

Sri Lanka says oil spill 'contained'

27 August 2012



Tourists and residents enjoy the waters off Mount Lavinia beach on the outskirts of Colombo on Sunday. Sri Lanka's coastguard and volunteers have cleaned up an oil spill from a sunken cargo vessel clearing the way for swimmers and foreign tourists to return to the beaches, officials said.

An oil slick from a sunken cargo vessel has been contained and is no longer a threat to beach resorts popular with foreign tourists, Sri Lankan authorities declared on Sunday.

The rusting ship went down in [bad weather](#) on Thursday night outside a Colombo harbour and had threatened a 50-kilometre (30-mile) stretch of coastline including resorts at Mount Lavinia and Negombo.

The spill—which was about 10 kilometres (six miles) long—had reached the shores of the capital Colombo.

Sri Lankan Coast Guard personnel clean up an oil slick washed up on the beach at the Wellawatte area of Colombo on Saturday.

"We have contained the remaining oil slick and chemicals are being used to get rid of it," Coast Conservation Department chief Anil Premaratne told AFP, cautioning: "We would remain vigilant for a few days more."

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said volunteers, including security personnel, had cleaned up thin layers of furnace oil which washed ashore in several places on Saturday in and around the capital.

"The [environmental damage](#) is much less than what was initially feared," DMC director Sarath Kumara told AFP. "The worst is over and the leaks from the [sunken ship](#) have stopped."

Foreign holiday makers were seen in the sea at Mount Lavinia and Negombo, just outside the capital, on Sunday. Neither resort had been affected.

The 15,000-tonne Thmothrmopolyseara, a Cyprus-flagged carrier, had been outside the Colombo harbour since 2009 following a dispute over its cargo of steel, local officials said.

The vessel had been detained by Sri Lankan courts following litigation over the cargo valued at over \$300 million, according to local media reports.

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