

SITREP – 16, 1800 hrs on 07/06/2025

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

1. Incident Overview:

Refer to SITREP – 6

2. Response Actions Initiated:

Refer to SITREP – 6

3. Present Status:

Offshore operations continue with focused deployment of response assets at the wreck site. The tugs *Nand Saarthi* and *Offshore Warrior* remain engaged in oil spill response, having conducted patrols and surface cleaning using dispersants and propeller wash. A surface oil sheen of approximately 2 km × 50 m was observed, located 10 NM south and 3 NM east of the datum point.

The *ETV Water Lily* has returned to the incident location for additional survey and support patrol after disembarking the survey team for data processing in Kochi. Data from the multibeam seabed survey is currently being analysed.

Mobilisation of *SEAMAC III* is in its final stages. All 12 divers, some of which have been arranged through Seagreen, are expected by this evening, with the onboard diving system and portable decompression chamber arriving today. Gases have been received and are being loaded. Two dive supervisors and a salvage master will oversee the operations. The ROV has arrived at Kochi airport and is awaiting customs clearance, while the operators are due to arrive by 08 June. Bunker supplier is under consideration and fuelling is expected to be completed by 08 or 09 June, enabling vessel departure in line with the air diving commencement timeline of 09 June.



Shoreline recovery continues with the delivery of 48 containers to port, and salvage operations ongoing for 13 identified containers at shore. MERC teams are engaged across Kollam, Trivandrum, and Kanyakumari. Among these, three critical containers are being prioritised and expected to reach port within 48 hours.



Partial container fragments are also being cleared. Meanwhile, the barrel recovery operation in Trivandrum has resulted in 21 barrels being safely placed in the Customs bonded area.

Volunteer deployment under the newly issued State SOP is scheduled to begin on 08 June. A total of 250 volunteers from NGOs and Civil Defence have been assigned to three coastal locations—Kovalam, Perumathura, and Veli—complementing the MERC teams already in the field. The nurdle cleanup and temporary storage continue as per the interim protocol, with further disposal measures under discussion with state agencies.

4. Situation Assessment:

The operation is approaching a critical juncture with offshore mobilisation readiness aligning with the 09 June air diving timeline. While mobilisation efforts for SEAMAC III and diving personnel are largely on track, customs clearance for the ROV and associated gear remains pending and must be expedited to avoid last-minute delays. The arrival details of the saturation diving team have still not been received and the concerns were flagged during the meeting.

Weather windows continue to be monitored closely, particularly given the increased sensitivity of air diving operations to offshore conditions. Safety checks and full integration of the diving system and portable chamber are expected to be completed shortly.

There is growing concern over the long-term plan for nurdle disposal. While temporary storage has been implemented, final disposal arrangements have yet to be formalised. An inter-agency meeting involving PCB, Customs, and district officials is scheduled for early next week to address this gap. The unpredictability of nurdle deposition is adding to the urgency of having dedicated disposal and storage infrastructure.

Drone mapping efforts by TNPCB continue to refine hotspot detection, but findings confirm that nurdles are still appearing daily, making it difficult to establish an end point for cleanup activities. The situation in Kanyakumari remains under close observation with over 300 local personnel involved in monitoring and coordination. Meanwhile, minor discrepancies in manifest data—such as under-deck cargo found ashore—are being resolved, with updated inputs shared with local authorities for safety advisory issuance.

Overall, while technical readiness is improving, operational pressure remains high, particularly in light of strict timelines and the logistical complexity of offshore and shoreline coordination. All stakeholders have been directed to adhere without deviation to committed deadlines and ensure that contingency plans remain in place.

5. Environmental Risks:

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

6. Coordination Measures

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