Environment Minister Mr. Jairam Ramesh’s visit to Mumbai in the aftermath of oil slick

(Media Coverage Report)
VISIT OF UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER Mr. JAIRAM RAMESH TO MUMBAI ON AUGUST 14, 2010

Union Minister for Environment & Forests, Mr. Jairam Ramesh visited Mumbai on August 14, 2010, in the aftermath of the oil slick following collision of ships off the Mumbai harbour. The Minister visited the ravaged sites at the Elephanta Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Monument, and examined the widespread damage caused to marine eco-system and more particularly to mangroves.

He also visited the Bombay Natural History Society at Hornbill House, and called upon their expertise in assessing the environmental impact of the oil spill. He also held a review meeting with all the concerned organizations of the Central and the State Government.

In the evening Mr. Jairam Ramesh addressed a packed press conference organized by PIB, where he spoke about the environmental impact of the oil slick. He also spoke about the proposed Navi Mumbai airport. Maharashtra Environment Minister Mr. Suresh Shetty was also present.

The Minister’s press conference received wide media coverage.

The Mumbai media highlighted –

- Vast damage caused to the ecology of Mumbai and surrounding areas.
- Call for better preparedness to handle oil spill like disasters in future
- Making Mumbai ports capable of handling Tier I oil spill disasters.
- Compensation to fishermen for loss of livelihood.
- Grounds of opposition to the proposed Navi Mumbai airport

The competitive nature of media was on display as several of them twisted the earnest remarks of the Minister to produce sensational copies. Since the Minister was vocal and forthcoming, some media persons even tried to put words in his mouth to extract a story from a different angle.

Alok Mishra, Dy Director, Sridhar Patil, Photographer and K M Nunse, Media Assistant were part of the PIB Team.

Manish Desai
Director (Media), PIB Mumbai
Jairam blasts local agencies as oil slick destroys mangroves
(Viju B, Times of India, Mumbai)

MUMBAI: As the oil slick from the two ships colliding off Mumbai was found to have destroyed more than 300 hectares of mangroves and lapped the Elephanta coast, Union environment minister Jairam Ramesh tore into mishandling by local government agencies. On Saturday, he blamed them for the massive destruction saying it might have been mitigated if these agencies had the right equipment and expertise.

Ramesh confirmed the spill had spread deep into the mangrove area and said that India had never had such a massive oil spill.

The first assessment of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), after studying the impact of the spill, showed that more than 300 hectares of verdant mangrove across a 100km stretch of coastline had been completely destroyed. "It will take at least one year to two years for them to regenerate and we will have to wait for the next seeding season to see whether the mudflats still have the oil slick," BNHS marine scientist Deepak Apte said. He said it was best to leave the mangroves alone with minimum human intervention.

"Measures like bio-remediation (artificial injection of bacteria for accelerating growth) will not succeed here," Apte said.

Ramesh demanded the polluter pay. "The compensation figure can be calculated only after conducting a comprehensive study on the adverse impact on mangroves, marine life and coastal fishing communities," he said.

"The National Environment Engineering and Research Institute (Nagpur) and the National Institute of Oceanography (Goa) will study the impact and submit a report soon," he said. An FIR has been lodged against the owners of the two ships under the Environment Protection Act and the state would press for claims for the cleaning-up operation, damage to the eco-system and loss of livelihood for coastal communities.

TOI on Saturday morning accompanied Ramesh on his survey of the mangrove stretches affected by the massive oil spill off the Elephanta coast and the wreckage site of the two vessels, M S Chitra and Khalijia 3, that collided off Mumbai's coast last Saturday.

Ramesh, however, had a good word for the Coast Guard. He applauded the agency for responding immediately and rushing to the spot to begin rescue and salvage operations and plugging the spill to a great extent. "The National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP) of 2006 gives the Coast Guard the mandate to coordinate with local port authorities and state environmental agencies to assist in cleaning-up operations in case of massive oil spills," Ramesh said.

But that contingency plan also mandated agencies like the port trusts to have tier-1 (basic) facilities and they should have procured basic emergency response equipment like booms (floating barricades to block oil spill), moppers and skimmers, all used commonly in port cities abroad to minimise the impact of oil spills. "But MbPT does not have these facilities and could not assist the Coast Guard, which resulted in the massive oil spill spreading to the shore," he said.
Chastened, a senior MbPT official said on Saturday that an MoU for getting tier-1 facilities would be signed shortly. "We have learnt many hard lessons from this oil spill and will be better prepared for a disaster like this next time," he added.

State environment minister Suresh Shetty, who accompanied Ramesh along with state environment secretary Valsa Nair Singh, said a 25-km stretch of mangroves along a 100-km belt had been completely destroyed. "I have directed district collectors to take help from NGOs and volunteers to clean up the shore. Already 100 volunteers have begun cleaning up the oil slick on the reefs and removing garbage that has piled up over the slick. We are also taking the help of Indian Oil Corporation in removing the slicks. Low-pressure water pumps will be used to clean up the slick on the rocks," he said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Oil spill has created huge mess on beaches

MUMBAI: Environmentalists have expressed concern over the damage the oil spill has done to some of the beaches in Mumbai and neighbouring Raigad.

An alarming level of oil has been found in sand on these beaches following the spill caused by the collision of two merchant vessels off the Mumbai coast on August 7.

The oil washed ashore has seeped into the sand at the beaches in Mumbai and those at Sasvane, Alibag and Uran (all in Raigad), creating a "huge mess", they said. National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), which has collected samples of water and sediments, is analysing them.

"Except in Dadar, we have found oil in the sand in Colaba, Priyadarshani Park, Breach Candy, Alibag and Uran beaches," Rakesh Mathur, Mumbai office in-charge of the Nagpur-based NEERI, said. Deepak Apte, a senior scientist at Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) who has been asked by the Coast Guard to assess the pollution.
MUMBAI: Describing as "significant" the impact of the oil spill caused by collision between two cargo ships off Mumbai coast, environment and forest Jairam Ramesh on Saturday said the Centre is in the process of assessing the extent of ecological damage.

The government is also planning to compensate the fishermen who lost their livelihood due to this mishap, he said.

"We have asked the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) along with the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) to study the impact of the oil spill on mangroves in the Navi Mumbai and Raigad areas. We are expecting a preliminary report within 2-3 weeks and a detailed report in the next 2-3 months," the minister said.

