

Malaysia News Articles from January 2020 to April 2022



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Malaysian govt. may relax rules for foreign workers on fishing vessels

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/04/25/govt-may-relax-visa-rules-to-allow-foreign-workers-on-fishing-vessels/>

"The government of Malaysia is considering relaxing visa regulations for foreign workers in fishing vessels in a move to boost the fisheries industry, says home minister Hamzah Zainudin.

In a statement today, he said the ministry is ready to consider granting flexibility in allowing foreign workers on local vessels.

This conditional relaxation covers the special exemption for visit passes (temporary work), only for those who have already applied for them and have a receipt confirming that their application is being processed by the immigration department, said Hamzah."

Cooperative has big haul of goodies for fishermen in Penang, Malaysia

<https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2022/04/16/cooperative-has-big-haul-of-goodies-for-fishermen>

Eligible fishermen and the local community in the south of Penang island in Malaysia can benefit from a newly established cooperative called Koperasi Komuniti Pulau Pinang Selatan Bhd (KKPPSB).

KKPPSB was set up under the Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) for the Penang South Islands (PSI) project.

The cooperative will be given assets on PSI, in line with Penang governments commitment to ensure the local community is not sidelined in the development.

Apart from annual dividends, members of the cooperative will also get other benefits like job and business opportunities, besides death benefits, said Penang Deputy Chief Minister I Datuk Ahmad Zakiyuddin Abdul Rahman.

A media statement by Penang Infrastructure Corporation (PIC) stated that in future, KKPPSB would also run other business activities like manufacturing and deploying fish aggregating devices (FADs) and artificial reefs; managing fish and shrimp hatcheries; providing maintenance services; and supplying food and bus or van transport service for construction workers."

Malaysian fishermen protest proposed development of fishing village

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/04/10/tanjung-tokong-fishermen-protest-proposed-demolition-of-homes-at-village/>

"About 100 residents at a fishing village in Tanjung Tokong are demanding answers from the state government over plans to demolish several structures in their village. They were told by the supervisor of an international school project nearby during a recent meeting that 12 structures in the village had to be demolished.

At a press conference organised by Persatuan Penduduk Kampung Warisan Tanjung Tokong today, the association's deputy secretary Waifuddin Hamdan said these included the houses of two fishermen, fish ponds, a surau, as well as two houses used as homestays and huts.

The villagers had been staying in the village for nearly 20 years. Some fishermen use their boats to take tourists out to sea as well, said Syahifah Hawa Zamzuri, the associations secretary. Tanjung Bungah assemblyman Zairil Khir Johari said that according to the terms of the agreement between the state government and the international school in 2017, all 78 structures on the beach reserve would have to be cleared, but he had negotiated with them to only demolish 12..."

Stop fishermen encroaching into Malaysian waters, PM tells Vietnam

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2022/03/22/stop-fishermen-encroaching-into-malaysian-waters-pm-tells-vietnam/>

"Vietnam has been told to take concrete action against aggressive fishermen encroaching into Malaysian waters, says Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

Ismail said of late, Vietnamese boat crews had been aggressive when facing off with maritime officers or fishermen in the countrys waters.

I have expressed Malaysias concern over these encroachments by foreign fishermen, including those from Vietnam.

These activities have affected the fishing industry and livelihoods of Malaysian fishermen, he said at a press conference during his official visit to Vietnam..."

Malaysian environmental group launches adopt-a-tree project in aid of fishermen

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/02/04/environmental-group-launches-adopt-a-tree-project-in-aid-of-fishermen-in-su/2039372>

"An environmental group in Penang, Malaysia, The Climate and Ecology Network (JEDI), launched an adopt-a-tree project today in its efforts to protect the shoreline while providing a source of income for fishermen involved in the project.

The project, which welcomes donors to adopt a tree at RM30 per mangrove tree, is a collaborative effort with the fishermen in Sungai Tembus in Penaga.

JEDI secretary Ahmad Izzudin Azmi said they are aiming to plant about 200 mangrove trees in Sungai Tembus which is located at the northern end of Sungai Perai.

We will have a tree planting event on February 12 and we are now calling for well-wishers to adopt a tree or more to support the project, he told Malay Mail.

The main goal of the project is to enrich the area for fisheries, protect the shores, increase the biodiversity of the shoreline and at the same time, provide an additional source of income for the Sungai Tembus fishermen unit.

Four foreign fishermen nabbed in Kelantan, Malaysia

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2022/02/767990/four-foreign-fishermen-nabbed-kelantan-mmea>

"A foreign fishing vessel was seized for encroaching and carrying out fishing activities in Kelantan waters here yesterday. Kelantan Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) director Captain Syed Nor Adli Ab Rahman said during the operation, four crew members, including the boat skipper, were detained. He said the vessel was stopped at 85.1 nautical miles off the Tok Bali beach. "

"The vessel with four crew members was seized at about noon. The skipper failed to produce valid documents to carry out the (fishing) activities when asked by the MMEA officers. ""He then was arrested together with his three crew members, all from Thailand,"" he said in a statement tonight. "

Indonesia, Malaysia to hold joint patrols against illegal fishing

<https://news.mongabay.com/2022/02/indonesia-malaysia-to-hold-joint-patrols-against-illegal-fishing/>

"Malaysia and Indonesia, whose fisheries have long suffered from illegal fishing, have agreed to carry out on joint patrols against poaching vessels in waters that connect the two Southeast Asian countries.

The joint operation in particular will beef up maritime security against illegal fishers in the Strait of Malacca, one of the world's most heavily trafficked shipping lanes, and the North Natuna Sea, at the southern tip of the hotly contested South China Sea.

The initiative will include sharing technological advancement in monitoring, and will be formalized in an agreement drafted by both governments later this year, according to a statement published by Indonesias Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries.

This operation isnt only targeting fishers from outside of the [two] countries, but also fishers from our own countries, Indonesia and Malaysia, who refuse to abide by the laws, Hamzah Bin Zainudin, the Malaysian home affairs minister, said as quoted in the statement. He added the joint patrols would take place at least three times a year.

Malaysia seeks holistic solutions to end modern slavery: Home Minister

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/01/25/home-minister-malaysia-seeks-holistic-solutions-to-end-modern-slavery/2037420>

"Malaysia is committed to continue fighting modern slavery holistically so that its victims can be protected, said Home Minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin. He said the government's focus was not solely on managing the entry of foreign workers but looking at effective methods to reduce the problem of human trafficking and forced labour.

Hamzah also explained that human trafficking and forced labour are cross-border issues that occur in many countries, whether developed or developing.

However, this matter is still unresolved despite various laws being enacted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). As part of his visit, Hamzah had a meeting with his Indonesian counterpart, Muhammad Tito Karnavian and Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Sakti Wahyu Trenggono. He said Malaysia and Indonesia had agreed to combat illegal fishing in the two countries' territorial waters via joint patrols.

