

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Small ships escorted in convoys, 8-day wait for rest

Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), whose navigational channels had been blocked since Saturday by floating and sunk containers from MSC Chitra, were partially opened for traffic on Thursday, with ship convoys escorted by naval helicopters, warships and ships with side-sonar equipment.

MbPT chairman Rahul Asthana said small and medium ships were allowed to use the channel on Thursday, while JNPT chairman N N Kumar added it will take another eight days for the channel to be fully operational. That means bigger ships will have to wait. There are 20 other ships waiting at MbPT and JNPT while the rest have been diverted to other ports. Thursday's exercise, called 'Operation Raasta Saaf' commenced at 8 am and Kumar said it will continue on Friday.

At a press conference at the state guest house Sahyadri on Thursday, Union shipping minister G K Vasan said, "The ports have been partly opened with convoy-based restricted navigation. We will open the ports in a phased manner over the next few days."

Chief of staff of the western naval command, vice-admiral Pradeep Chauhan told TOI, "The Navy is escorting the ships in and out of the harbour. We have told port officials to select ships which have cargo critically important for the city and the overall economy of the country, our side-sonar equipped ships, helicopters and warships will be escorting them." The convoy of merchant ships is being escorted by a helicopter providing aerial coverage of the channel, a minesweeper ship along with two survey boats equipped with side-scan sonars.

Ships escorted out were Zembra and Annapurna Express from JNPT and Yesa Pembe, BBL Spain, HAL Pendant, Calmy Coral, and Nand Hazira from MbPT. The

naval ships escorted Taban 1 and Golden Fareast back from the outershore to JNPT and Fushimi and BBL Austria to MbPT.

The Navy is also carrying out a thorough survey of Mumbai harbour called Operation Pathfinder using its specialized survey ship. The survey data will be shared with other maritime agencies and will aid in clearing the navigational dangers and restoring normal operations in Mumbai harbour.

Vasan informed that 26 containers were retrieved from the seas so far and said the number of containers falling off has reduced, only one falling off on Wednesday night. He added the listing of the ship was now at 50-55 degrees. On Sunday and Monday, Chitra had tilted up to 75 degrees and officials said it would have been a disaster if the ship had listed to 90 degrees. The minister said prima-facie the mishap had occurred due to navigational and communication problems. He said an inquiry by director-general of shipping, S B Agnihotri will be completed in a month.

'Nothing to be alarmed'

Speaking to newsmen after a meeting with chief minister Ashok Chavan, deputy CM Chhagan Bhujbal, petroleum minister Murli Deora, state health minister Suresh Shetty and senior naval and shipping officials, Union minister for shipping G K Vasan said normalcy would be restored at the ports soon. When pointed out that on March 23, a foreign vessel "Golden Purity" had similarly dashed into a Coast Guard ship near Indira Dock, he said that incident was also being probed. He said MbPT had a disaster management plan in place and it was made operational last Saturday. He denied that the state government was informed late about the collision. "The central and state governments are working in full coordination," he stated.

## No fuel shortage as operations resume at port

The country's busiest harbour, the Mumbai port, resumed operations on Thursday, after being forced to close down for five days because of the oil spill off the city coast. The Indian Navy escorted 19 ships in and out of the channel. Mumbaiites now need not worry about the city running out of fuel, which had been a possibility if the ports had not reopened by Sunday.

Two cargo ships collided on Saturday, causing leakage from MSC Chitra's fuel tank as well as spillage of 350 containers into the sea, dangerous for the movement of other vessels in the navigation channel.

"The operations were done on a war-footing to ensure that the channel was functioning partially at least," said Union Shipping Minister G.K. Wasan, who visited the site on Thursday. "A six-ship Navy convoy took 10 ships out of the channel and brought nine ships in." More than 30 ships have been stranded at the two ports.

"We will not face any shortage. We have sufficient crude oil being pumped out at Bombay High. Also, with ports reopening, oil and fertiliser ships will be let in on priority," said Murlu Deora, union minister of petroleum.

The Navy's Western Naval Command conducted the operation. The escort force, consisting of ships and helicopters, surveyed the route guided the naval ships through the navigation channel steering them clear of floating and submerged containers.

While two helicopters provide aerial coverage, a minesweeper ship and two survey boats with side-scan sonar followed by a fast-attack craft are ensuring that the merchant ships safely find their way through the channel, said Captain Manohar Nambiar, spokesperson for the Navy.

