

## **SITREP – 12, 1800 hrs on 02/06/2025**

### **Sinking of MSC ELSA 3 (IMO no – 9123221, Flag Liberia) South West of Kochi**

#### **1. Incident Overview:**

Refer to SITREP – 8

#### **2. Response Actions Initiated:**

Refer to SITREP – 6

#### **3. Present Status:**

The ETV *Water Lily* is currently in Kochi, with the installation of multibeam survey equipment in its final stages. Commissioning is expected to be completed, and the vessel made operational by 1800 hrs today. Once deployed, it will initiate a multibeam hydrographic survey of the wreck area in 01 nautical mile radius, supported by three technicians and hydrographers from T&T.

Oil spill response remains active, with Nand Saarthi and Offshore Warrior, continuing prop wash operations. A surface oil sheen approximately 1 km by 70 m has been observed about 10 NM south and 3 NM east of the wreck site. Sampling conducted near Alleppey yielded mostly seawater due to the thinness of the sheen.

SEAMAC III is expected to arrive on-site by 5 June. A single operational ROV is confirmed to be in transit from South Africa, while dive gear is being shipped from Dubai. Commercial and shipping documentation is nearly finalised, and flight arrival details are awaited. The previously considered ROV from Singapore has been deemed unsuitable. Gas cylinders needed for diving operations are scheduled for transport from Mumbai to Kochi with coordination support from DGS. The salvors do not have the details of gas supplier in Mumbai, the same will be coordinated with input provide by DGS, and the technical operators of SEAMAC III. As per the timelines indicated by T&T, the divers, equipment and the gases are all expected to arrive by 07<sup>th</sup> June 2025 and diving expected to commence from 09<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

To facilitate the timelines and arrival of divers, DGS has communicated to the respective Embassies (Iran, Ukraine, Spain, Italy and Germany) and High Commissions (Singapore, Malaysia, Namibia, South Africa, United Kingdom and Philippines) to expedite the VISA issuance process of the diving team.

Onshore, MERC has delivered 27 containers to port, with 4 more en route and 16 undergoing active salvage. MERC is conducting grinding operations under constrained conditions due to weather and limited site access. Portable generators are being used to facilitate cutting operations in challenging environments. The following action is being undertaken by the MERC Team:

At the **Kollam Centre**, salvage operations are ongoing across four coastal sites with a total deployment of 84 personnel. At **Ozhukkuthode**, 19 workers are engaged in the recovery of 2 containers, while **Thirumullavaram** Temple site has 24 personnel working on 3 container recoveries. **Kappil Beach** hosts 15 workers handling 1 container, and **Neendakara** Temple has the highest manpower concentration with 26 personnel working on 2 containers. Additionally, 44 personnel from the Civil Defence team, led by 5 Pollution Control officials, are deployed for coordinated shoreline cleanup.

At the **Trivandrum Centre**, salvage efforts continue at three key locations with a total of 75 personnel deployed. **Veli Beach** is witnessing the recovery of 2 partially damaged containers with 22 personnel. **Thumba Beach** has 25 workers engaged in salvaging 2 containers, while **Varkala Beach** has 22 personnel handling 2 container operations. All teams are actively engaged in overcoming access and safety challenges in their respective locations.

MSC is actively coordinating immigration processes for foreign divers. They are also liaising with the Kochi Port Harbour Master to prioritise tug and equipment clearance. It is also managing real-time coordination between T&T and MERC control centres. The make and model of the onboard VDR are under review, and recovery will commence upon DSV arrival.

Letters have been issued by DGS to High Commissions and embassies to expedite the VISA process.

#### **4. Additional Support:**

On the environmental front, ITOPF continues to conduct shoreline assessments with MERC, but weather shifts could complicate monitoring. Indian Coast Guard vessels Samarth and Samudra Prahari are rotating deployments for spill response and surveillance. Coordination with customs and local administration is ongoing to manage site security and public access.

A team comprising 120 NGO volunteers and 60 MERC personnel are deployed in Kanyakumari by the Tamil Nadu State Authorities.



#### **5. Situation Assessment:**

Several logistical and operational challenges remain. The core dive team comprises personnel from three different groups—including salvage divers, technical operators, and ROV handlers—many of whom have not previously worked together. Since the activities are interconnected, and though only 20 are required immediately, delays in flight arrivals or visa approvals could affect early-stage underwater operations. MSC and DGS are expediting immigration formalities, but the need for synchronized arrival remains critical.

The availability of only one confirmed ROV introduces challenges. DGS has asked T&T to evaluate an alternative ROV unit currently in Chennai as a standby, given the uncertainty of extended deployment timelines. Furthermore, the diving gases, though

ready for dispatch, have yet to be shipped due to pending coordination with the supplier.

Access to some shoreline containers remains a safety and engineering challenge. Local topography and rock barriers hinder the deployment of excavation equipment. Salvors have suggested that state authorities be involved in modifying the terrain<sup>1</sup> if necessary for the removal of containers. DGS has requested to be kept in the loop for any permissions sought.



The cargo manifest and container stowage plan—comprising 643 units—has to be submitted by MSC. This data is essential for dive planning and salvage prioritization.

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<sup>1</sup> some of the containers are beyond the rock barrier which has been constructed for tsunami control wall. Access for heavy duty excavator or any other equipment will require modification of these barriers to create an approach road for the equipment to reach the container site.

Additionally, immediate clarity is needed on which agency will receive and process the collected oil samples, as advised by DGS.

**6. Environmental Risks:**

Refer to SITREP – 6, 1800 hrs on 28/05/2024

**7. Coordination Measures**

Refer to SITREP – 6 for the overall coordination measures being undertaken