Malaysia's mangrove-planting fishermen stumble at nature finance hurdle

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/malaysias-mangrove-planting-fishermen-stumble-nature-finance-hurdle-2022-01-24/>

"Walking across a swamp, retired fisherman Ilias Shafie and a small group of villagers plant mangrove saplings on Malaysia's west coast, one tree at a time.

They have put in some 400,000 mangrove trees since a restoration initiative started two decades ago, in what was initially a bid to increase the catch of local fishermen.

Now their work has taken on extra significance as alarm grows over global warming and nature loss, with mangroves regarded as a key weapon in the fight against climate change.

But the surge of international concern has yet to help this community win the global finance required to expand its project, highlighting the barriers often faced by groups on the ground seeking to tap into growing funding flows for nature protection.

Malaysian State of Sabah can now issue deep-sea fishing licences

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/12/05/sabah-can-now-issue-deep-sea-fishing-licences>

"The authorisation given to the Sabah Fisheries Department to issue deep-sea fishing licences is expected to help boost the deep-sea fishing industry in this region.

Vessel and deep-sea fishing paraphernalia licences in Sabah were previously handled through the Malaysian Fisheries Department director-general.

This means Sabah can decide how many licences to be issued and how many fish can be (raked in) based on the source capacity in our waters, said Agriculture and Food Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee.

The decision is expected to benefit both the Federal and state governments in terms of managing fisheries resources, coastal security and international relations.

Fishermen in Malaysia's Sarawak on losing side despite recent price hike of goods, laments association

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2021/11/30/fishermen-on-losing-side-despite-recent-price-hike-of-goods-laments-association/>

"Fishermen in Sarawak, Malaysia, are still on the losing side despite the recent price hike of wet goods, especially fish in the market, lamented Sarawak Fishing Vessel Association secretary Harry Tan.

The 38-year-old said that the price hike of goods in the market was inevitable due to the increase in price of other raw materials.

Trawls and other tools all went up in price ” for example, (the price) of iron tools went up by 40 per cent while trawls and rope increase by up to 30 per cent due to the sharp increase in transportation costs, he said when asked by The Borneo Post to comment on how pricey wet goods in the market were currently.

Tan said however, fishermen could only watch from afar as the pricey fish are being sold in the market as they are not part of the groups that can benefit from it (price hike). He said that fishermen cannot control the price of fish being sold in the market as it is not their call to set the price.

Fishermen in Pantai Puteri, Malaysia, want coastal erosion issue resolved quickly

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/11/11/pantai-puteri-fishermen-want-coastal-erosion-issue-resolved-quickly>

"Residents along Pantai Puteri in Melaka in southwestern Malaysia are hoping that the new state government to be formed on Nov 20 can solve the protracted coastal erosion in the area. A majority of the residents are fishermen and claim that the erosion had caused them to lose up to 60% of their income.

For them to survive, the problem needed to be resolved quickly. When met by Bernama, fisherman Rozali Kadir, 50, said his income has dropped to just RM800 a month compared to RM2,000 previously.

Khairul Wahab, 47, said there was a proposal to install a breakwater wall or build a lagoon along the coastline of the village, but unfortunately, nothing had happened yet.

Malaysia continues to improve socio-economy of fishermen nationwide

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/10/735278/mafi-continues-improve-socio-economy-fishermen-nationwide>

"The Agriculture and Food Industry (MAFI) in Malaysia has allocated RM6.43 million to repair and build new houses for fishermen nationwide this year. The funds channelled through the Malaysian Fisheries Development Board (LKIM) for the fishermen housing project included RM3.45 million to Sabah.

The programme aims to improve the well-being of low-income fishermen, said Federal Agriculture and Food Industry Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee during a walkabout to visit the various programmes for fishermen.

In total, more than RM150 million has been allocated this year to help the fishermen community including the monthly RM300 subsistence allowance (ESHN), diesel and petrol subsidies, fishermen fund, disaster and welfare fund, cash crops, fishermen group economic project and food basket programme.

Now, Malaysian fishermen in Penangs south want three islands project

https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2021/10/07/now-fishermen-in-penangs-south-want-three-islands-project/?_cf_chl_jschl_tk__=pmd_CZhJfZtniX..d2SddZk2ByK0yGolaia6DfWaskuBtrM-1633615936-0-gqNtZGzNAqWjcnBszQjR

"The three-islands reclamation project in the south of Penang in Malaysia has received a show of support, with a group of residents and fishermen handing a petition to chief minister Chow Kon Yeow, asking for the project to go ahead.

The group, called Pertubuhan Lestari Alam Sekitar Pulau Pinang (PLASPP), submitted a petition with 1,521 signatures in support of the Penang South Reclamation (PSR). Of the signatories, 435 were fishermen.

Last month, the PSR had its approval by the environmental regulators withdrawn, following an appeal by another group of fishermen over a technicality. The Penang government plans to get the High Court to review the decision.

31,500 Malaysians, including fisheries entrepreneurs, to benefit through Penjana SIM grant

https://themalaysianreserve.com/2021/10/05/31500-malaysians-to-benefit-through-penjana-sim-grant/?_cf_chl_jschl_tk__=pmd_rnB5kwrN38UR.7l8sJcxwRVi6QHJluaa9SOOrUJfgvOE-1633439136-0-gqNtZGzNAmWjcnBszQil

"Some 31,500 Malaysians will benefit from the efforts of 63 social enterprises who received funding support totalling RM10 million through the Penjana social impact matching (SIM) grant last year.

Among them is Demilaut, a social enterprise providing integrated solutions towards a sustainable fishing culture, has assisted two fishing villages in Bako and Sibuti, Sarawak with 32 Pemukat Noh, a mechanised trawl engine through the SIM grant.

Its founder Haaziq Ibrahim said this has reduced the need of already depleting fishing manpower due to Covid-19 restrictions and increased the fishers database, as well as youth participation.

Malaysian-flagged boat seized by Indonesia over illegal fishing at Malacca Strait

<https://en.antaranews.com/news/191589/malaysian-flagged-boat-seized-over-illegal-fishing-at-malacca-strait>

"The Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry of Indonesia detained a Malaysian-flagged fishing vessel conducting illegal fishing activity in Indonesia's Fisheries Management Area (WPPNRI) 571 at the Malacca Strait. "

"Our officers managed to arrest a Malaysian-flagged illegal fishing vessel SLFA 5219 with a trawler," Director General of Marine and Fishery Resources Surveillance (PSDKP) Adin Nurawaluddin noted in his official statement here on Wednesday.

Malaysia fishermen in last-ditch bid to stop Penang reclamation

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/6/penang-pushes-ahead-with-massive-reclamation-plan-despite-outcry>

"Building three artificial islands from scratch off the island of Penang in Malaysia's northwest is no small task. But the government of Penang, one of Malaysia's smallest states, appears determined to take on the challenge.