The Navy is also carrying out a survey of the harbour using its survey ship. The data gathered will aid in clearing navigational dangers and restoring normal operations.

Investigations underway suggest the collision took place because of communication errors. Wasan said: "Prima-facie, the accident seems to have happened because of errors in communication and navigation. An inquiry is being conducted by the Directorate General Shipping and will be ready in a month." Satish Agnihotri, joint director general of shipping, said the probe would take some time.

Meanwhile, SMIT Salvage, a Netherlands-based firm, is continuing with operations to clear the 350 containers from the channel. A floating crane and two tugs have been employed to tow and pick up containers drifting in the channel. The firm is also pumping out the remaining fuel from MSC Chitra to avoid the possibility of a further spill. Shipping officials said clearing MSC Chitra could take a few months.



## Mumbai port traffic slowly resumes

Even as Union Petroleum Minister Murlidhara Deora said that there was no shortage of petroleum products in the wake of the navigation channel of Mumbai and Jawaharlal Nehru ports being closed after Saturday's collision of two ships, traffic was partially resumed at the Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) on Thursday with Navy minesweepers scanning the channel for submerged containers.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday after meeting Chief Minister Ashok Chavan and other senior state government officials, Union Minister for Shipping G K Vasani said

that measures taken in the aftermath of the collision of MSC Chitra with another cargo ship MV Khalijia had resulted in the restoration of "partial movement of traffic" in the port.

He added that a survey by the Navy on Wednesday had indicated the feasibility of convoy-based navigation, and on Thursday seven ships were moved out while nine were escorted into the port in a convoy. Vasani said the prime concern was now to restore normalcy and especially ensure movement of petroleum and fertilisers in the port.

# THE ASIAN AGE

## Navy escorts ships in, out of harbour in Mumbai

The Indian Navy started escorting merchant vessels through Mumbai's navigational channel on Thursday in order to ensure that ships safely leave the harbour without any mishaps.

"The Indian Navy's Western Naval Command has undertaken 'Operation Pathfinder' to safely escort merchant vessels in and out of the Mumbai harbour," said Captain Manohar Nambiar, chief public relation officer, defence, Mumbai

The Indian Navy is guiding the merchant ships by forming a convoy of these merchant ships. This convoy is being

escorted by a helicopter, which provides an aerial coverage of the channel. Apart from this, a minesweeper ship along with two survey boats with their side scan sonar are ensuring that the navigational channel is clear for the convoy to make headway. A fast-attack craft, INS Matanga, follows this convoy.

Four naval ships, two Chetak helicopters and three specialised survey boats are being pressed into service for this operation.

On Thursday, seven merchant ships were escorted out of the Mumbai harbour and other five were brought into the harbour.

# THE HINDU

## Naval ships escort vessels out of Mumbai port



*(From left) Union Petroleum Minister Murli Deora, Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, and Union Minister of Shipping G.K. Vasan during a press conference on the impact of the oil spill in Mumbai on Thursday. (Right) The slicked shores of Elephanta Island are pictured on the outskirts of Mumbai.*

Mumbai: Movement of goods began along the navigational channel in the Mumbai harbour, which opened partially on Thursday after a five-day shutdown, Union Shipping Minister G. K. Vasan told a press conference here.

“We were able to resume partial movement of traffic in the Mumbai port. The survey done by the Navy on Wednesday revealed the feasibility of convoy-based navigation,” he said.

The survey was necessitated by Panamanian cargo ships — MSC Chitra and m.v. Khalijia-III — colliding off the Mumbai coast, triggering an oil spill, on August 7.

On Thursday, seven vessels — five from the Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) and two from the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) — were escorted out of the harbour and six — three to JNPT and three to MbPT — were escorted in, the Defence Ministry said.

### **Operation Pathfinder**

Termed “Operation Pathfinder,” the

naval escort effort “saw the participation of four ships of the Indian Navy, two Chetak helicopters and three specialised survey boats. The channel, which was rendered dangerous for navigation by the presence of numerous floating and sunken containers, was surveyed continuously for three days prior to undertaking the operation. The escort was successfully completed at 3 p.m. on [Thursday],” a Defence note stated.

