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**Oil spill contained off Singapore as cleanup continues**

*By Philip Lim*

An oil spill from a tanker damaged in a collision off eastern Singapore has largely been contained by emergency response teams, the vessel's operator said Wednesday.

The leaked crude was "more or less contained" and "won't spread" out of the cleanup zone, a spokeswoman for petroleum shipper AET told AFP as the company issued an update 24 hours after the spill was first reported.

The Malaysian-registered tanker MT Bunga Kelana 3 was carrying nearly 62,000 tonnes of crude when it collided before dawn Tuesday with the MV Waily, a bulk carrier registered in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

About 5,000 tonnes of crude leaked from a gash on the double-hulled tanker's port side, according to Singapore port officials. Double-hulled tankers are designed to limit spillage in case of a rupture.

In a statement Wednesday, AET said "the incident caused significant damage to the vessel's hull and resulted in a spill of Bintulu light crude oil that is now being cleaned up by specialists using a small armada of boats."

"Efforts resumed early this morning, with the addition of more than 100 personnel deployed along the shoreline in case the spill reaches the coast," the Malaysia-based company said.

Singapore ecologists said they were awaiting progress reports on the cleanup after the government alerted waterfront establishments and communities in districts near Changi Airport to be on standby for a possible oil-spill impact.

"If they manage to contain it, then it won't affect wildlife that much," said Louis Ng, executive director of activist group Animal Concerns Research and Education Society.

An AFP reporter who visited the Changi coast on Wednesday saw no signs of emergency crews, and there were no indications that any of the oil had washed ashore.

The strong smell of crude that had lingered in residential areas near the coast overnight was gone as joggers and cyclists enjoyed the fresh morning breeze.

Singapore food-industry officials said 51 offshore aquaculture farms near the spill were loaned canvas skirting to cover their underwater nets and prevent any leaked oil from contaminating their fish.

The collision took place in a busy shipping route along the Singapore and Malacca straits also bordered by Indonesia and Malaysia, but ship traffic was not affected by the incident and cleanup, port officials said.

Singapore is one of the world's busiest ports, with data from the Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) showing the island-nation handled 472 million tonnes of cargo last year, with bulk oil cargo constituting 37.5 percent of the total.

Hours after the collision, an oil slick about four kilometres (2.5 miles) long and one kilometre wide was spotted near the east coast of Singapore.

There were no immediate estimates of the remaining volume on Wednesday.

AET said the remaining oil within the damaged section of the tanker was being pumped into another tank in the vessel prior to an underwater inspection of the hull.