Approved in 2015, the hugely controversial Penang South Reclamation (PSR) was conceived to fund the larger and much anticipated 46 billion Malaysian ringgit (\$11bn) Penang Transport Master Plan (PTMP), which includes the development of a seamless system of new highways, a tunnel connecting the mainland and island and a light rail system to ease the island's traffic congestion.

Fishers in Indonesia's Natuna Islands fend off domestic, international threats

<https://www.rappler.com/environment/fishers-natuna-islands-indonesia-fending-off-domestic-international-threats>

"The Natuna Regency, an archipelago of 272 islands in the South China Sea, is hot property “smack in the middle of one of the world's busiest shipping and fishing routes. Despite being closer to Malaysia and Singapore, the Natuna Islands are actually part of Indonesia and have become one of the biggest hotspots for illegal fishing in country.

In 2016, as many as 280 foreign vessels were discovered fishing illegally in just one area, at fishing Zone 711, just north of Natuna, according to a study of Radar Sat footage by the Infrastructure Development of Space and Oceanography project.

With illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing having depleted seafood stock in the South China Sea by up to 90% since the 1950s, fishers from across the region are being forced further from the shore to find catch, and closer to conflict with each other.

Penang South Islands project • A young Malaysian fisherman’s view

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/what-you-think/2021/08/04/penang-south-islands-project-a-young-fishermans-view-nur-adam-anuar/1995163>

"For three generations, my family worked as fishermen in Teluk Kumbar, at the south of Penang island. I just want to share my view about the Penang South Islands (PSI) project as a young fisherman who grew up here. Im not good with the English language and have asked my friends to help translate this article so that I can also share my views to English readers.

I began helping grandpa at sea when I was 14 years old. We wake up in the middle of the night to prepare our fishing gear and boat. Often times we spend the whole night without sleep at our wooden hut waiting for favourable water current and weather.

The scariest part in the job is getting caught in a storm in the middle of the sea. We had one such encounter when I was 18. Our boat was bombarded by strong waves that it almost broke in two. And the rain curtain was so thick that we couldnt see the shoreline and we were lost. But somehow, we managed to find our way back • God was merciful. That experience was traumatising, but we had to continue to go to sea because we had to eat. That was our life as fishermen.

That’s why many fishermen want their children to pursue higher education so that they will have more career options. Thats why I took a diploma course in electrical engineering. However, having higher education doesnt guarantee us jobs when there is no opportunity. After my graduation, I continued to go to sea with my grandpa.

As a fisherman, I dont have a stable income and a payslip. Thats why I couldnt commit to an insurance scheme or purchase a motorcycle. I didnt even have Socso and EPF (KWSP) contributions. The turning point came when my grandpa urged me to apply for a job in the

Penang South Islands project after he learned that the Penang state government will develop the three islands in Teluk Kumbar. I applied and was offered a position in the stakeholder engagement department.

I'm now 23 and have been working in the PSI project for more than a year. The job has provided me with a stable income and I have all the staff benefits such as insurance coverage, Socso, and EPF savings. With payslips, I can now purchase a motorcycle through monthly installment. I had none of these before.

After seeing the progress in my own life, my peers who grow up with me in Teluk Kumbar are now seeking employment in PSI too. However, there aren't many jobs currently as the reclamation work hasn't started and are still waiting for the Department of Environment's approval for the environmental management plan.

The delay of the approval could be due to a small group of fishermen led by Zakaria Ismail who is trying to stop the project with their lawyer from the NGO. Zakaria said that he opposes the project because he wants to keep the PSI-area for his children to fish. But we, in the fishermen community, know that none of Zakaria's four children work as fishermen. No one knows what is his real motive opposing the project.

My family of three generations of fishermen has no issue with the PSI. My grandpa himself urged me to work for the project, seeing that there is more prospect and job security for me. He is now 66 years old. After being a fisherman all his life, he can see that the PSI will bring development into the area and generate plenty of jobs for his children and grandchildren and other fishermen's children and grandchildren in Teluk Kumbar.

He believes that with more career options, the local community wouldn't need to continue risking their lives at sea. Moreover, the PSI will only reclaim the land at specific locations and there are many other fishing areas in the southern sea for fishermen like grandpa to work at.

Climate change threatens food security of 65 nations: study

<https://www.eco-business.com/news/climate-change-threatens-food-security-of-65-nations/>

"Scientists have projected that millions of people in 65 nations globally, particularly those in Africa and South-East Asia and the Pacific, could face increased malnutrition as climate change and overfishing take their toll on fisheries.

According to a study that analysed over 800 fish species from more than 157 countries, climate change and overfishing could lead to acute shortages of vital micronutrients from the oceans. Countries whose fisheries are at increased risk include those in Sub-Saharan Africa such as Mozambique and Sierra Leone, and East Asian and Pacific countries including Cambodia,

Indonesia, Malaysia and Timor-Leste, according to the study published this month (20 July) in *Current Biology*.

Countries with nutrient-dense catches are more vulnerable to climate change, mostly tropical nations from East Asia, Pacific, and Sub-Saharan Africa where micronutrient deficiencies are particularly prevalent, says Eva Maire, the study's lead author and a senior research associate at the Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University, England. This suggests unmet potential for fisheries to help close nutrition gaps, especially amongst coastal communities.

Maire says that the study found a clear impact from climate change on the overall availability of micronutrients for 65 nations, and consequently threatening the food security of millions of people living in these countries could be threatened. She explains that fish is a good source of protein and many vitamins, minerals, and fatty acids that are often missing in the diets of coastal populations throughout the world.

Making fish more accessible locally could have a huge impact on global food security and combat malnutrition-related diseases in millions of people globally, she adds. Researchers analysed the combined influence of climate change and overfishing on micronutrient availability using fish catch data from 157 countries for the years 2010 to 2014. Our analysis highlights the need to consolidate fisheries, climate, and food policies to secure the sustainable contribution of fish-derived micronutrients to food and nutrition security, the study says.

Maire tells SciDev.Net that an earlier study found that climate change could lead to large-scale redistribution of global fish catches with a drop of up to 40 per cent. We need to find a way to put human nutrition at the core of fisheries policies. Food security policymakers should acknowledge that fish is nutrient-rich food and work on what can be done to increase access to fish by malnourished people.

Effective climate [change] mitigation is a high priority, she says. Edward Kimani, chief research scientist, fisheries and aquatic ecology at the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, says that economic impacts of reduced fishery production include reduced employment and household incomes as well as other fisheries support activities, and reduced trade and exports.

Fish production is dependent on the aquatic environment and climate change directly impairs productivity, he explains, adding that the study's findings could inform policymakers of the impacts of overfishing and climate change on one key source of food and nutrition in Africa.