With the opening of the channel, fears of an impending fuel crisis dwindled. “We want to assure the government of Maharashtra that there would be no shortage of petroleum products. Sufficient crude is being pumped in from Bombay High,” Petroleum Secretary S. Sundareshan said.

On Thursday, Mr. Vasan reviewed the salvage operations and met Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, and Union Petroleum Minister Murli Deora.

“The falling of containers has been reduced; only one container fell today [ Thursday]. Twenty-six of them were retrieved and secured. The listing of the ship [MSC Chitra] has also been reduced to 50 to 60

degrees. Normality would be restored in the next two days. [The priority is to see] how early we can start the trade,” Mr. Vasani said.

Asked about a letter the State Ports Minister had sent to the Shipping Ministry about shifting the MbPT outside Mumbai, Mr. Vasani said there was no communication gap between the ministries. Rahul Asthana, Chairman, MbPT, said it was agreed that the port would not handle hazardous cargo.

To questions about the reason for the accident and status of the investigation, Satish Agnihotri, Director-General of Shipping, said that prima facie, “communication and navigational problems” led to the disaster. “The inquiry officers have to take depositions, estimate losses, look at data recorder and look at logs on ships.” A preliminary inquiry revealed that both ports were following adequate safety measures.

Mr. Asthana said the salvors of the ships used in salvage operations were “the best in the world.” He said the port had a disaster management plan in place which was put into effect.

As for compensation for environmental damage and claims, State Environment Minister Suresh Shetty said the government

would place its claim before Director-General, Shipping. Insurance officials are slated to meet in Mumbai on Friday. “We will recover the expenses incurred in the cleaning operations,” Mr. Shetty said. The estimate of liability for environmental damage would be drawn after the impact assessment by the National Institute of Oceanography.

With regard to the loss of livelihoods of the fishing community, the State Fisheries Secretary has written to the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.

The MbPT would also be filing an independent claim; however, there was no estimate as yet, Mr. Asthana said. So is the case with the JNPT.

“We will be filing our claims with MSC Chitra for loss of revenue, expenses incurred to restore normality and for asset loss. We are meeting with the insurers tomorrow [Friday]. If at a later stage, m.v. Khalijia-III is found to be responsible for the accident then Chitra may file a suit against Khalijia, but as of now the claims go to Chitra,” N.N. Kumar, Chairman, JNPT, told The Hindu over telephone.

## **Oil spill: Very few takers for fish**

“

Please take these, are the best pomfret and prawns that you can get anywhere, these are very tasty, see the colour, touch it and examine.....just cook this and you would come again tomorrow,” says Babita, a fisherwoman from Vasai taluka, as she repeatedly urges market-goers to purchase fish.

Fisherfolk across fish markets in Mumbai and neighbouring Thane district are facing hard times to convince customers - to pick up fish. The reason: the Mumbai oil spill. Prices of fish have fallen drastically in wholesale and retail markets in different markets alike.

Reports collected from Sassoon Dock, Bhayender, Fort, Thane city and Vasai reveal that the consumption has come down.

“Anyhow during the month of shraavan, the sales come down and now because of the impact of the oil slick, people are not taking fish at all,” Monika, another fisherwoman from south Mumbai says, even as she faces hard time to convince the customers that the

fish that she was selling was caught a week ago and the consignment has come from Goa and Gujarat.

This Sakal Times correspondent visited some of the fish markets in Mumbai to have a first hand assessment of the situation and found that in some of the cases, prices had almost fallen by half. Intake of fish in hotels, restaurants, bars and permit rooms across this commercial capital has come down.

Since fishing is banned along the Maharashtra coast till August 15 - the fish supplies mainly come from Gujarat, Goa and Karnataka.

Officers of the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation have been asked by the Maharashtra government to check samples of fish and find whether they had come in contact with the oil spill.

Meanwhile, Satish Mahajan, the secretary of Mahila Koli Sangharsh Samiti, said that on Thursday they are planning to call on chief minister Ashok Chavan.

He also said that the statements of Chavan and state environment minister Suresh Shetty advising the general public to avoid fish intake - has created problems for them. A handful of big prawns (standard measure - referred to as one wata), which generally may cost between Rs 150 and Rs 200 at the Holi market of Vasai was available for even Rs 70 - but there were no takers. In Sion market, where three watas of shrimps are available at Rs 50 - now it is Rs 20 - but again very few takers. Three pieces of the medium-sized pomfret which was sold at Rs 200, is now is available at Rs 100.