The ministry has also asked the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute to prepare a detailed report on fisheries loss and an action plan will be put in place to compensate the affected fishermen, he said.

So far, almost 100 kilometers of area has been affected by the oil-spill, of which almost 70 kms area is covered by mangroves. BNHS is studying the impact of the oil-spill in these areas and after that they will prepare a detailed report, Ramesh said, adding the Government is also planning to initiate a plan for regeneration of mangroves in the affected areas.

The minister said that it may take more time for Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) and Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) to become fully operational.

The environment minister also said that the damages caused by the oil-spill are quiet tangible.

"There are areas where mangroves are totally washed out, while it has also affected the marine life in those areas," he said, adding fuel oil-spill is more dangerous than crude which vapourises easily.

He said that senior authorities of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) and Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) have decided to launch Tier-I system compliance (a safety management system) with the oil companies in next 7-8-months.

On operations at both JNPT and MbPT, the Minister said "it might take little longer to get them fully operational. So far, there are 83 containers physically accounted out of 250," he said.
Situation grave, says Union Environment Minister

Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh, who took a four-hour ride around the Mumbai Harbour and visited Elephanta Island on Saturday, has commissioned reports to assess the environmental damage caused by last week’s ship collision, and the impact on Mumbai’s fishing communities. Two cargo ships — the MSC Chitra and MV Khalijia-III — collided just off the coast of Mumbai last Saturday, causing the MSC Chitra, which is still lying on its side in the harbour, to spill 879 metric tonnes of oil into the ocean.

Calling it a ‘freak incident, Ramesh said the location of the ship in the middle of the channel, the choppy monsoon sea and the huge quantity of oil involved made things worse.

Terming the situation “grave”, the minister added: “The damage done to the mangrove cover is quite tangible.

There is a substantial impact to the 100-kilometre coastline as well. Crude oil vaporises, but fuel oil is thick and environmentally damaging.”

The studies commissioned include a centrally funded environment impact assessment to be conducted by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute and the National Institute of Oceanography. A preliminary report will be ready in three weeks, the full report, in three months.

The Bombay Natural History Society will conduct a marine ecosystem impact study and the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute in Kochi, Kerala, will conduct a fishermen livelihood impact study to determine the compensation to be awarded to those affected. Indian Oil Corporation and The Energy and Resource Institute will conduct shoreline-cleaning activities through bioremediation, though this will not extend to mangroves.

“The younger mangroves [less than two years old] have been destroyed,” Ramesh said. “But once the oil has been sucked out of the area, the older ones may live through a natural regeneration process.”

“The Coast Guard did a great job,” Ramesh added. “But it would have helped if the Mumbai Port Trust and Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust had had a pollution response system in place.”

For now, Ramesh added, the primary concern is to clear the hundreds of metric tonnes of furnace oil still on the MSC Chitra and remove the 37 containers carrying hazardous chemical and pesticides. The state government has flown in an expert from London to tackle this issue.
Taking a tough posture against the owners of the two cargo ships which had collided off the Mumbai coast resulting in oil slick, Environment and Forest Minister Jairam Ramesh on Saturday said the law demands that the "polluter must pay up". "There is no conspiracy in it. It is a freak accident. But we should see what the law says...the law says that the polluter must pay up," Ramesh said here after visiting the affected coast.

He said government is in the process of assessing the environmental losses due to the August 7 disaster.

"The Ministry and the Central Pollution Control Board are talking to law firms to file a case against these shipping companies," Ramesh said, adding the government is also planning to compensate the fishermen who lost their livelihood due to the mishap.

"We have asked the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) along with the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) to study the impact of the oil spill on the mangroves in Navi Mumbai and Raigad areas. We are expecting a preliminary report within 2-3 weeks and a detailed report in the next 2-3 months," the Minister said.

The Ministry has also asked the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi, to prepare a detailed report on the loss of marine livestock and an action plan will be put in place to compensate the affected fishermen, he said.

So far, almost 100km of area has been impacted by the oil spill, of which almost 70 km area are mangroves.
Environment and Forest Minister Jairam Ramesh on Saturday said the government won't tolerate any violation of the Forest Act by any corporate and will decide future of the Vedanta and Posco projects in Orissa after the probe panels submit their reports. Both Posco and Vedanta have to comply with the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 and the Forest Right Act of 2006, Ramesh said, adding "the government will not tolerate any violation of the Forest Conservation Act or any violation of the conditions," he said.

Both Vedanta Resources' bauxite mining project and Posco's Rs 54,000-crore steel project in Orissa are under the scanner of the Ministry due to alleged violation of the Forest Conservation Act.

"The four-member committee under the chairmanship of N C Saxena will submit a detailed report on Vedanta soon. (Future course of) action will be decided after that," Ramesh said.

In the case of Posco, the committee, which was formed to check alleged violations, will visit the site on August 18, he added. The report is expected in the first week of September.

The minister was in Mumbai on Saturday to assess the impact of the oil slick off the Mumbai coast.

Commenting on the oil spill, he said the country needs to be a part of international conventions such as the International Maritime Organisation's Bunker's Convention so that it could claim higher and quicker compensation for damages in such situations.
Explore new site for second city air port

An expert panel will evaluate a tract of land near Kalyan as a possible site for Mumbai’s second airport, Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said on Saturday. While it is true that the city’s only airport was overloaded, one could not ignore the problems with the Navi Mumbai site being proposed by the state government, he said.

It has been made out that I am against this new site [in Navi Mumba airport, he said in an interview with HT. I cannot ignore the environmental violations.

Three MPs from the Thane and Kalyan belt met him on Friday and suggested an alternative site near Kalyan, Ramesh said.

It is an 1,800-acre tract lying with the defence services. I have passed on all related papers to the Expert Appraisal Committee [under the ministry], which is looking at the issue.

He pointed out three problems with the Navi Mumbai site: An airport would divert two rivers, which could flood Panvel, 400 acres of mangroves would be destroyed as would a hillock.

Also the site was in an CRZ-I area, which is environmentally sensitive and so a nod was not given. It was cleared through a special amendment, when there was a caretaker government, Ramesh said. The sanction came three days before Ramesh took charge of the ministry. The amendment clearly says that it was amended for allowing construction, subject to neutralization of environmental concerns.