It is an early warning towards preparing mitigation by reducing the impacts as well as developing alternative sources of food and economic activities to cover the loss due to overfishing and climate change, he says.

Strategies for mitigating overfishing, according to Kimani, include the development of other economic activities such as coastal and marine tourism to reduce the number of people who directly depend on fishing, and the development of fish farming to reduce dependence on harvesting of fish in their natural habitat.

Sewage from anchored ships laying waste to coral reefs in Spratly Islands in the South China Sea ” report

<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/07/12/2111973/sewage-anchored-ships-laying-waste-coral-reefs-spratlys-report>

"Raw sewage from hundreds of anchored ships in the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, including West Philippine Sea, have damaged coral reefs in the area, according to a report from a US-based geospatial imagery and data analysis company.

Liz Derr, co-founder and CEO at Similarity, presented the Spratlys water quality report in an online forum organized by the Stratbase ADR Institute on the fifth anniversary of the South China Sea arbitral ruling. Similarity released satellite images showing how anchored ships created chlorophyll-a blooms in Union Banks, located entirely within the country's exclusive economic zone in the West Philippine Sea.

According to the report, chlorophyll-a concentration in water is a measure of phytoplankton. "Excess phytoplankton that cannot be consumed by the reef inhabitants dies off and sinks to the sea floor, where it is consumed by bacteria," the report read. "These bacteria consume oxygen that would normally be available to the fish, creating a 'dead zone,'" it added. The report showed chlorophyll-a concentration on Mabini (Johnson South), McKennan (Hughes), Pagkakaisa (Lansdowne), Ross and Roxas (Collins) Reefs.

Mabini and McKennan Reefs are occupied by China while Pagkakaisa and Roxas Reefs are occupied by Vietnam. Satellite images showed that there had been increased chlorophyll-a concentration on these features in the past five years, indicating overgrowth of algae. "Fleshy algae on reefs increase copious amounts of nutrients, which microbes eat.

These microbes then endanger corals by depleting oxygen from the environment or by introducing diseases," Similarity reported. What is worse is that overfishing in the waters near coral reefs have removed the primary-algae eaters, increasing the population of fleshy algae. "

"Tipping the balance towards algae results in increased acidification of the water, increasing coral erosion," the report read, adding that this is in addition to increased ocean acidification from climate change. Coral reefs in the Spratlys matter as fishes from the area supply 85% of coastal inhabitants.

Similarity also noted that Spratly reefs serve as nurseries for adult fish stock that make up the fisheries in the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. "

"Damaging these reefs directly affects the fish stocks of the entire South China Sea and can lead to a hunger crisis in coastal regions and a collapse of commercial fishing in the South China Sea," Similarity said. As of June 17, 236 ships, likely Chinese, have been spotted in Union Banks as seen on satellite images released by Similarity.

Malaysia nabs five Vietnamese fishermen for illegally harvesting sea cucumbers

<https://www.thesundaily.my/local/mmea-nabs-five-vietnamese-fishermen-for-illegally-harvesting-sea-cucumbers-ED8036644>

"The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) of Kelantan arrested five Vietnamese fishermen, including the skipper, on suspicion of illegally harvesting sea cucumbers in the countrys waters yesterday.

Kelantan MMEA director Captain Muhd Nur Syam Asmawie Yaacob said a patrol team detected a boat with the five men on board about 42.7 nautical miles off Tok Bali at about 5.55pm. They tried to flee when they realised the presence of the MMEA boat but were eventually caught after a nearly 15-minute chase.

Upon further inspection, we seized 200 kilogrammes (kg) of sea cucumbers, 2,000 litres of diesel and the boat, with total seizure amounting to RM300,000, he told a media conference at the Tok Bali MMEA Office here today.

He said the five suspects, aged 25 to 38, were also arrested for not having any valid identity documents. They are willing to encroach into our waters because sea cucumbers can fetch a hefty price in their country, at almost RM1,000 per kg. Their activities using self-made tools can destroy the fish breeding ecosystem, he said.

Two foreign fishing boats, 13 Vietnamese detained off Miri, Malaysia, for encroachment, illegal fishing

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2021/06/29/two-foreign-fishing-boats-13-vietnamese-detained-off-miri-for-encroachment-illegal-fishing/>

"The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) has detained two foreign fishing boats and 13 Vietnamese for encroachment and illegal fishing in Malaysian waters. Miri MMEA head Captain Md Fauzi Othman in a statement today said the two boats were detained at about 39 nautical miles from Miri at 1.01pm yesterday.

Two out of six illegal foreign fishing boats were spotted at the location by the patrol team who were carrying out their routine patrol at the area.

As soon as they realised that there was an enforcement team at the area, they tried to escape and released their fishing equipment into the waters to dispose of the evidence, said Md Fauzi. He added that after about 30 minutes chase, the MMEA patrol team managed to detain the two boats.

Checks conducted on the two boats found 13 Vietnamese crew aged between 22 and 46. None of them had any identification documents and documents from the Fisheries Department to carry out fishing activities.

Paradise 1 dive site off Mabul island, off Sabah, Malaysia, now a graveyard of broken corals

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/06/702969/paradise-1-dive-site-mabul-island-now-graveyard-broken-corals>

"Divers lamented that healthy corals at the Paradise 1 dive site of Mabul Island off the eastern Malaysian state of Sabah have been wiped out after being damaged by a barge landing near the island. The site, once flourished with healthy and rare coral colonies, is as flat as a football field after the large vessel carrying construction materials for Eastern Sabah Security Command (Esscom) forward operating base landed near the island.

Underwater photographer Andy Chia Chee Shiong said the Paradise 1 site was his second home where he learned underwater photography, between 2006 and 2009. ""Paradise 1 dive site is how Mabul got famous internationally as a macro heaven. ""However, what was formerly a coral paradise is now a graveyard of broken corals,"" he said, adding it was disappointing that the incident wiped out the site overnight when many have been working towards preserving the marine life for years.

Echoing the same sentiment is Blu Hope co-founder Monica Chin who said environmental destruction kept on happening despite talks on protecting nature and preserving biodiversity. ""There have been promotions on scuba diving (in Sabah) over the world and talks to encourage our community on environmental and marine conservation. "

"But, I feel like a fool when news like this (Mabul incident) happens, even after similar incidents which occurred in Sipadan in 2006 and Kudat in 2019, as well as other fish bombings and commercial fishing vessels,"" she said, questioning whether the contractor was monitored while doing the construction work at the island.

Chin, who is also Sabah's first trainer and ambassador for Ocean Quest Global on coral reefs rehabilitation, said the state is blessed as it has the most biodiversity from Mount Kinabalu, one

of the oldest rainforest and ocean located within the Coral Triangle Initiative. "These are the most valuable assets which can sustain and feed many generations. "

"To preserve all this unique biodiversity we do not need heavy fancy development, we just need to maintain and improve the quality of the existing one," she said, adding true leaders would lead by examples and would take the necessary course of action for the future of Sabah.