**Daman advises people not to eat sea food**

*Daman:* Administration of the coastal Union Territory of Daman and Diu has advised people not to consume sea food for the next 10 days in view of the oil spill caused by the collision of two cargo ships off Mumbai coast. "It is brought to the public notice that the collision between ships MSC Chitra and M V Khalijia III off the coast of Mumbai on Saturday has led to oil spill near the Mumbai

harbour," Daman district collector M K Shaoo said here on Wednesday. "It is suspected that the oil spill might have contaminated the fish population in the sea," he said. "Therefore, as precautionary measures, the public of Daman are requested not to consume fish for about 10 days as they might be contaminated," Shaoo said.

*PTI*

**Vasan, Deora to be in Mumbai today**

*MUMBAI:* Shipping minister G K Vasan and petroleum and natural gas minister Murli Deora are airdashing to Mumbai on Thursday to review the situation following the mid-sea collision between MV MSC Chitra and MV Khalijia III and subsequent oil spill. The central ministers would meet top officials of the central and Maharashtra government and chalk out a strategy to clean the harbour channel that leads to Mumbai and Nhava-Sheva ports and ensure that petroleum supplies are not affected. Deora and Vasan would also meet chief minister Ashok Chavan.

# THE ECONOMIC TIMES

## Mumbai harbour reopens for traffic after five days

Mumbai harbour reopened for traffic, five days after it was suspended following a collision between two cargo ships that led to an oil spill, with the Indian Navy escorting 12 freighters in and out of the port.

The traffic resumed after the Coast Guard and other agencies involved in salvage efforts cleared the navigational channel of containers that were adrift after falling off Panaminan vessel MSC Chitra, which ran aground as a result of the Saturday crash.

"The Indian Navy commenced escorting a convoy of merchant ships to and out of

Mumbai port from 1000 hours," Defence Spokesman Capt M Nambiar told media.

"Seven ships have been escorted out of the harbour while five are being escorted into the harbour," he said.

The freighters were given aerial assistance in navigating the sea by a helicopter while a minesweeper ship with two survey boats equipped with sonar scanners ensured that the channel was clear for the convoy, he said.

The ships were trailed by the Indian Naval Ship 'Matanga', he said.

## Business Standard

### Mumbai harbour opens for traffic partially

Partial operations have resumed at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) and Mumbai Port Trust, where movement of ships was suspended following a collision between two cargo vessels.

Nearly six ships comprising four from the Mumbai Port and two from Jawaharlal Nehru Port were piloted out of the Mumbai channel by the Indian Navy. Similarly, nine ships waiting to reach these two ports were also escorted by it.

Traffic in the Mumbai channel had come to a halt when two merchant vessels MSC Chitra and MV Khailijia III had collided off the Mumbai coast on Saturday.

Union Shipping Minister G K Vasana, who along with Petroleum Minister Murli Deora held meeting with Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan, told reporters that necessary efforts were being made by the central and state governments and their respective agencies to restore normalcy in the Mumbai channel and at Mumbai Port and Jawaharlal Nehru Port.

Prima facie, Vasana said the collision took place due to communication and navigation gaps. However, more details would be known once the director general of shipping completes inquiry.

# THE HINDU Business Line

## Mumbai port operations resume partially



Spill effect: Oil washed ashore at the Elephanta caves near Mumbai harbour after the oil spill caused by the collision of two cargo vessels.

Mumbai and JN Port terminals, which were shut after the collision of two ships off Mumbai's coast last week, partially resumed operations on Thursday.

“After several surveys and assessment done by various agencies, the port will be partially functioning for navigation with the help of convoy of naval ships and helicopters,” Mr G.K. Vasani, Union Shipping Minister, told reporters here today.

He said the port will gradually be able to restore full operations in few days.

On Thursday, seven vessels sailed off from Mumbai port and nine ships were allowed berths while at JNPT six ships went out and 10 came in to berth. The ports together handle about 40 per cent of India's maritime traffic.

“So far 26 containers have been retrieved,” said Mr Vasani. Following the collision of container ship MSC Chitra and the bulk carrier MV Khalija on August 7, around 325 containers fell off from the ship, which blocked the port's main channel.

