

Meghna tanker capsized: oil spillage can pose a threat to marine life

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The Daily Morning Voice Online Desk: Experts and officials of the Department of Environment and Fisheries suspect there may be an extensive damage to the biodiversity and aquatic life, including the hilsa, following the oil spill from the submerged tanker in the Meghna river. An oil tanker, carrying 11 lakh litres of fuel, partially sank in the Meghna in Bhola Sadar's Tultuli area early yesterday.

A portion of the oil spilt in the river after the tanker, Nandini-2, was hit by an unidentified vessel around 4:00am, said Enayet Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bhola Sadar Police Station. The authorities concerned are yet to start a salvage operation even after 24 hours since the incident. Expressing concern over the issue, Anisur Rahman Talukder, divisional deputy director of the Department of Fisheries, said there will be a direct impact due to the split oil. "It could damage the eco-system and also affect the Hilsa movement and its sanctuary," he said. "We can confirm it after examining," he added. If oil spills into the river, it can cause huge damage to the biodiversity and aquatic life, said Arifur Rahman, assistant professor of the environmental science department at the Patuakahli Science and Technology University.

Md Tota Mia, assistant director of the Department of Environment, said, "The split oil got washed away by the current. We still can't confirm the quantity of the oil spilt in the river." Coast Guard (South Zone) Media Officer KM Shafiul Kinjal said efforts have been on to recover the oil since 5:00pm yesterday. "The oil did not spread far. We are extracting it along with water. Once the necessary equipment arrives, it'll be possible to extract the oil separately from the water," he said. Abdus Salam, joint director (rescue) at BIWTA, said they do not have a rescue vessel that can lift the submerged tanker.

The owner has already sent a rescue vessel Sagarbodhu-3 while another one Sagarbodhu-4 is on the way, the official added. The tanker, carrying 11 lakh litres of fuel, was hit by an unidentified vessel around 4:00am. All 13 staff members of the tanker were rescued by a sand-laden vessel following the incident. After the incident, a hole near the engine room made the oil tanker's stern to skin, said OC Enayet, adding that most of the vessel sank by the evening. The oil tanker had taken in around 2.34 lakh litres of diesel and the rest octane from Chattogram port and headed towards the Padma Oil depot in Chandpur.