

>

Title: The Minister of Defence made a statement regarding incident of major fire onboard Indian Navy submarine INS Sindhurakshak.

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): Madam, there was an unfortunate incident of explosions and fire onboard Indian Navy Submarine INS Sindhurakshak in the intervening night of 13 / 14 August 2013. At the time of incident, the submarine was berthed at the Naval Dockyard, Mumbai. ...(*Interruptions*) I visited the site on 14 August 2013, accompanied by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, to get a first-hand account of the situation, where I was briefed by the Chief of the Naval Staff. ...(*Interruptions*)

Initial assessments indicate that an internal explosion occurred in the forward compartment of the submarine, where ordnance was stowed, resulting in further near-simultaneous explosions, and major fire onboard INS Sindhurakshak. ...(*Interruptions*) Fire tenders from the Naval Dockyard as well as Mumbai Fire Brigade were pressed into action and the fire was brought under control. However, INS Sindhurakshak was observed to be slowly submerging, due to damage sustained during the fire and explosions onboard. ...(*Interruptions*) A minor fire was also observed on the upper casing of INS Sindhughosh, which was berthed alongside INS Sindhurakshak which was brought under control, and she and other ships in vicinity were moved away from INS Sindhurakshak to safe locations. ...(*Interruptions*)

18 naval duty personnel, comprising 03 officers and 15 sailors, were inside the submarine at the time of the incident. As the explosion and resultant damage were near instantaneous, these personnel could not evacuate. ...(*Interruptions*) Although full details are yet to emerge, the rapidity and intensity of the explosion and the resultant damage sustained by the submarine indicate that the personnel would not have survived.

The submarine is presently resting on the bottom, and is partially submerged next to the jetty where the incident took place. Diving operations by the Indian Navy are in progress round the clock to attempt search for the personnel, assess the damage and also attempt to arrest leakages and ensure dewatering. ...(*Interruptions*) Naval Divers have been able to enter the submarine. They could access only some parts of the submarine due to heavy damage and flooding of compartments, with obstructions from debris and structural distortions. ...(*Interruptions*) Efforts have been made to de-water the flooded compartments using high-capacity pumps. However, there has been no discernible change in the water level inside the submarine, indicating likelihood of ingress of water through openings due to structural damage. Further efforts have been made to identify possible areas of water ingress by inserting high pressure air. ...(*Interruptions*) These have indicated breach of Watertight integrity in the forward portion of the submarine hull. Globally renowned professional salvage agencies have been approached, and they are undertaking the survey for salvage operations. There is also an offer of help from Russia, where the refit and upgrade had been undertaken. ...(*Interruptions*)

MADAM SPEAKER: Hon. Minister, please lay it on the Table.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI A.K. ANTONY : Madam, with your permission, I lay rest of my Statement on the Table of the House...(*Interruptions*)

..... Preliminary investigations indicate that the explosion was due to the possible ignition of armament. The cause of ignition is however yet to be established. Visual and forensic examination would throw more light into the possible cause of ignition. This will be possible only after the submarine is afloat and dewatered. A Board of Inquiry with all relevant specialists has been constituted to investigate the likely causes of the accident at the earliest.

In addition extensive checks on weapon related safety systems and audit of Standard Operating Procedures on all operational submarines of the Indian Navy have been ordered.

We are deeply saddened by the incident and the resultant loss of lives. I would like to assure that all support, assistance and counselling will be provided to the families of the 18 naval personnel. A special family cell has been formed at Western Naval Command in Mumbai for this purpose. We convey our deepest condolences to the families of the Indian Navy personnel who have made the supreme sacrifice in the line of-duty. *.....*

(Placed in Library, See No. LT 9403/15/13)