The Netherlands-based firm SMIT is doing the salvage operations for recovering the containers.

‘No petro product shortage’

The Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Mr Murli Deora, said that the State would not face shortage of petroleum products following the closure of ports. It was feared that Bharat Petroleum Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation, which import crude through Mumbai port, may run short of crude supplies.

Mr Suresh Shetty, Maharashtra's Minister for Environment, said that loss to the marine environment due to the oil spill can be

gauged only after a detailed Environment Impact Analysis (EIA) is carried out by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB). The money spent by the State Government in cleaning up the oil spill would be recovered from insurance companies, he said.

“For insurances claims, the Directorate General of Shipping would be the nodal agency. From Friday, preliminary talks with insurance companies will commence,” Mr Shetty said.

Eco assessment

The State Government has appointed National Environmental Engineering Research Institute and Goa-based National Institute of Oceanography to assess the environment impact of the accident.

According to Western India Shippers Association, there are around 33,000-35,000 export boxes inside the three terminals at the JN Port awaiting the arrival of vessels for loading.

Nearly 20 vessels bringing around 15,000 TEUs of import boxes for off-loading at the JNP Terminals have reportedly diverted to other ports.



## Mumbai oil spill: Taking stock of the losses

**Mumbai:** After a total shutdown for five days, two of the country's premier ports partially reopened on Thursday morning

The Indian Navy's Western Naval Command undertook 'Op Pathfinder'. The operation was undertaken to safely escort 13 vessels in and out of Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and Mumbai Port Trust.

Operation Pathfinder saw four ships of the Indian Navy, two Chetak helicopters and three specialised Survey boats, help guide vessels out of the ports.

The channel was rendered dangerous for navigation by the presence of numerous floating and sunken containers after two merchant ships MV Khalijia and MSC Chitra collided off the coast of Mumbai on Saturday morning and over 200 containers from MSC Chitra fell into the water. The channel was surveyed continuously for three days prior to undertaking the operation.

When asked about the losses, the Union Minister

for Shipping, G. K. Vasan, evaded the question. "The point is to get the ports fully operational", he said.

The minister may avoid the obvious question, but the losses are for real

JNPT that handles close to 65 percent of container traffic in the country has lost Rs. 2 crore every day, aggregating Rs. 10 crore worth of revenue lost. The Mumbai Port has lost Rs. 3.5 crore per day in losses, adding up to over Rs. 17 crore.

The Federation of Indian Exporters is pegging its losses at Rs. 12.5 crore a day with cargo stuck and deliveries delayed.

In all losses of over Rs. 90 crore which will be stemmed once the waterway becomes fully operational. And that could take another month.

Meanwhile, there is no count of the damage to the environment, the marine life and the many trades that depend on these waters for sustenance



## Mumbai port partially resumes operations on Thursday

India's busiest port, which was shut after a collision of two cargo ships off Mumbai's coast, partially resumed operations on Thursday, a port official told Reuters. "We are plying about 6-8 ships in JNPT and Bombay Port Trust. It is possible only during high tide and day time," said an official who did not wish to be identified because he is not authorised to talk to the media. On Wednesday, Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said normal traffic would be resumed by Sunday.

The collision, which triggered an oil slick, has hit operations at the Mumbai port and the neighbouring Jawaharlal Nehru Port after about 300 containers fell into the shipping channel used by the ports. Only some containers have been secured and work is underway to remove all the containers that fell into the sea, the official said. Port officials will meet later in the day to decide when the port operations can resume fully, he added. (Reporting by Swati Pandey; Editing by Surojit Gupta) (For more news on Reuters India, click <http://in.reuters.com>)



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"The Indian Navy commenced escorting a convoy of merchant ships to and out of Mumbai port from 1000 hours," Defence Spokesman Capt M Nambiar told a news agency.

"Seven ships have been escorted out of the harbour while five are being escorted into the harbour," he said.

The freighters were given aerial assistance in navigating the sea by a helicopter while a minesweeper ship with two survey boats equipped with sonar scanners ensured that the channel was clear for the convoy, he said.

The ships were trailed by the Indian Naval Ship 'Matanga', he said.

Two merchant vessels MSC Chitra and MV Khalijia III had collided off the Mumbai coast on Saturday. The hull of MSC Chitra loaded with 1219 containers was breached leading to the oil slick. Of the 1,219 containers, over 250 were believed to have slipped into the sea.

