

Rapid Assessment of the Channel Clearance for Safe Navigation due to Fire-stricken ‘MV X PRESS PEARL’ Colombo Port, Sri Lanka

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The recent accident of the MV X Press Pearl caused a massive threat to the safe operation of the Colombo Port. She was carrying about 1486 containers and due to this incident, many of them and other debris might have fallen into the navigation channel and an urgent hydrographic survey has conducted in early June 2021 to confirm the clearance for safe navigability. A detailed Side Scan Sonar survey was conducted in the area by the Faculty of Geomatics, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka with the collaboration of Sri Lanka Ports Authority in order to confirm the channel clearance. The Side Scan Sonar is an effective tool in rapid hazard investigation of a large area, and from this survey it was successfully confirmed that the critical port operation area is safe for navigation. Several containers and other debris were found lying on the seabed about 4-6km away from the channel where the MV X Press Pearl was grounded. However, further surveys needed to be conducted in a systematic manner in the entire area including the port anchorage for full investigation in order to ensure that the area is clear for the ship anchoring and local fishing activities and to eliminate the future threats due to the current dragged debris.

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