeholders and participants for the constructive discussions providing

momentum to strengthen cooperation in Marine Pollution Response and also for their presence despite challenges of pandemic and travel restrictions

8. Besides, NATPOLREX, ICG is also concurrently, conducting capacity building professional training course in Marine Oil Response and Preparedness for 45 international participants from 18 countries including member states from Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) at Chennai from 18-29 Apr.

