

# Massive damage to mangroves

Vinaya Deshpande

**MUMBAI:** The oil spill from MSC Chitra has caused massive damage to the 25-km mangroves stretch in and around the city, Maharashtra Environment Secretary Valsa Nair Singh said on Friday.

This is the first official assessment of the environmental impact of the oil spill, caused by the collision of MSC Chitra and MV Khalijia-III off Mumbai coast last week. The department will submit further damage assessment report next week.

"The contaminated sites have been noticed in two-three patches," Ms. Nair-Singh told *The Hindu* on phone. "Around 10-12 km coastline between Revas and Mandwa and 5-6 km coastline at Elephanta and Vashi have been found massively damaged," she said.

Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh is set to visit the oil spill-affected area on Saturday along with the Maharashtra State Environment Department officials and researchers for a overview.

## "A conspiracy"

Meanwhile, the Akhil Maharashtra Macchhimar Kruti Samiti has alleged that the ship collision wasn't an accident but a conspiracy. "Water

• **Jairam Ramesh to visit affected area today**

• **Government hiding details, says samiti**

is just 12 metres deep where the ships collided. How did the ships reach there when there is a different channel marked for them?" samiti president Damodar Tandel said at a press conference here.

He said the ships collided near the Colaba-Dandi lighthouse where there were no channels laid out for the passing ships. "Why aren't the police investigating that?" He alleged that the government was purposefully hiding details from people. "Why aren't we yet told what all the ship was carrying? We only know about the harmful substances," he said.

Samiti vice-president Praadeep Tapke said the government should have come out with an elaborate notification about the harmful contents of the ship.

Mr. Tandel said MSC Chitra could have been secured within hours of collision. "But the reason they waited before starting the control operations could be to get complete insurance for the containers as well.