

CLEAN-UP BEGINS ON KERALA BEACH

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Disaster and disaster management

Joint effort: Workers removing contaminated beach sand in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday. Special Arrangement

The Industries Department on Thursday constituted a three-member committee to investigate the leak of furnace oil from pipeline of the Travancore Titanium Products Ltd (TTP) here into the coast.

It has asked the panel to submit its report within 10 days.

The panel comprises A.P.M. Mohammed Haneesh, Principal Secretary, Industries Department; M. Mohammed Ali, managing director, Malabar Cements; and S. Chandrabose, managing director, Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd. (KMML).

Industries Minister E.P. Jayarajan said the leak, which had triggered concerns about environmental damage, warranted a comprehensive probe.

The panel will also submit a set of recommendations for preventing the recurrence of such mishaps.

Protests by residents

Roughly 5,000 litres of furnace oil leaked into the sea following a pipeline rupture on Wednesday morning. The incident had sparked vehement protests by the local people who accused the TTP of negligence.

Over Wednesday and Thursday, the TTP removed approximately 15,000 kg of beach sand from a four-km stretch suspected to have been contaminated by the spillage. The sand is being stored on TTP premises for the time being as directed by the Kerala State Pollution Control Board. The cleaning would continue on Friday, TTP officials said.

Following pressure from local residents, the authorities also initiated steps to close the discharge point of the drain leading from the TTP campus into the seashore.

Damage assessment

The Pollution Control Board will carry out a detailed assessment of the damage caused by the oil leak. The board is also examining whether an assessment of the impact on the livelihood of fisherfolk can be incorporated into the exercise.

Following the leak, the PCB had issued detailed instructions regarding the remedial measures and directed the TTP management not to restart operations without its permission.

The Coast Guard is continuing to monitor the situation to ascertain whether the oil had spread into the deep sea.

A Coast Guard vessel stationed in the area reported that no spillage has been detected far from the shore so far.

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