

Kerala on alert as toxic cargo ship sinks in Arabian Sea

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India's southern state of Kerala was on high alert Sunday after a Liberian-flagged vessel carrying hazardous cargo sank off its coast.

The Indian Ministry of Defense said the 184-meter MSC Elsa 3 container ship was en route to Kochi from Vizhinjam on Saturday when it issued a distress call.

All 24 members of the vessel's crew — which included nationals of Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, and the Philippines — were rescued by the Coast Guard and the Navy.

"The vessel went down with



Indian Coast Guard officials rescue crew members of a Liberian-flagged container ship off India's southern coast of Kerala, on Sunday. Supplied

640 containers, including 13 with hazardous cargo and 12 containing calcium carbide," the ministry said.

It did not specify what other hazardous substances were

onboard, but calcium carbide becomes dangerous on contact with water, producing acetylene gas, which is flammable and explosive.

The vessel was also loaded with

more than 84 metric tonnes of diesel and 367 metric tonnes of furnace oil.

Diesel and furnace oil are both classified as marine pollutants. They are toxic to marine life and can contaminate coastal ecosystems.

The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority issued a public warning on Saturday, when the ship started losing containers in the Arabian Sea.

The authority's secretary told reporters that "there is a chance the cargo, including containers and oil, will wash ashore."