Environment approval is not a formality and proposal has to go through the clearances, he said. He pointed out that the Airport Authority had first suggested Revas-Mandwa as a site in 1996.
Ships collision was a ‘freak accident’, says Jairam Ramesh

The state environment department, along with the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB), have sought legal consultation to claim damages from the two shipping companies whose vessels collided, causing an oil spill off the Mumbai coast, Union Environment minister Jairam Ramesh said at a media briefing in the city Saturday.

Terming the whole disaster a “freak accident”, Ramesh said “we have been confronted with a new situation, lessons have to be learnt and a system will be put in place to combat such pollution.”

“In terms of location (off Mumbai coast), timing (during southwest monsoon) and quantity (2,000 tonnes of fuel oil), the country hasn’t ever seen such an oil spill till date,” Ramesh said. Speaking on the Navi Mumbai Airport issue, he said that it could be partially resolved by August 18, as the Environment Appraisal Committee (EAC) will be meeting to discuss the answers from CIDCO on the major environmental issues.

He added that the country will lose out on considerable funds it could have claimed as liability as it is not yet a part of the Bunker convention of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), a specialised agency of the UN which establishes compensation and liability issues. “The Directorate General of Shipping will be co-ordinating to tie up with the IMO for future cases,” Ramesh said.

The minister along with the Maharashtra environment minister Suresh Shetty, inspected the coastline near Elephanta Island and held review meetings with the various agencies.

Ramesh further added that the environment ministry has appointed the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) and the National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) to undertake an environment damage assessment of the oil spill.

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFI) has also been asked to submit a report on the loss of fishermen’s livelihood. “Only after this report will we be able to compensate the fishermen,” he said.

The preliminary assessment report will be available within 10-15 days, while the detailed assessment will be available after three months. Furthermore, the union minister and state minister had consulted experts from London as well as India on the damage control measures to be taken to save the coastline.

“The experts suggest that minimal human interference should be made in the regeneration of the marine ecology. There is no other option than to let them regenerate naturally. Regarding beaches, the state government has deputed a team of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) to conduct bio-remedial operations on the stretches of beach affected by the oil spill,” Ramesh said.

The minister further expressed concern over the extent of damage caused due to 2000 tonnes of furnace oil in the sea. “Fuel oil is more dangerous than crude oil as it does not vapourise. The impact on marine life like pohmphrets, crabs, sardines, lobsters is huge,” he said. He further trashed allegations of conspiracy in the oil spill.

“It was a freak accident and no conspiracy was involved. We do not know how much damage has been caused by the oil spill in the environment around the Navi Mumbai airport site, but there is no conspiracy,” he reiterated.

When questioned about the 31 containers with hazardous chemicals, the minister said, “Around 250 containers fell off the ship during the collision. About 83 have been physically located and accounted for. However, 160 containers are not yet located.
There were also 7 containers of pesticide and one container was spotted along the coast. The remaining 6 are still on the ship and will be removed during salvage operations. Normal port operations will be restored after the Chief Hydrographer gives the go-ahead after one week.

The minister further added that the MpBT and JNPT will both be tier 1 compliant within eight months. “We have started the process and are hoping that all major ports, especially those handling petroleum products will become tier 1 compliant,” Ramesh said.

According to him, within a year, an online system will be put in place which will have a detailed background of the 15,000 ships entering Indian ports. “This way, we will have an idea about the age of the ships. Random checks will be made on ships less than 25 years old and systematic checks will be made on ships older than 25 years,” he said.

Jairam Ramesh says oil spill is the worst India has seen

Union minister for environment and forests Jairam Ramesh today said the oil spill off the Mumbai coast was the worst the country has ever seen.

He also said that the damage was quite tangible.

The Union minister for environment and forests said a detailed assessment would be carried out in 2-3 days and a detailed review would follow.

The minister visited the site of the oil spill off Mumbai coast today to take stock of the ongoing salvage operations, a week after the ship collision.

Accompanied by Maharashtra environment minister Suresh Shetty, Ramesh expressed his concern over the extensive damage to the environment and the coastal areas of Mumbai, Raigad and Thane districts. The minister said that the mangroves along the coast have been damaged extensively due to the spill and only some of them will be able to regenerate.

In the meantime, several workers of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) along with the Coast Guard workers undertook clean-up operations at the site of the oil spill Saturday morning.

The oil spilled from the sunken containers that fell from the Panamanian cargo carrier, MSC Chitra after its collision with a St. Kitts-flagged vessel, MV Khalijia-III, just outside the Mumbai harbour last Saturday.
Navi Mumbai airport will cause environmental damage: Jairam Ramesh

Environment minister Jairam Ramesh today disfavoured the proposed Navi Mumbai Airport saying it would have serious environmental implications and suggested an alternative site for the second airport in Mumbai.

He said that the proposed airport construction in Navi Mumbai will have serious environmental implications and the flooding of Panvel could be one among them.

"Mumbai needs a second airport. But where that airport should be located is a matter that has to be decided coolly, dispassionately, taking into account all environmental matters," Ramesh told reporters in Mumbai while explaining the steps taken by the ministry on the environmental damages caused by the oil spill off the Mumbai coast.

Strongly refuting the charge that he was stalling the development of the city, the minister said environmental approval is not a mere formality.

"I have no problem with Navi Mumbai. I am not to stall any development. But we cannot ignore environmental issues. Environmental clearance is not a formality. It has to be gone through (sic)," Ramesh said.

Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) 1991 did not allow the building of an airport in Navi Mumbai. Though it was amended in 2009, it was not to build an airport in Navi Mumbai, he said.

"Please note that CRZ ’91 was amended to make constructing an airport in Navi Mumbai a permissible activity subject to neutralisation measures being undertaken," Ramesh said.

Ramesh said that three MPs from Thane district had met him on August 13 with an application to move the new airport to Kalyan.

"The MPs told me that 1,800 acres of land, available near Kalyan which is now in the possession of the defence establishment, can be used for the second airport instead of Navi Mumbai. I have passed all those papers to the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) for Infrastructure," he said.

The minister said there are three major environmental issues regarding the proposed Navi Mumbai Airport site, with diversion of two rivers being the most serious issue.

"Diversion of the rivers is the most serious issue. We all know what happened to Mithi. In case of a flooding or monsoon, what will happen to Panvel town...?" he said. The loss of 400 acres of mangroves and the blasting of a hill 80metre above sea level are the two other serious issues, Ramesh said.

