

Beat: Sports

Divers enter Indian submarine where 18 sailors remain trapped

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USPA News - Indian divers have entered a submarine that sunk in Mumbai after it was crippled by a fire and two massive explosions on early Wednesday, but none of the eighteen sailors who were on board the vessel have yet been sighted or recovered, defense officials said Thursday. Navy divers were able to pry open the main hatch of the vessel some 12 hours after Wednesday's accident, but they were unable to immediately go inside due to the dark environment and muddy water.

It took until late Wednesday evening before they were finally able to enter the submarine. "The diving efforts are hampered by poor visibility inside [the] submarine (which is filled with water), extremely restricted spaces and displacement of most equipment from their original location," the defense ministry said on Thursday. "The heat of the explosion has melted parts of the internal hull, deforming the submarine hatches and preventing access to compartments." None of the eighteen missing sailors had been sighted or recovered by late Thursday evening, but rescue and recovery efforts were continuing. "Heavy duty pumps are being used to pump out the water from the submarine. There has been [a] large scale ingress of sea water into the submarine due to the explosion," a defense spokesperson said. Speaking on the occasion of the country's 67th Independence Day, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh paid tribute to the eighteen sailors who are feared to have been killed. "We are deeply pained that we lost the submarine INS Sindurakshak in an accident yesterday," he said. "Eighteen brave sailors are feared to have lost their lives." The accident occurred shortly after midnight on Wednesday when a fire broke out on the INS Sindhurakshak, a Russian-made Kilo-class diesel-electric submarine of the Indian Navy. The fire caused some of the weapons on board the vessel to detonate, resulting in two massive explosions which sent huge fireballs into the night sky. Firefighters from the Naval Dockyard and the Mumbai Fire Brigade immediately responded to the scene and were able to extinguish the fire about two hours later. "However, due to as yet unknown damage suffered as a result of the explosion, the submarine has submerged at her berth with only a portion visible above the surface," the defense ministry said on Wednesday. Indian Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Devendra Kumar Joshi had acknowledged on Wednesday evening that the Navy was prepared for the worst case scenario with no survivors, but he noted there is a small possibility that some sailors could still be alive inside an air pocket or by using breathing apparatus.

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