Green playlist: Films on fishing villages in Malaysia, Vietnam among Asian short films on protecting the environment

<https://globalvoices.org/2021/06/16/green-playlist-asian-short-films-on-protecting-the-environment/>

"In celebration of World Environment Day on June 5, EngageMedia curated a playlist of documentaries and short films on how communities across the Asia-Pacific are fighting to preserve and protect their lands against environmental degradation, industrialization, and climate change. These films on Cinemata, a mix of new uploads and works from the archives, take us from Nueva Vizcaya (Dagami Daytoy) in the Philippines and Nam Dinh province in Vietnam (Another Exodus), to Sawarak in Malaysia (Melikin) and Taunggyi in Myanmar (Plastic Outlive Us). The playlist also includes award-winning films, among them Dagami Daytoy (winner of the 2020 Gawad Cultural Center of the Philippines Para sa Alternatibong Pelikula at Video), Anak Pokok (Films for the Forest, SXSW Community Screening), and Kaise Jeebo Re! (winner of the 1997 International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam).

Malaysia: Doa Seorang Nelayan (A Fisherman's Prayers) Zakaria Ismail believes it is his divine calling to defend fellow coastal fishermen from a land reclamation project in southern Penang that threatens to bury their fishing grounds under 4,500 acres of reclaimed land. He and other members of his village are labeled B40, referring to the bottom 40 percent of Malaysian households with monthly incomes of RM 3,900 (949 US dollars) and below. In this story about class struggle, tensions between modern and traditional values, and the Machiavellian interventions of political actors, Zakaria turns to his God for wisdom and courage to stand against one of the most ambitious projects being carried out in New Malaysia.

Vietnam: Another Exodus A fishing village in Vietnam wakes up in the murmur of predawn prayers while the ebb and flow of waves hit the breakers. Fishermen from the older generation quietly recall the good old days, anxiously awaiting what's coming up next. They know of the exodus every 50 or 60 years, where they'll have to move away from the shorelines because of climate change. Once prosperous neighborhoods have become poor fishing villages, and fertile fields and fruitful orchards have been destroyed by the rising seawater. Another Exodus is a

short documentary by Vietnamese filmmaker Le Nguyen.

Malaysian marine scientist shines a light on seagrass, the unsung hero of the ocean

<https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/people/2021/06/14/marine-scientist-shines-a-light-on-seagrass-the-unsung-hero-of-the-ocean>

"Before the pandemic, it was typical for Dr Jillian Ooi to spend up to 10 days every month exploring seagrass meadows off the coast of Johor and its surrounding islands. An expert on seagrass, the marine scientist and senior lecturer with Universiti Malayas Geography Department has been passionate about bringing the little-known marine species to the fore for more than a decade. The unsung hero of the marine world, she explains, plays a very important part in our lives “ seagrass meadows serve as a form of nursery for fishes and also attract a lot of the fish we consume on a daily basis. Through her research, Ooi, 49, hopes to share everything she learns about the flowering plants that live in coastal waters and feed marine life.

Coupled with the research done by her team of seven post-graduate students she currently supervises, she hopes they will play a role in conserving the seagrass ecosystem that is endangered not only by polluted ocean waters but also development. However, Ooi admits that it is very hard to lobby for something that not many people know or care about. Seagrass is so invisible. Also, among the marine ecosystems, seagrass is not as visually dynamic or spectacular as other ecosystems like coral reefs, for example, until you get to know it well. Its like the lalang in your yard, basically. But seagrass meadows are really vital to the ecosystem and to fish, she says. If you care about the fish and seafood you consume, you should really care about seagrass. Ooi certainly has her work cut out for her as it isnt easy to convince even colleagues to see seagrass the way she does, let alone collaborate on projects.

Even her husband, Affendi Yang Amri, a coral reef ecologist and research officer with Universiti Malayas Institute of Ocean and Earth Sciences, took some convincing, jokes Ooi. We took a bet some years ago, she reveals. I was so frustrated about how difficult it was for me to get funding for my seagrass research projects while on the other hand, it was always so easy for him to get big funding because everyone loves corals. So when one of our students was out on a field trip and was about to place cameras to study the seagrass ecosystem, we placed a wager about the type of fish that both ecosystems would attract. We found that coral reefs attracted a lot of big, beautiful fish... fish that contributed to the aquarium trade.

Meanwhile, the seagrass meadows attracted a lot of colourless fish that were not beautiful at all and no one would want in their aquariums. But these were fish that we eat... your snappers, bream and so on. All the fish that ends up on our table was at the seagrass meadows, she explains. So, we really should care about our seagrass because they are what the fish we eat feed on! But there was also another important discovery. We found that there were six times more

baby fish in the seagrass meadows than in coral reefs. The seagrass meadows are like nurseries and feeding grounds for many juvenile fish, which then move over to coral reefs when they become adults, she enthuses. Ooi first became interested in environmental conservation as an undergraduate at Universiti Malayas Arts Faculty in the early 1990s.

That was just about the time when environmentalism was growing and it caught my attention, shares Ooi, who majored in Geography. I was interested in the environment but it took me a while to determine what I wanted to focus my undergraduate study on. I finally realised that I was really drawn to the ocean, and then I found seagrass, she shares. Always a person to root for the underdog, Ooi knew that shed found her niche with seagrass.

I like to fight for things that people dont think there is value to and seagrass is the underdog of all the marine ecosystems, Ooi explains. Apart from supervising postgraduate students, Ooi spends a majority of her time teaching and mentoring undergraduate students. And that, she discloses, is where the other half of her passion lies “ teaching. After completing my PhD at the Western Australia University in Perth, I was really tempted to stay on there because Australia is really the perfect place for a scientist studying seagrass. But, I knew I had to come back to share all that I have learnt with students back in Malaysia.

I realised that this could be my value to my country. Not just teaching students the science of seagrass but also teaching them to question, argue, protest and be confident enough to speak out and speak up. There really isnt this culture among our students. Most undergraduates want you to give them the answers. They believe everything a person of authority tells them. But thats not how it should be and I feel it is my responsibility to nurture not just an interest in the environment and seagrass but to nurture more critical students, says Ooi. Though she has won numerous awards and accolades for her work, her students, she says, are the milestones in her career. We have trained some truly amazing students who have gone on to do great work and advocate for seagrass and the environment, she says with pride. Ooi admits that work-life balance is something she struggles with. I work on public holidays and weekends; I start early and work late. Most days I am working till midnight. Its not easy being an academic in the university in Malaysia right now because our teaching load and research demands are high as UM wants to maintain its position in the top 100 list of universities.