Recently, IIT-Mumbai had done a study on the environmental implications of the construction of the new airport and submitted their findings to EAC. On the basis of that study, EAC sought clarifications from CIDCO, the developing agency.

"CIDO representatives are asked to clarify the issues raised by EAC on August 18 meeting. If these issues can be resolved, then I will examine the recommendations of EAC," Ramesh said.

To a query, Ramesh said the Expert Committee of Airport Authority of India (AAI) had found Rewas-Mandwa as the best site for a second airport in 1996. But later in 2000, following a recommendation from Maharashtra government, AAI selected Navi Mumbai for the second airport.

"I have no problem with that. But I cannot give environmental clearance with good conscience until and unless all the major concerns are resolved. I conveyed these factors to the civil aviation minister (Praful Patel) and the chief minister. They are also concerned," Ramesh said.
New airport impasse may end on Aug 18

The city may inch closer to a nod for the second airport at Navi Mumbai on August 18 when the Environment Appraisal Committee (EAC), formed to look into the green issues dogging the project, meets to discuss the answers sought from City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra Ltd (CIDCO).

The committee will review three major issues raised in an assessment report submitted by IIT Bombay on June 20, said the Union minister of environment and forest Jairam Ramesh at a press conference on Saturday.

“I am not stalling the development of the city. I need resolution on three major environmental problems that could arise due to the airport project. The most serious is the diversion of two rivers, followed by the loss of 400 acres of mangrove cover, and blasting of island up to 80 meters above sea level. On a scale of one to 10, I will give 10 to the diversion of rivers — Gadhi and Ulwe. Villages in the area will be submerged if waters of both rivers are diverted. EAC had sought answers to these issues from CIDCO a month back, and we are yet to receive answers,” he said.

The Union minister also met three members of parliament — Suresh Tawre from Bhiwandi, Anand Parmar from Kalyan and Baliram Jadhav from Palghar — who proposed Kalyan as the ideal location for the airport. “I have forwarded their proposal to the EAC. We will approve the project if all environment concerns are clarified,” he added.
A week after the Mumbai oil spill, Union Environment and Forests Minister Jairam Ramesh who undertook an aerial survey of the area on Saturday called the collision of two cargo ships off Mumbai harbour a freak accident, which he said had substantially affected about 100 kilometres of the coastline, including a 70-km mangrove stretch.

He also said that 167 containers of the 250 that had fallen off MSC Chitra, one of the two ships, were yet to be located.

“There has been a substantial impact on 100 kilometres of the coast, of which a 70-kilometre stretch is of mangroves. The damage will be assessed by agencies. The only way to deal with oil on mangroves is to allow natural regeneration,” he said.

Younger mangroves, one to two years old, had been destroyed while the older ones could regenerate naturally by the beginning of next year, he said.

“We got an expert from London who suggested we allow the natural systems to regenerate. There is nothing we should be doing at the moment. Mangroves 1-2 years old are completely washed out. They are history. Beginning of the next year, after we have sucked out all the oil, we can hope for regeneration,” said Ramesh.

Along with the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) and National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has been asked to assess the impact on the marine eco system and suggest remedial measures.

Younger mangroves, one to two years old, had been destroyed while the older ones could regenerate naturally by the beginning of next year, he said.

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Mangroves 1-2 years old are completely washed out. They are history. Beginning of the next year, after we have sucked out all the oil, we can hope for regeneration,” said Ramesh.

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The Tier-1 oil-spill response system in 8 months’

Referring to the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOSDCP) for setting up an Oil Spill Response facilities at Mumbai port, which has not materialised since 1996, Jairam Ramesh said it would be expedited. “We need to equip our ports with Tier-I pollution response system (it can handle oil spills upto 700 tonnes). The Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) and the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust JNPT will have Tier-I system in eight months,” he said. All stakeholders are on board and an MOU will be signed in a week. “There is no doubt major ports handling fuel cargo must be equipped. We must be in a state of preparedness.”

The NOSDCP involves the Coast Guard, MbPT, JNPT, oil companies BPCL, HPCL, IOCL, ONGC, Aegis Logistics Ltd, Tata Power Co. Ltd, and Chemical Terminal Trombay Ltd. The project cost estimated in 1996 was Rs 11.26 crore with a recurring annual cost of Rs 2.5 crore.
Navi Mumbai airport faces Ramesh hurdle

Mumbai, Aug. 14: The Union environment minister, Mr Jairam Ramesh, on Saturday put a dampener on the proposed second airport for the city in Navi Mumbai, claiming that the changes required for constructing the airport could have serious environmental repercussions.

The minister, while emphasising the need for a second airport in Mumbai, made it clear that the airport wouldn’t get the Centre’s nod, unless environment issues were resolved.

“I have been singled out as if I were stalling the development of Mumbai. But that is wrong… I have no problem with the site, but I cannot in good conscience ignore the environment factors,” Mr Ramesh.

According to the minister, there are three major issues with the present site, of which the diversion of two rivers was the most serious one. “I would rate the problem ten out of a scale of ten. We have seen the dangers of Mithi river overflowing. In case of flooding, what will happen to Panvel?” Mr Ramesh said.

The second and third issues are the loss of 400 acres of mangroves needed for constructing the airport and the blasting of a 80 metre-hill.

“Though some say that the mangroves are of poor quality and the hill is not an issue, these problems still need to be dealt with,” Mr Ramesh said.

The minister said the Coastal Regulation Zone rule of 1991 (CRZ 91) does not allow construction of an airport in Navi Mumbai. However, in accordance with the 2001 amendment of CRZ 91, development activity is permissible subject to neutralisation measures been undertaken, Mr Ramesh said.

Jairam Ramesh visits oil spill site

A week after the ship collision, the Union minister for environment and forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh, on Saturday visited the site of the oil spill off Mumbai coast to take stock of the ongoing salvage operations.

Accompanied by Maharashtra environment minister, Mr Suresh Shetty, Mr Ramesh expressed his concern over the extensive damage to the environment and the coastal areas of Mumbai, Raigad and Thane districts.

Mr Ramesh is to hold a review meeting on the Mumbai oil slick and address mediapersons later.

The minister said that the mangroves along the coast have been damaged extensively due to the spill and only some of them will be able to regenerate. Mr Shetty said that other mangroves in the 25 km stretch will be replanted after they receive the damage assessment report next week.
Jairam Ramesh grounds Navi Mumbai Airport plan

MUMBAI Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh today virtually ruled out the proposed Navi Mumbai Airport saying it would have serious environmental implications and suggested an alternative site for the second airport in Mumbai. He said the proposed airport construction in Navi Mumbai will have serious environmental implications and flooding of Panvel town could be one among them.

