

Sanchi could burn for a month; bunker fuel now the main concern



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Oil tanker Sanchi, adrift and ablaze in the East China Sea after her collision on Saturday evening with grain carrier CF Crystal, could burn for as long as a month, South Korea's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries said on January 10th.



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Dozens of rescue boats continued to deal with strong winds, high waves and toxic fumes as they searched for 31 missing sailors and attempted to control the fire. There remain concerns that the ship could explode or sink, or both. Ministry official Park Sung-dong told Reuters that "we believe flames would last

for two weeks to a month, considering previous cases of oil tank accidents. What we are concerned about at the moment is the bunker fuel, which could contaminate the water if the vessel sinks".

The Chinese government said late on Tuesday that it had not detected any large-scale oil leak, and noted that the condensate was burning off or evaporating so quickly that it would leave less than 1% residue within five hours of a spill.

The South Korean ministry official said they suspected that the tanker caught fire as soon as it hit the freighter carrying grain. Park said that it was unlikely that the oil would spread to South Korea at the moment because the tanker had moved 100 kilometres to the southeast.

Meanwhile, German insurer Allianz noted that analysis of global shipping losses over the past decade had highlighted East/South East Asian seas as an accident hotspot. The insurer said that the collision of Sanchi with CF Crystal off the coast of Shanghai was the latest major shipping incident in the region. Marine insurer Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty (AGCS) regularly analyzes shipping 'total loss' data in its annual Safety and Shipping Reviews, and its latest analysis identified East/South Asian seas as the top hotspot for shipping losses around the world in 2016, responsible for 34 total losses during that year alone. This equalled 40% of all total losses worldwide (85 in 2016). These 34 losses came from the collective maritime zones covering Japan, Korea, North China as well as South China, South East Asia, Indonesia and Philippines.

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