

## Lawsuits and ramifications of X-Press Pearl foundering start

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With the smoking hull of containership **X-Press Pearl** (IMO 9875343) settling into the sea about 10 miles off the coast of Sri Lanka, the country's Centre for Environmental Justice, which is associated with Friends of the Earth Sri Lanka, has filed suit against the Sri Lankan government and the vessel's operators, according to a Channel News Asia report.

The lawsuit seeks an unspecified amount in damages for environmental damage. X-Press Feeders said that ashore representatives of ITOPF and Oil Spill Response were monitoring updates from the scene and remained on standby to be deployed in case of any reported oil spill. They continued to coordinate with MEPA and the Sri Lankan Navy on an established plan to deal with any possible spill of oil and other pollutants.

Government analysts were scheduled to begin an inspection of the foundered vessel, the aft of which is on the sea bottom at 21 metres of depth, while the bow is gradually settling, weighed down by the tons of water used to fight the flames that eventually engulfed the vessel.

Arrangements were made for a team of officers from the Government Analyst Department and the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) to board the vessel on June 4th, with the assistance of the Sri Lanka Navy, although the operation depended on the weather conditions on scene. Sri Lanka's CID had so far has recorded 13 statements.

A statement was to be recorded from the Director-General of Merchant Shipping on June 4th. A statement would also be recorded from the Chief Officer of Merchant Shipping who was reportedly in charge of containers being transported on vessels.

The CID has also obtained copies of emails that have been exchanged between the captain of the vessel and the local agent in Colombo.

Meanwhile local fishermen have told media that they felt "helpless" as a result of the disaster. They are still banned from plying their trade, and the beaches nearest

the ship are closed off to the public. Containers carrying millions of granules of micro plastics fell overboard and broke open, and these granules have now fetched up on the beaches of the island.

The fishing ban currently runs along a 50-mile stretch of the island nation's west coast.

Charitha Pattiaratchi, a professor of coastal oceanography at the University of Western Australia, said the plastic pellets, that are expected to travel as far as Indonesia and Somalia, could act as a breeding ground for bacteria, putting marine life at risk.

2021-built, Singapore-flagged, 31,629 gt X-Press Pearl is owned by Eos Ro Pte Ltd care of manager Sea Consortium Pte Ltd (X-Press Feeders) of Singapore, ISM manager is Eastaway Ship Management Pte. It is entered with London Club on behalf of Killiney Shipping Pte Ltd.