"Mumbai needs a second airport. But where that airport should be located is a matter that has to be decided coolly, dispassionately, taking into account all environmental matters," Ramesh told reporters here while explaining the steps taken by the ministry on the environmental damages caused by the oil spill off the Mumbai Coast.

Strongly refuting the charge that he was stalling the development of the city, the Minister said environmental approval is not a mere formality. "I have no problem with Navi Mumbai. I am not to stall any development. But we cannot ignore environmental issues. Environmental clearance is not a formality.

It has to be gone through (sic)," Ramesh said. Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) 1991 did not allow building of an airport in Navi Mumbai. Though it was amended in 2009, it was not to build an airport in Navi Mumbai, he said.

"Please note that CRZ '91 was amended to make constructing an airport in Navi Mumbai a permissible activity subject to neutralisation measures being undertaken," Ramesh said.

Ramesh said three MPs from nearby Thane District had met him on August 13 with an application to move the new airport to Kalyan. "The MPs told me that 1,800 acres of land, available near Kalyan which is now in the possession of the defence establishment, can be used for the second airport instead of Navi Mumbai. I have passed all those papers to the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) for Infrastructure," he said.

The Minister said there are three major environmental issues regarding the proposed Navi Mumbai Airport site, with diversion of two rivers being the most serious issue. "Diversion of the rivers is the most serious issue. We all know what happened to Mithi. In case of a flooding or monsoon, what will happen to Panvel town..?" he said. The loss of 400 acres of mangroves and the blasting of a hill 80 metres above sea level are the two other serious issues, Ramesh said.

Recently, IIT-Mumbai had done a study on environmental implications of the construction of the new airport and submitted their findings to EAC. On the basis of that study, EAC sought clarifications from CIDCO, the developing agency. CIDCO representatives are asked to clarify the issues raised by EAC on August 18 meeting. If these issues can be resolved, then I will examine the recommendations of EAC," Ramesh said.

To a query, Ramesh said the Expert Committee of Airport Authority of India (AAI) had found Rewas-Mandwa as the best site for a second airport in 1996. But later in 2000, following a recommendation from Maharashtra government, AAI selected Navi Mumbai for the second airport.

"I have no problem with that. But I cannot give environmental clearance with a good conscience until and unless all the major concerns are resolved. I conveyed these factors to the Civil Aviation Minister (Praful Patel) and the Chief Minister. They are also concerned," Ramesh said.
MUMBAI TERMING the collision between two ships off Mumbai as a freak accident, Union Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh said Saturday that India has never seen an oil spill like the one resulting from the incident. Ramesh inspected the coastline near Elephanta Island along with Maharashtra Environment Minister Suresh Shetty on Saturday morning followed by a review meeting with the various agencies concerned.

"In terms of location (off Mumbai harbour), timing (during southwest monsoon) and quantity (2,000 tonnes of fuel oil), India has not seen such an oil spill till date," Ramesh said. "It is a freak accident. This is a unique spill and we have been confronted with a new situation," Ramesh added.

Ramesh mentioned that there are lessons to be learnt and a system will soon be put in place to combat such a pollution. Ramesh also said that another lesson India needs to learn from the oil spill is the need to be a member of the international conventions. "We need to be a part of the Bunker convention of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) which will enable India to have more funds in terms of claims," he said. "The Directorate General of Shipping will be co-ordinating the matter," he added.

Ramesh said that there were 250-odd containers which fell off MSC Chitra ship as it collided with another vessel last Saturday. "Of the 250 containers, 83 have been physically located," Ramesh said. Normal operations at ports will be restored only after the hazard posed by surfacing of containers on the channel is checked, he added.

Commenting on the environmental damage, Ramesh said that it is massive. "There is undoubtedly a substantial impact on the 100 km coastline, 70 km of which are mangroves. However, the degree of the damage will be known only after an assessment report," he said. While the preliminary assessment report will be available in a few days, the detailed assessment report will be available only after three months.

"Experts suggest minimal human interference in the regeneration of the mangroves. There is no other option than to let them regenerate naturally," Ramesh said when asked about the damage-control measures that can be taken to save the mangroves.

"The Maharashtra Government has deputed a team of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) to carry on bio-remedial operations on the beaches affected by the oil spill," Ramesh said.

Ramesh also expressed his concern over the impact on marine life like pomphrets, crabs, lobsters and other marine fauna due to the oil spill.

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFI) has been asked to assess to the loss to fishermen and the marine life, after which steps will be initiated on compensating fishermen.

Shetty said that the environment damage assessment undertaken by the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) and the National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) will be funded by the Union Environment Ministry.
Cannot put airport before environment, says Jairam Ramesh

Union Minister declares that all matters should be considered and clearance for proposed Navi Mumbai project will not be a formality

The who’s who of state politics are insisting on another airport at Navi Mumbai, but the possibility of it coming up on the proposed site has become distant, if one goes by the view of the Central Environment Ministry.

In a rude shock to all those keen on the airport, Union Minister of State for Environment & Forests, Jairam Ramesh made it clear on Saturday, that the environmental clearance for it will not be a mere formality. He was on a day-long visit to assess the damage to mangroves and marine life in and around Mumbai due to the collision between two ships - MSC Chitra and MV Khalijia III last week - and subsequent oil spill.

He said that the CIDCO officials were yet to submit their clarifications on some of the environmental issues raised by an experts panel on the airport. CIDCO, a state government undertaking working as the nodal agency for the proposed airport, has been asked to submit its detailed plan on the mangroves, diversion of rivers and other issues by the experts committee in the Union Environment Ministry. The next meeting of the panel is on August 18.

Three important issues need to be resolved, said Ramesh. These are - diversion of the natural course of two rivers Ulwe and Gadhi, cutting and levelling of two hills and destruction of mangroves on 161 hectares.

"Mumbai needs a second airport. But where that airport should be located has to be decided coolly, dispassionately, taking into account all environmental matters," Ramesh said.
Ramesh admits to proposal to shift airport

On a visit to the city on Saturday, Union Minister for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh admitted to having received a proposal to shift the new airport from Navi Mumbai to Ambernath.

