

'This spill is unique, a freak accident'

Vinaya Deshpande

MUMBAI: Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests, said here on Saturday that the oil spill after the collision between MSC Chitra and m.v. Khalijia-III was the worst such disaster in India.

Calling it a "freak accident," he said, "This spill is unique. India hasn't faced anything like this before."

Mr. Ramesh said the spill

was the worst in terms of three aspects: "Location-wise, this has happened in Mumbai, near the harbour and the mangroves. Timing-wise, this has happened during the South-West monsoon. And quantity-wise, nearly 2,000 tonnes of fuel oil has been spilled in the sea."

He said the leakage of fuel oil was more dangerous to the environment than that of crude oil.

"Fuel oil is heavy, whereas

crude oil evaporates," he said, rubbishing allegations of any conspiracy behind the accident.

The exact extent of impact can only be ascertained after detailed reports from the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).