

PRESS RELEASE - Dated: 09th June 2025

By: Directorate General of Shipping, Mumbai

Sub: Underwater Salvage operation of sunken container ship MSC ELSA 3 set to commence today i.e. on 09th June 2025 off Kochi.

Update regarding the progress in Salvage, removal of oil from the vessel and Shore line clean-up operation are as follows;

The response to the sinking of Liberian flagged vessel MSC ELSA 3 incident progressed steadily under the supervision of the Directorate General of Shipping by regular and effective coordination with the Indian Coast Guard and State Authorities for onshore and offshore response. The container ship sank 13 nautical miles off the Kerala coast on 25th May 2025.

Offshore Response:

At sea off Kerala coast, Offshore Support vessels *Nand Saarthi* and *Offshore Warrior* remain deployed (engaged by T&T Salvage, Singapore) and continuously engaged in removal and dispersal of light oil sheen noticed at the surface. Indian Coast Guard Pollution response vessel, ICGS Samudra Praharahi continues to remain deployed near the sunken vessel for monitoring the situation and to deal with any eventuality.

The Emergency Towing Vessel (ETV) *Water Lily* has been conducting a multibeam seabed survey since 5th June at the datum location. The initial phase of the survey has been completed, and data is currently under analysis, with the report expected shortly.

Mobilization of Diving Support Vessel:

Simultaneously, the owners and salvors have mobilized the Diving Support Vessel SEAMEC III for deployment on site. The DSV *SEAMEC III*, set to reach near the sunken vessel and commence underwater salvage and diving operation today i.e on 09th June 2025. Twelve divers have been arranged to carry out air diving operation. Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) and diving equipment, including decompression systems, have been loaded onboard the ship to ensure the vessel is fully operational and ready to undertake diving near the sunken vessel.

At the first stage the divers will identify the openings of fuel oil tanks and carry out capping to prevent any oil seepage from the vessel. As per the plan given by the salvors, the removal of oil from the fuel oil tanks by hot tapping will be done during the second stage which is scheduled to complete by 03rd July 2025 subject to weather conditions.



Diving Gears being set up on the deck of Diving Support Vessel SEAMEC-III



Diving Team is ready onboard DSV SEAMEC-III for underwater salvage operation

Onshore clean-up and removal of containers and debris:

Container salvage efforts by Marine Emergency Response Services (MERC, Gujarat) along the shoreline have seen continued progress. The MSC and the Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Club insurer of the vessel had appointed the firm MERC for removal of containers and other shore line clean-up activities. Till date a total of 51 containers out of 61 washed ashore have been successfully recovered and delivered to port, while the remaining 10 containers are currently under active salvage. These include several challenging and partially submerged containers being addressed by dedicated response teams in coordination with local administration. It is emphasized that none of the 61 contains washed ashore had any hazardous substances.

Shoreline clean-up operations for the plastic nurdles washed ashore along Trivandrum and Kanyakumari coast are progressing steadily in close coordination with the Marine Emergency Response Centre (MERC), local district authorities, and the State Disaster Management

Authorities. The state government has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to ensure the systematic deployment of trained volunteers from NGOs and Civil Defence, starting 8th June. The representatives of P and I club of the vessel and the ship owners had a meeting with the State Government and agreed for settlement of claims in accordance with law.



Container Recovery operations



Air Diving preparations on SEAMAC III

No Oil pollution noticed along the Coast:

While there have been no reports of oil pollution along the shoreline till date, necessary response equipment remains on standby as a precautionary measure.

The Directorate General of Shipping continues to monitor the situation closely through coordination meetings every day and remains committed to ensuring swift, safe, and environmentally responsible operations in collaboration with all stakeholders.

The statutory investigation under the Merchant Shipping Act leading to the identification of the causal factor into the incident is also being undertaken by Mercantile Marine Department, Kochi.

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