Yes, politicians from Thane district did approach me for considering the plan to shift the airport from Navi Mumbai to Ambernath. I have forwarded their proposal to concerned authorities," said Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister for Environment and Forests on a trip to Mumbai on Saturday. Ramesh's statement is a confirmation of the report carried by MiDDAY on July 24 titled, 'Airport at Ambernath?'

MiDDAY had earlier reported that politicians from Thane district and builders were campaigning for the airport to be shifted to Ambernath. However, Praful Patel, Civil Aviation Minister had denied the news as rumours.

Subsequent media reports revealed that the Prime Minister himself was concerned about the delay in the upcoming airport.

On Saturday, while addressing the media, Ramesh expressed his reservations for the Navi Mumbai project, and said, "There are three main environmental issues, of which I give prime importance to the diversion of the two important rivers. If these rivers are diverted, Panvel city will be under water, and 400 acres of mangroves will be left damaged. A third of the 80-metre hillock will have to be cut down. These are all important issues."

Ramesh said he had also visited Mumbai's coast to survey the scene of the recent oil spill. "We will be granting compensation to fishermen for damages borne," said Ramesh. He lamented that not much can be done about mangroves being affected by the oil spill.
Reading about the spill is one thing, but seeing it is different, says Jairam

MUMBAI: As the boat approaches Elephanta Island near Mumbai, the blackened coastline is visible despite the haze. The huge rocks along the jetty glisten with oil, pesticide bottles and debris as volunteers from the Civil Defence try and do a clean-up, wearing masks and bright yellow gloves.

On a rainy Saturday morning, Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh had a glimpse of what the oil spill has done to the sea and the coast around Mumbai. Mr. Ramesh — who was accompanied by the Coast Guard, State Environment Minister Suresh Shetty and senior officials — said it was one thing to read about an oil spill, but seeing it was different.

He made a stopover at Elephanta Island where the sand, water and shrivelled mangroves bear witness to the environmental disaster.

Vivek Dharne, a student from Uran, has been here for the last five days along with 60 others to clean up the spill. “The stench of the oil is so strong that even if we wear masks, we have to stop every one or two hours, since breathing becomes difficult,” he said.

The spill has left a trail of debris along the coast, with pesticide bottles, tea bags and giant rolls of paper finding their way to the shore. The debris collected in huge sacks from Elephanta by workers and members of the Civil Defence will be incinerated at Taloja, Mr. Shetty said.

Mr. Ramesh had discussions with Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) director Asad Rahmani and assistant director Deepak Apte, who also accompanied him.

Dr. Rahmani advised the Minister that the best method for a clean-up would be to permit the natural process of regeneration of the mangroves and allow the tidal movement
to flush out the oil. The blackened stumps of mangroves, covered with oil at the base and green on top with oil pools, border Elephanta Island, famed for its tourism and ancient cave sculptures.

The beaches affected will be cleaned up using bioremediation and the Indian Oil Company will provide technical expertise, but the mangroves, especially in Navi Mumbai, will be left to recover with nature's resilience.

While the Coast Guard did a competent job in handling the emergency, the capacity of the Mumbai Port Trust has come in for question. It took six days for technical experts to be called in for an assessment.

Mr. Ramesh has asked the BNHS to prepare a rapid environment assessment of the oil spill within three months.

THE HINDU

Navi Mumbai Airport: Jairam seeks second opinion

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh on Saturday directed the Bombay Natural History Society (BHNS) to give its opinion on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report of the proposed Navi Mumbai International Airport currently mired in controversy.

Environmentalists have been protesting the site selection as the area has 161.5 hectares (ha.) of virgin mangroves, 340 ha. of coastal marshy land and the project involves the diversion of the Gadhi and Ulve rivers. It also includes the levelling of a 90 metre-high hillock. Talking to The Hindu, Mr. Ramesh said that the BNHS would have a month's time to assess the EIA report and focus on three things — the vulnerability of the mangroves, the impact of the diversion of the two rivers downstream of Panvel city and the blasting of a hillock to make way for the project.
Later, at a press conference, he said that the diversion of the two rivers would be a very serious factor. He admitted that Mumbai needed a second airport urgently but “we need to coolly and dispassionately take all environmental factors into account.” He added that the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) amendment in 2009 was not to build an airport in Navi Mumbai but to make its construction a permissible activity subject to neutralisation measures being undertaken.

The EIA for the Navi Mumbai airport was prepared by the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay and submitted in June. However, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has called for a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) of the airport before its environment clearance application can be considered. The airport has been the bone of contention between Union Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel and Mr. Ramesh.

The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) which met last month decided that the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) of Maharashtra must submit an SIA as required under the National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy 2007. Meanwhile, three MPs from Maharashtra have submitted a request to Mr. Ramesh to consider an alternative site for the international airport at Kalyan, where he said 1,800 acres of defence land was available. He has passed on all the papers to the EAC.

The next EAC meeting will be held on August 18. “I have asked the premier ecological research institute in the country to give me their advice on these issues related to the airport,” Mr. Ramesh said, adding that he needed an independent analysis before taking any final decision on clearing the airport construction.

According to the minutes of the EAC meeting, the committee also asked for a copy of the report prepared by the Civil Aviation Ministry’s technical committee which had recommended the Navi Mumbai site. It wanted to know the details of any alternative sites that were considered, especially if they were outside the CRZ, and the reasons for which they were rejected in favour of the Navi Mumbai site. It demanded detailed and updated maps based on the latest satellite imagery, rather than those maps submitted based on 1990 images.

Jairam Ramesh visits oil spill site

A week after the ship collision, the Union minister for environment and forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh, on Saturday visited the site of the oil spill off Mumbai coast to take stock of the ongoing salvage operations.

Accompanied by Maharashtra environment minister, Mr Suresh Shetty, Mr Ramesh expressed his concern over the extensive damage to the environment and the coastal areas of Mumbai, Raigad and Thane districts.

Mr Ramesh is to hold a review meeting on the Mumbai oil slick and address mediapersons later.

The minister said that the mangroves along the coast have been damaged extensively due to the spill and only some of them will be able to regenerate. Mr Shetty said that other mangroves in the 25 km stretch will be replanted after they receive the damage assessment report next week.
MUMBAI: Rattled by the damage to the marine ecosystem and coastal areas of Mumbai, Thane and Raigad, following the oil spill in Arabian Sea, Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh on Saturday said that there has been “undoubtedly substantial impact” to mangroves along the 100-km-long coastline.

