

**Agence France-Presse**

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**Singapore oil spill contained after ship collision**

Public beaches stained by an oil slick from a tanker damaged in a collision off Singapore have been closed ahead of the island's summer school holidays, officials said Thursday.

A chocolate-like film covered a stretch of water along the popular East Coast Park after crude from Tuesday's collision slipped out of a floating cordon at sea.

Officials maintained that most of the spill was still far from the shores of the city-state, which has one of the world's busiest ports and expects 11.5 million to 12.5 million tourists this year, more than double its population.

"The main oil slick is largely contained out at sea," a spokeswoman for the Maritime and Port Authority told AFP.

A National Environment Agency advisory said "the extent of the impact is currently minimal, but will require some clean up over the next few days."

The NEA estimated that some 7.2 kilometres (4.5 miles) of beach and rock bunds along the east coast, as well as a canal, had been affected by the slick after wind and tide conditions made containment at sea difficult.

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

About 2,500 tonnes of crude leaked from a gash on the double-hulled tanker's port side, officials said. Such tankers are designed to limit spillage in case of a rupture.

Emergency crews are using biodegradable dispersants and absorbent material to soak up the oil, while 3.3 kilometres of booms surround the main oil slick in a busy shipping lane straddling Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Signs have been put up to advise the public to stay away from the affected beaches until the cleaning is complete.

The month-long school summer holiday starts on Friday, a public holiday. On long weekends, Singaporeans, expatriates and tourists normally throng the park for swimming, barbecues and other activities.

Singaporean environmentalists were closely monitoring the situation and preparing to take part in the cleanup and animal rescue operations.

"If it more or less hits the sands, it's mainly the invertebrates like the crabs, the sea snails that will likely be affected," said Louis Ng, executive director of activist group Animal Concerns Research and Education Society.

He said his group would visit the affected areas and "if there are any animals, then we will rescue them."

"From yesterday we were told it was contained. I think we will have a look this afternoon and will know better."

The government has loaned canvas skirting to offshore seafood farms near the spill site to cover their underwater nets and prevent any leaked oil from contaminating their fish stocks.

The collision took place in a busy shipping route along the Singapore and Malacca straits but ship traffic was not affected by the incident and clean-up, port officials said.

Singapore is one of the world's leading ports, with data from the port authority showing the island-nation handled 472 million tonnes of cargo last year, with bulk oil cargo constituting 37.5 percent of the total.