

Chitra container found at Raigad

Rahi Gaikwad

MUMBAI: Amid assurances that all the hazardous cargo on MSC Chitra was "intact" on board, a container with Organophosphorus Pesticide has been found in Raigad, Valsa Nair Singh, Environment secretary told *The Hindu* on Tuesday.

"Of the 31 containers [with hazardous material], only 27 have been found on the ship.

One container with Organophosphorus Pesticide was found in Raigad. The rest have to be accounted for," Ms. Singh said. She pointed to the

likelihood of the containers' contents having leaked into the sea. "Tests on water samples have shown the presence of mild pesticide content," she said.

The Directorate General of Shipping has informed through a press release that nine containers fell off MSC Chitra on Tuesday of which

four were retrieved. Four of the remaining five containers have "sodium hydroxide and one contains solid pesticides."

"While attempting to board the vessel, the [salvage] team noticed the possibility of pesticide containers having fallen into the hold of the ship... with some amount of spillage

- Tests on water samples showed presence of mild pesticide content
- Deck being subjected to thorough check before considering further operations

of the cargo on the ship. As such, the deck and the hold area is being subjected to a thorough check before considering further operations like removal of oil and stabilisation of ship.

"Navy survey boats have identified six sunken containers near the navigational channel and eight containers at different locations which have been marked," the note stated.

Meanwhile, helicopters have located 38 containers, a defence press note said. While The Navy has so far escorted 74 ships in and out of

the Mumbai Port, Chitra's tilt has stabilised at 30 degrees.

Cleaning operations

Ms. Singh said scientific cleaning operations would start by Wednesday. "The ITOPF [The International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation] have given us an action plan [for clean up measures]. We would be mobilising manpower and logistics. Three representatives from East Asia Response Private Limited are here. We have imported low pressure pumps, jet sprays and booms [oil absorbents]," she said.