“He said that the mangroves in Elephanta Island, Vashi and Revas-Mandva have suffered damage. He said that the

National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) and National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) is conducting an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA). “A preliminary report is expected in about four weeks, while a detailed report would be submitted in three months,” he said, adding that the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) is also preparing a report on the marine ecosystem and remedial measures would be suggested.

He said that of the 100-km-coastline, where the oil spill occurred, nearly 70-km stretch had mangroves. “Mangroves, which were around two years old, were washed out. The older ones have survived,” Ramesh said. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) would carry out an assessment for working out compensation to the fishermen, he added.

“From the visual survey it appears that the damage to mangroves is quite tangible. However, to what degree would be known only after reports of studies become available,” Ramesh, who was accompanied by his Maharashtra counterpart Suresh Shetty, told media after a visit to the Elephanta Island following a review meeting at the Sayhadri Guest House at Malabar Hill here.

He specifically said that the mangroves in Elephanta Island, Vashi and Revas-Mandva have suffered damage. He said that the
NEW DELHI: Describing the ship collision off the coast of Mumbai as a “freak accident”, environment minister Jairam Ramesh said that India has never seen an oil spill like the one resulting from the incident.

Stating that there are lessons to be learnt, he said that a system will soon be put in place to combat such a pollution. The minister said, “We need to be a part of the Bunker convention of the International Maritime Organisation which will enable India to have more funds in terms of claims.” There was a substantial impact on the 100 km coastline. The preliminary assessment report will be available in a few days, a detailed assessment report will be available only in three months time.

“Experts suggest minimal human interference in the regeneration of the mangroves. There is no other option than to let them regeneratenaturally,” Mr Ramesh said.

The Maharashtra government has deputed a team of Indian Oil Corporation to carry on bio-remedial operations on the beaches affected by the oil spill. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute has been asked to assess to the loss to fishermen and the marine life, after which steps will be initiated on compensating fishermen.

Union environment ministry will fund the environment damage assessment undertaken by the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) and the National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI). On Saturday, Mr Ramesh inspected the coastline near Elephanta Island, along with Maharashtra environment minister Suresh Shetty.
Ports will soon get systems to combat oil spills

The Mumbai and JN Ports would soon be equipped with Tier-I pollution response system to combat oil spills.

The decision to set up the system was taken following the collision of two ships at Mumbai harbour last week, causing an oil spill along the Mumbai coast.

Addressing a press conference here today after assessing environmental damage caused by the oil spill, the Union Minister for Environment and Forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh, said the system will be capable of responding to oil spills up to 700 tonnes.

Mr Ramesh also said that another lesson India needs to learn from the oil spill is the need to be a member of international conventions. “We need to be a part of the Bunker Convention of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), which will enable India to have more funds in terms of claims,” he told presspersons. “The Directorate-General of Shipping will co-ordinate the matter,” he added.

‘Freak accident’

Terming the collision between two ships off Mumbai as a freak accident, he said India has never seen an oil spill as the one resulting from the incident.

“The oil spill occurred in the Mumbai harbour during the monsoon season and involved 2,000 tonnes of fuel oil, which is more dangerous than the crude oil in terms of damage to the environment,” he added.

On the environmental damage, Mr Ramesh said there has been a substantial impact on the 100-km coastline, of which mangroves stretch for 70 km.

“The degree of the damage will be known only after an assessment report. While the preliminary assessment report will be available in a few days, the detailed assessment report will be available only after three months,” he said.
'Nod for Navi Mumbai airport only after eco clearances'

Jairam Ramesh said on Saturday the proposed site for the international airport in Navi Mumbai suffers from three major environment problems — diversion of two rivers, survival of mangroves spread over 400 acres and blasting of a hill.

He accepted Mumbai needs a second airport, but made it clear that the decision needs to be considering all environment factors. He would take a call on clearing the present project in Navi Mumbai only after the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) submits its report. Incidentally, EAC is meeting on August 18 to discuss certain clarifications that have been sought on the relevant issues from state-run City and Industrial Development Corporation (Cidco).

Ramesh’s observation is crucial, especially when Union Minister for Civil Aviation Praful Patel made it clear that an alternate site would not be possible for the second airport. Ramesh recalled that the Airports Authority of India had in 1996 selected a site at Revas Mandva in Raigad district. However, after the state government’s advice that Navi Mumbai would be a better site, the option was dropped.

In addition, a group of MPs from the state have sought the Prime Minister’s intervention to ensure an early clearance for the Navi Mumbai airport. Ramesh said three MPs from Thane district met him two days ago and suggested that the new airport should be developed in Kalyan on 1,800 acres, which is currently in the possession of the defence ministry. Ramesh said he has forwarded the recommendation to the EAC.

“What will happen to Panvel in the wake of flooding of the two rivers? We know what happened to the Mithi river (after the devastating rains of July 26, 2005 in Mumbai). Mangroves are spread over 400 acres and some of the environmentalists told me they are of low quality. Besides, there is a big risk involved in the blasting of a hill which is 80 meters above sea level.”

Ramesh clarified that the Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) Notification, 1991 did not allow for the building of an airport in Navi Mumbai. “What had been released on May 25, 2009 after the amendment to the CRZ, 1991 rules clearly says that an airport is made a permissible activity subject to certain measures,” he noted.

Meanwhile, Ramesh also said today the fuel oil spill after the collision of MSC Chitra and Khalijia has caused tangible damage to the environment and marine life.
Kalyan site proposed for second Mumbai airport

The city of Kalyan in Thane district has emerged another alternative for the proposed second international airport in Mumbai, the Union Environment and Forests Minister, Mr Jairam Ramesh, said on Saturday.

Reiterating that “Mumbai needs a second airport,” Mr Ramesh said three local Members of Parliament had recently met him and suggested Kalyan as an alternative. The MPs suggested that the project be shifted to Nevali, near Kalyan, from the present site near Panvel in Raigad district, 35 km from Mumbai. The 1,800-acre alternative site, being suggested by local MPs, belongs to the Defence authorities.

The suggestion has been passed on to the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC), he added. The Environment Minister was in Mumbai to survey the damage caused by the oil spill after the recent collision of two merchant ships off Mumbai.

Environment Impact

Mumbai’s second international airport has been at the centre of much controversy, with the present proposed site at Panvel not making the cut on environment grounds.