The huge containers, either floating or sunk, along the navigation route were retrieved to clear the channel as they posed a serious threat to vessels.

As many as 31 containers of the 1219 on MSC Chitra have hazardous chemicals, including organo-phosphorous pesticides, sodium hydrochloride and pyrethroid pesticides.

According to Coast Guard sources, an estimated 400-500 metric tonnes of oil may have spilled from the vessel which was carrying 2,662 metric tonnes of oil.

Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust, Mumbai Port Trust, Coast Guard and foreign experts from SMIT, a Netherlands-based company, are jointly carrying out the salvage operation



## Mumbai ports eager to resume normal operations

The government's prime concern is to restore normalcy at the Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) at the earliest, Shipping Minister G.K. Vasan said Thursday.

'Operations at both the ports have (started) partially and we will be able to restore total operations in a day or two,' he said here.

The minister said there will be no shortage of petroleum or related products over the next few days.

'The accident appears to have happened due to communication errors. The Directorate General of Shipping is carrying out investigations and it will be premature to comment on the reason for the collision,' Vasan said.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan promised complete coordination in the matter.

Five days after two ships collided near Mumbai harbour, skeletal maritime activity was resumed here early Thursday.

'However, the assessment of the ecological loss and the claim of compensation process will take three months,' said Director General of Shipping Satish Agnihotri.

'Seven ships have so far been allowed in and nine out of Mumbai port,' said Rahul Asthana, Chairman of MbPT.

'I cannot say whether we will be able to increase the number of ships. But I can say that criticality of cargo will be given importance. We might allow bigger ships and vessels,' Asthana said.

The ships that were allowed in were escorted by Indian naval ship INS Matanga through the approximately 200-metre-wide

main shipping channel leading to the MbPT and JNPT.

'The tilt of the ship has been reduced to around 60 degrees as against 80 degrees earlier and only one container has fell into the sea today. Twenty-six falling containers have been secured,' Vasan said.

The Indian Navy's INS Yamnua Wednesday launched a survey of the entire shipping channel leading to and from the two main ports to trace out the sunken containers.

All normal maritime activities had come to a halt in Mumbai since Saturday when MSC Chitra and a St. Kitts cargo carrier MV Khalijia-III collided, around five kilometers off Mumbai.

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On Wednesday, Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said normal traffic would be resumed by Sunday. [ID:nSGE6790J5]

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resume fully, he added. (Reporting by Swati Pandey; Editing by Surojit Gupta)



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### **Ships begin moving in Indian port after collision**

The Indian navy on Thursday began moving merchant ships in and out of a major Mumbai port that was closed after two vessels collided and spilled containers, fuel and lubricants into the Arabian Sea, an official said.

The Jawahar Lal Nehru port had been closed since Saturday because nearly 300 containers had been tossed overboard during the collision, posing a navigational hazard.

Using helicopters, minesweepers and sonar equipment, the navy created a safe channel in the sea and escorted seven ships out of the Mumbai harbor and brought in five vessels waiting to be

berthed there, said Capt. Manohar Nambiar, a defense ministry spokesman.

Another five merchant ships were to be escorted out of the harbor later Thursday, Nambiar told The Associated Press.

Mumbai on India's west coast is the country's financial hub.

The containers had fallen off the MSC Chitra, which ran aground and has been listing heavily following the collision. It spilled nearly 500 tons of its fuel and lubricants before the leaks were plugged Monday. The second ship, the MV-Khalijia-II, suffered less damage.

"In view of the relatively rough position of the sea near the site, an attempt to stabilize the ship and pump fuel oil has not been started yet," said a Maharashtra state government statement on Wednesday.

On Wednesday, the salvors SMIT International, Singapore, recovered 15 containers from the sea.

The statement said the ship's owner reported about 200 of the more than 500 containers on board were empty.

The government statement said analysis of water samples so far showed no

contamination from hazardous chemicals like sodium hydroxide or pesticides.

However, oil has been sighted ashore in Mumbai, affecting mangroves in some areas.

Nearly 1,100 pounds (500 kilograms) of fish samples in the area were contaminated with oil. Authorities have stepped up sample testing the quality of the fish catch, the statement said.

The state authorities have banned fishing in the area until Aug. 15.