I am also really interested in what I am doing so I push myself more. I follow the students in all their field trips even though its not required but I really like going and being out there, she says. Her greatest challenge, she reckons, is making people see that seagrass matters. Every project we do incrementally adds a little knowledge about what we know of seagrass. And it takes a really long time to build up this knowledge because research is hard work. The science is hard and its also very physically tough. We have to be out there on the boat under the hot sun and in dangerous conditions. We have been swept away by strong currents many times. And being underwater can also be dangerous and we are responsible not only for ourselves but our students, she adds. But the rewards come in the form of the discoveries made, the progress in

raising the profile of seagrass and also, working with people who are as passionate and dedicated about the environment and the ocean as she is. This, of course, includes her husband, Affendi. We work together a lot because, firstly, we like travelling together and secondly, we've realised that the work is more interesting when we look at multiple ecosystems instead of just one, because everything is connected. Also, for me, I'm hitching seagrass onto the back of corals since the public and policy-makers give a lot more attention to corals. It's my sneaky way of getting seagrass onto the conservation agenda, she quips.

Malaysia facing shortage of foreign fishers <https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/supply-trade/malaysia-facing-shortage-of-foreign-fishers> "COVID-19-related travel restrictions have prevented foreign workers from entering Malaysia, resulting in a labor shortage in the country's fisheries sector. Malaysia began a two-week lockdown, or movement control order, from 1 June to contain a surge of the coronavirus infections across the country. As a result, it has been difficult for fishing companies in Malaysia to bring in crew members from other countries, The Star reported 8 June. Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM) Chairman Datuk Syed Abu Hussin Hafiz Syed Abdul Fasal said his agency is willing to help local recruiters pass foreign workers through Malaysia's land borders.

LKIM has received approval from the Immigration Department to bring in crew members from Thailand and Vietnam to work in deep-sea [fisheries], he said. Fish landings in Malaysia have declined by 10 percent during the current lockdown as a result of the shortage of foreign crews, The Star reported. But Fasal said the shortage can be covered by local fishermen and that fish supply is sufficient for domestic consumption.

LKIM also has stocks of frozen fish kept by companies that can help cover the shortage of fish supply in the market, he said at a press briefing. Malaysia reported 5,566 new cases of COVID-19 on 8 June, bringing the country's total to 541,319. More than 3,500 Malaysians have died from COVID-19. In Thailand and Vietnam, where Malaysia wants to hire workers for its fisheries sector, the situation is also worsening. Thailand had 2,662 new cases as of 8 June, with a total of 182,548 people infected and nearly 1,300 mortalities from COVID-19, according to The Nation. Vietnam had more than 9,000 cases with 55 deaths as of 8 June, government data showed.

On World Oceans Day, threats to West Philippine Sea gain relevance

<https://globalnation.inquirer.net/196833/on-world-oceans-day-threats-to-west-philippine-sea-gain-relevance>

"World Oceans Day is celebrated each year across the globe every June 8. The United Nations said the yearly event seeks to generate awareness on the impact of human activities on oceans, which is gaining relevance especially in the West Philippine Sea. World Oceans Day reminds

everyone of the major role the oceans have in everyday life, the UN said. They are the lungs of our planet and a major source of food and medicine and a critical part of the biosphere, it added. As part of this years celebration of World Oceans Day, the global impact of illegal fishing, especially by China in the West Philippine Sea, is recalled.

A study published in 2020 in the scientific journal Science Advances revealed that between 2005 to 2014, at least 7.7 to 14 million metric tons of illegal fish catches were traded illicitly each year. As a result, between \$8.9 and \$17.2 billion in gross revenues were lost to illicit trading. The study also found that Asia, Africa, and South America were dealt a huge blow in illegal catch and gross revenue losses during the same period. Analysis by data consumer company Statista on Tuesday (June 8) noted that the Asian continent loses at least \$6.7 billion in annual gross revenue from illegal fishing and trading.

Assuming that 50 to 80 percent of illicit commercial catch and 10 to 30 percent of the illicit artisanal catch is traded, up to \$3.4 billion is lost every year in the Western Central Pacific (incl. the South China Sea), while up to \$2.0 billion vanishes annually in Northeast Asia and up to \$1.5 billion of revenue goes missing in the Eastern Indian Ocean every year, said Statistas Katharina Buccholz, citing the 2020 study. The Central Eastern Atlantic lost around \$4.3 billion each year. Among the countries that suffered the most revenue loss due to illicit fishing were China, the Philippines, the US Pacific territories, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco, Mauritania, Russia, and Guinea. The harmful economic impact of the illicit trade of illegally caught fish does not only harm annual revenues of regions or countries worldwide.

According to the study, illegal fishing has also brought to Asia food insecurity, job loss, and income loss for local fishers. In 2019, out of a total of 152 coastal states assessed worldwide, China gained the worst scores for their degree of exposure to and quality of response toward illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. <https://www.iuufishingindex.net/> China, which operates the worlds largest overseas fishing fleet with 200,000 to 800,000 fishing boats, accounts for nearly half of the worlds fishing activity” according to an article published in 2020 at the Yale School of the Environment.

Aside from being the worlds biggest seafood exporter, Chinas population also accounts for over a third of the total fish consumption worldwide. Having depleted the seas close to home, the Chinese fishing fleet has been sailing farther afield in recent years to exploit the waters of other countries, including those in West Africa and Latin America, where enforcement tends to be weaker as local governments lack the resources or inclination to police their waters, said investigative reporter Ian Urbina in his article.

Most Chinese distant-water ships are so large that they scoop up as many fish in one week as local boats from Senegal or Mexico might catch in a year he added. China has also expanded its maritime presence in Northeast Asia and most notably in the West Philippine Sea”causing the still unresolved territorial dispute and tension between the Philippines and China. This was

despite the international arbitral ruling in The Hague in 2016 which declared China's mythical nine-dash claim to most of the South China Sea, including the West Philippine Sea, as invalid and baseless.

China, according to the ruling, violated Philippine sovereignty and Filipinos' right to fish and explore resources in the West Philippine Sea. Beijing considered the ruling as trash and does not recognize it. The Philippines, along with fellow Southeast Asian neighbors Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam, have overlapping claims to the sea along with China. Despite an agreement to refrain from provocative actions, China has continued to expand and militarize territories that it claims in the maritime region.