The Environment Impact Assessment done by IIT Bombay for the main developer of the project, CIDCO (City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra), was submitted in late June. A month later, the EAC met and sought some clarification, Mr Ramesh said. The EAC for infrastructure projects, under the Environment Ministry, is scheduled to meet again mid-next week.

The Panvel site was not getting the green signal for three main reasons, he said. It involved the “most serious” concern of diverting two rivers, destruction of 400 acres of mangroves, and razing an 80-metre hillock.

The destruction of mangroves is of particular concern as they act as a natural buffer against sea and coastal erosion, he explained.

“We have seen it in the past during the tsunami how several villages suffered fewer damage,” he added. The diversion of rivers raise concerns of flooding during monsoons and its impact on Panvel, he said. The impact of a clogged Mithi river was evident during the 2005 floods, he added.

Oil-Spill

On “lessons learnt” from the recent collision and the oil spill, Mr Ramesh said the Mumbai Port and JNPT would set up a Tier-1 pollution response system within eight months to combat such incidents.

This would involve the participation of BPCL and ONGC and would be equipped to handle oil-spills up to 700 tonnes.
Ramesh says damage due to oil spill quite tangible

Union minister for environment and forests Jairam Ramesh has admitted said the oil spill off the Mumbai coast was the worst the country has ever seen. He also said that the damage was quite tangible. He announced to carry out the assessment of the loss in two-three days followed by a detailed review.

Ramesh visited the affected areas of Elephanta Island and nearby places with Maharashtra Environment Minister Suresh Shetty to ascertain the damage caused by the oil spill to the mangroves and also interacted with Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) experts. Later he reviewed the various measures being undertaken to tackle the environmental damage at a meeting with DG (Shipping), heads of JNPT and MbPT, Maharashtra Environment Secretary and representatives from Coast Guard and the Navy.

Ramesh said that mangroves along the coast have been damaged extensively due to the spill and only some of them will be able to regenerate. He also announced to give compensation to the fishermen who had to bear loss due to the oil spill.

"It appeared hat the one-two old younger mangroves have been damaged along the 70 of the 100 km of the coast line. The extent of the damage to the mangroves would be known after the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) which will be carried out by National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur and the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Panaji. The two organisations would submit a preliminary report in 3-4 weeks while a detailed report would be submitted in 2-3 months from thereon," he said.

Talking about putting in place systems to tackle such crisis in future, Ramesh asserted that the Mumbai port would be equipped with Tier-I response system in 6-8 months. Tier I response system will be capable of handling oil spills up to 700 tons. He said that the major oil companies along with the two ports have agreed to sign a MoU under which the oil companies would make investment to buy equipment to handle such situation in future.

Ramesh said that the accident and the oil spill occurred in the Mumbai harbor during the monsoon season and involved fuel oil, which was more dangerous than the crude oil in terms of damage to the environment. He informed that 150-160 containers were still unaccounted for and that it could take about a week for the normal traffic to resume.
Government committed to establish mechanism to contain oil spills in future. Jairam Ramesh promises to fund studies to assess environmental damage caused by oil slick in Mumbai harbour.

Navi Airport faces environmental hurdle. Jairam Ramesh firm on his stand, despite growing political pressure. Says environmental concerns must be addressed before clearance is accorded

Shift airport to Nevali near Kalyan. Navi Mumbai airport saddled with too many environmental problems. Mangrove destruction will be dangerous says Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh

Jairam Ramesh shows red signal to Navi Mumbai airport. CRZ 1991 did not permit building of the airport. Amendment in 2009 made it a permissible activity, only after addressing all environmental concerns.

Red Signal for Navi Mumbai airport. Destruction of mangroves, flattening of hill and diversion of two rivers ecologically dangerous says Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh. Minister’s stand is a big body blow to the builder lobby, waiting to reap benefits of soaring land prices in Navi Mumbai, Panvel region
Airport at Navi Mumbai not desirable. Diversion of two rivers will cause immense environmental damage – Jairam Ramesh

Navi Airport faces environmental hurdle. Jairam Ramesh says environmental concerns must be addressed before clearance is accorded.

Fishermen to get compensation. Maharashtra Government to assess loss of livelihood with the help of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. Central Ministry of Environment agrees to fund the survey.

Hurdles in the path of Navi Mumbai airport. Jairam Ramesh insists environmental concerns must be addressed before the clearance is accorded.

Navi Airport faces environmental hurdle. Jairam Ramesh says environmental concerns must be addressed before clearance is accorded.
Jairam wants shipping cos to pay for oil spill

**Mumbai:** The Mumbai oil spill has severely damaged the fragile mangrove forests, which are critical to the ecosystem. Even as **MSC Chitra** continues to tilt unsteadily and choppy waters hamper Coast Guard's attempts to stabilise her, the Government is mincing no words in calling the oil spill one of the worst environmental disasters India has seen.

Union Environment Minister **Jairam Ramesh** came down heavily on the city's ports, saying they should have been better prepared, and that polluters would have to pay for the damage.

"There has been extensive substantial damage to marine ecosystems around 100 km of coastline. Both ports should have been better prepared. The polluters would not be allowed to get away without paying compensation," said Ramesh in Mumbai on Saturday.

Even as the Minister said the response to the spill was inadequate, authorities in charge of ports insisted there was nothing lacking in their response.

"Our response was within the limits of what it should have been," said Mumbai Port Trust Chairman Rahul Asthana.
The Minister also defended his decision to stall the much-awaited second city airport. He said the new site suffers major environmental problems, including diverting a river which could lead to flooding in the region.

"We cannot ignore environmental considerations. Environmental approval is not a formality," he said.

The Minister's visit has once again put the spotlight on environmental concerns plaguing both air and sea transport in the city. The question is: Is the state administration ignoring the environment as it struggles to make place for infrastructure development?

**Mumbai:** It's been a week now since two merchant ships collided just five miles off the coast of Mumbai. The unprecedented mid-sea disaster blocked India's busiest trade route causing huge losses to the ports and exporters.

The oil spill soaked up along the coastline in Mumbai and beyond. Economically, environmentally and logistically it is a big calamity.

After inspecting the oil spill today, Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said that this is the biggest oil spill India has ever seen and it has had a substantial impact on the coastline.

The Environment Minister also said that he held a review meeting on the spill and a detailed assessment will be out in the next two-three days.