

Need for an Integrated Framework to address maritime issues including situations arising out of accidents of vessels carrying hazardous cargo.-laid

DR. SHASHI THAROOR (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM): I wish to draw the attention of Government to the mounting threat of maritime accidents involving vessels carrying hazardous cargo-gravely endangering marine ecosystems and coastal livelihoods. Recently, on May 25, 2025, off the coast of Thottappally in Alappuzha district, Kerala, the Liberian-flagged M.V. ELSA 3 sank, carrying 643 containers¹³ with hazardous materials, plus plastic nurdles. Its sinking caused widespread fear, environmental harm, and economic disruption¹⁴ halting fishing activities and seafood consumption for local communities. While Kerala has declared this a State-specific disaster, similar losses could occur anywhere in India, especially as maritime trade and port expansions surge. Lack of stringent monitoring, enforcement of international conventions, rapid-response systems, and poor public awareness exacerbate the risks. I therefore urge the Union Government to adopt a national framework for managing maritime accidents involving all cargo; reinforcement of obligations under international maritime conventions, including MARPOL and the Nairobi Wreck Removal Convention; ensure rapid deployment of environmental disaster response teams; establish standard compensation mechanisms for affected coastal populations; mandate environmental impact assessment and risk audits for vessels entering Indian waters. This disaster is not an isolated event, but a warning sign for future generations. Thereby, I request the Hon¹⁵ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways to address this issue urgently.