Covid-19 pandemic forced a wake up to climate crisis, says charity

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-suffolk-57359951>

"A charity which has protected threatened landscapes equivalent in size to Cyprus said Covid-19 had made people wake up to the climate crisis. The World Land Trust (WLT), based in Halesworth, Suffolk, works with partners to secure at-risk habitats. Its latest campaign, to protect forests in Tanzania, raised an "incredible" £400,000 in five weeks. "In the past 18 months, people have realised how important landscapes are," said Dan Bradbury, a director at WLT. "People are waking up - we have a biodiversity crisis and climate crisis, and I think people have seen the link with that and the pandemic. "

"Also, during the lockdown, people were heading out into open spaces and hearing the birds sing, and loving being outdoors, and have seen how important landscapes are to them." The charity was set up in 1989, initially to buy and protect habitats used by migrating birds in Belize, Central America. From a former shop in Halesworth, it now works with 24 organisations in 34 countries and has helped secure millions of acres, equivalent to the size of Cyprus. Its projects - including planting two million trees - support communities, enabling local people to protect, manage and maintain the precious landscape on their doorstep. "

Our approach is to inspire, we're making a huge impact around the world - from Central and South America, to Africa, India, Armenia, all the way to Vietnam and Malaysian Borneo," added Mr Bradbury, director of communications and development. In eastern Tanzania, coastal forests provide a habitat for elephants, lions, the Rondo bushbaby, and an abundance of birdlife. But it is vanishing at a "rapid rate" to cashew and sesame farming, with just 10% remaining. At least 49,000 acres will be protected after WLT's appeal, which smashed its original target of £340,000. "

"We are surprised by the response, although we always believe the projects are important and really strong," added Mr Bradbury. "It's enabling us to create 10 village reserves, managed by local people, and with that extra money we can do more patrolling, more monitoring and give

much more protection to this landscape." The charity's ongoing campaigns include protecting some of the world's oldest rainforests in Malaysian Borneo, where the orangutan population has halved in 20 years. "

"We need to save more land, more species, and we will do this acre by acre," added Mr Bradbury. "It's incredibly important - we're on the cusp of this irreversible climate change and we can't sit and do nothing, we have to do something now. "If you protect land, it protects everything."

Malaysia MP tells Penang to cancel controversial three-island reclamation project

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/06/01/nurul-izzah-tells-penang-to-cancel-controversial-three-island-reclamation-b/1978711>

Permatang Pauh MP Nurul Izzah Anwar has criticised the controversial Penang South Reclamation (PSR) project, calling for it to be cancelled and replaced with a sustainable economic rejuvenation plan to reverse the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. She said there was no need to reclaim 4,500 acres of land in the sea when land was plentiful in the mainland area of the state. More efforts should be focused on small-scale pro-community development on the Penang mainland, as advocated by Think City, to address unbalanced growth; this should be the main trajectory of Penang's development, she said in a statement yesterday.

She pointed out that the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report for the PSR project, clearly stated that there would be permanent destruction and residual impacts on the mudflat ecosystem, fishing grounds, turtle landings, and some of the coral reefs on Pulau Rimau. She added that it was stated in the EIA that the permanent destruction will have a significant negative impact on fisheries resources, fishermen and the security of the country's food supply. This development project will not only affect the livelihood of fishing communities and increase poverty, but also threaten the safety of fisherfolk, she said.

The state's ambition to leave a legacy must not be at the expense of rakyat, not only fishermen whose livelihoods are directly threatened, but also, all Penangites who will bear the costs of diminishing supply of fresh seafood and resultant higher prices, she added. She said the state and people of Penang should not be burdened with a project that is fraught with risks, debt, uncertainties and U-turns.

As it stands, the entire PSR project will be funded and managed by a 70-30 joint-venture between SRS Consortium Sdn Bhd and the Penang State Government - it is now a privately-led mega-project, lacking clarity on the various aspects of the mammoth project, she said. Instead of massive infrastructure projects, Nurul Izzah said the urgent need now is to strengthen the re-skilling efforts to enable local communities to compete effectively for incoming high-skilled

roles. Given the above considerations, can we afford to wait without adequate socio-economic safeguards and certainty, for another 30 years, before reaping the intended benefits of this project, while we navigate an unprecedented public health and economic crisis? she asked.

She said the losses and risks of the PSR project far outweigh any possible gains to the state and its people. She said the mitigation measures for the project were inadequate and do not address the costs incurred by fishermen or the safety considerations. Although the Penang state government is offering ex-gratia packages and programs that are intended to provide long-term benefits to the 1,615 affected fishermen, the project will result in damage to the ocean and coastal ecosystems that threaten the livelihoods of almost 5,000 fishermen, as the impact of the reclamation will extend beyond Teluk Kumbar and even beyond Penang waters, she said. She called on the Ministry of Environment and Water to revoke the previous approval provided by the Department of Environment and put in more efforts to collaborate with the Penang state government in managing the peoples socio-economic recovery post-pandemic.

In response to her statement, Penang state exco Zairil Khir Johari claimed that the Penang South Islands (PSI) project, which was previously called the PSR, will benefit the fishermen. In actual fact, it would not be a stretch to say that the ex-gratia packages being offered to the fishermen affected by the project is quite possibly the best large scale package ever paid out in Malaysia, he said in a statement today. He said the fishermen will also receive new boats and engines, bringing their total package to about RM60,000 each depending on their category. As an added effort, a fisheries sustainability programme will also be implemented through the use of artificial reefs and fish aggregating devices, the release of fish and prawn fry and funding for marine-related research, he said. He agreed with Nurul Izzah that there is a need for re-skilling efforts as a more comprehensive solution to the fishing communitys problems.

Besides the ex-gratia packages, there will also be a re-skilling programme for full-time fishermen, providing them with gainful employment during the course of the project that is projected to last for years, he said. He said the state government is willing to arrange for Nurul Izzah to meet and speak directly to some of the fishermen involved to get a clearer picture of the situation.

As for the impact on the environment, Zairil said mitigation measures have been planned under the ecology offset programmes and that they have also incorporated studies by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Low Carbon Cities Framework, and the independent report by the Royal Haskoning DHV into the planning of the PSI. He said the three islands are designed with plenty of public green spaces and 20 per cent of the land are reserved for parks, mangroves, water canals, and wetlands to achieve temperature cooling.

In addition to that, the PSI also aims to reduce carbon emissions by 40 per cent, achieve 100 per cent renewable energy usage and reduce freshwater demand by 70 per cent, he said. Finally, he said the PSI and the Penang Transport Master Plan (PTMP) have been identified by the Penang

Socio-Economic Recovery Consultative Council (PSERCC) as key recovery drivers to ensure the states economy and its citizens survives after the current Covid-19 crisis. It is precisely because of the current protracted pandemic and the ensuing economic disaster that the PSI is needed now more than ever as a catalytic development project for Penang, he said. He said an independent study prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers has indicated that the completed PSI would attract RM70 billion of foreign direct investments and create more than 300,000 jobs over a 30-year timeframe.

He said the PSI will create more high-value employment to stop the outward migration of talented Penangites and also attract the best and brightest from all over the country to come to Penang. Zairil said the joint-venture model with SRS Consortium allowed the state to commence with the project without the associated risks and debt such as project financing and corporate guarantee as these are borne by the principal partner of SRS Consortium, Gamuda Berhad. In the event of default, we have also agreed that all reclaimed land will not be subject to caveat by the lenders. This effectively mitigates the potential risks, he said.

COVID-19 and small-scale fisheries in Southeast Asia: Impacts and Responses

<http://www.asianfisheriessociety.org/publication/downloadfile.php?id=1355&file=Y0dSbUx6QXIOekU0TkRRd01ERTJNVGswTURZME1qa3VjR1Jt>

"This new paper describes the impacts of and responses to COVID-19 of small-scale fisheries in six selected countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The paper used a structured case study approach to analyse the impacts and responses and relied heavily on existing reports and data sources in each country.

The pandemic has further revealed the vulnerability of small-scale fishing households in the region. Given the few assets of fisher households, their ability to cushion the negative impact of crises and shocks is limited. Fishers made adaptive responses such as direct fish marketing, online marketing, and home delivery services.

While short-term responses of providing food and financial assistance have been helpful, long-term support to address pandemics such as COVID-19 and other stressors will require developing more resilient fishing households. The paper recommends several approaches and interventions to improve household resilience and to be better prepared for similar challenges and threats in the future.

These include: i) strengthening the fishing households social network of friends, relatives, and neighbours to serve as both a social safety net and a bridge towards the transition to financial inclusion; ii) diversifying livelihood to reduce dependency on the fishery and provide for additional sources of income and food; iii) promoting financial inclusion through savings, credit, digital payment products, and insurance; iv) value chain upgrading through post-harvest fish

handling and processing methods; and, v) providing access, especially for women, to social protection measures such as government health insurance and social security.

52 Vietnamese fishermen arrested, 8 trawlers seized for anchoring illegally in Malaysian waters

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/04/01/mmea-nabs-52-vietnamese-fishermen-seize-eight-trawlers-anchoring-illegally-in-malaysian-waters>

"The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) has arrested 52 Vietnam nationals and seized eight trawlers for anchoring illegally near Sungai Endau here. Johor Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) director First Admiral Nurul Hizam Zakaria said that the suspects, age between 22 and 55 years old, were reported anchoring at an illegal jetty 3.2 nautical miles (6km) from the riverbanks at about 8.45pm on Wednesday (March 31).

Three of the trawlers had entered Sungai Endau in a suspicious manner prompting investigations by MMEA. At the same time, we also received reports from the public on the remaining trawlers that were closely anchored together at an illegal jetty near the river, he said in a statement Thursday (April 1). He added that investigations revealed that all of the trawlers are type C fishing vessels with a crew of 52.

The suspects are believed to have just arrived based on their GPS history data and records. The group also had suspicious personal documents with an expired boat licence. All of the suspects have been brought to the Mersing MMEA office for further investigations, he said adding that the case is being investigated under the Immigration Act 1959/63 and the Fisheries Act 1985.

Tackling fish-bombing at Malaysia's vulnerable coral reefs

<https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/tackling-fish-bombing-at-malaysia-s-vulnerable-coral-reefs>

"At the sound of a muffled boom, the divers pause and look uneasily at each other and their divemaster. Luckily, the blast seems far enough for the group to continue exploring the colourful reef. What is fish-bombing? Bottles, usually containing a mix of ammonium nitrate fertiliser and petroleum, are fitted with a timed fuse and dropped into the water.

The ensuing explosion kills or stuns fish, which are then scooped out of the water. It is also known as blast or dynamite fishing. Fish-bombing is the stuff of nightmares for the diving industry in Sabah state, Malaysian Borneo. Not only does it put off the tourists, it also devastates marine life and endangers the fishers themselves.

Action to address the practice has been ongoing for at least 16 years across several Asian countries. In Sabah, this action has intensified in the last six years as tourism has become increasingly central to the states economy and coastal communities. Programs have been run by various concerned stakeholders and the government-led Anti-Fish Bombing Committee. As a result, there has been a decline in the practice in Sabah.

In March last year, Covid-19 abruptly shut down tourism in Sabah, cutting off this vital source of income and increasing food insecurity for local communities. So far, data shared with China Dialogue Ocean from former fish-bombing hotspot the Mantanani islands, as well as information from other monitored islands, indicate the illegal practice has not increased.

But as the tourism drought continues, some fear desperate fishers will return or resort to fish-bombing and other unsustainable practices. In its 2020 report on fish-bombing in Mantanani, the NGO Reef Check Malaysia sounded a warning note: The impact of the pandemic on jobs reliant on tourism will contribute to community members becoming fish bombers again.

Data can inform enforcement Several programs monitor fish-bombing in Sabah. They use detectors to record information such as blast location, time and size. The data is then analysed and shared with relevant agencies, enabling a more targeted approach to enforcement. One of these programs involves the Hong Kong-based Oceanway Corporation. It has been supplying detectors and analysing data in Sabah since 2005, and intensively since 2014 in tandem with non-profit The Reef Defenders and local NGOs. Generally the activity has reduced in Sabah during the Covid-19 period, said Paul Hodgson, Oceanways director.

Local NGOs are putting this down to an increased presence of enforcement agencies. Malaysias border controls to rein in Covid-19 have been strict, particularly in Sabah where pandemic deaths currently make up about a third of the countrys total. The state is located very close to the Philippines, and in normal times people move regularly between the two countries. There has been an increase of navy and Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency patrol ships near the borders. I think their presence has reduced fish-bombing activities, said Dr. Achier Chung, lead marine biologist with Reef Guardian.

The NGO manages reefs in the Sugud Islands Marine Conservation Area off Sabahs northeast coast. It implements an effective monitoring and enforcement strategy based on data from blast detectors and a radar tracking system otherwise used for border control purposes. The three islands in the privately run protected area have no permanent inhabitants; but illegal fishers come from the mainland and the Philippines.

Chung said the NGO has wildlife wardens who patrol the waters with the assistance of police, and apprehend encroachers. In the five years between 2014 and 2019, they had reduced the number of fish-bombing incidents from 49 per day to less than 10, she said. Meanwhile, on Sabahs west coast, a fish-bombing response plan is being developed for a much larger area. The Tun Mustapha Park covers more than 50 islands across nearly 9,000 square kilometres. It is the

states newest and largest marine park and has its second highest coral concentration. As a multiple-use conservation area, its fishing grounds support the livelihoods of about 85,000 people, said Joannie Jomitol of WWF-Malaysia. Fish-bombing has been practised there for generations and destroys coral habitats,"" she added. Healthy coral habitats support better livelihoods for coastal communities . . . and can withstand inevitable climate change impacts such as coral bleaching.

Fish-bomb detectors were installed throughout the park two years ago by a government-led multi-stakeholder task force including WWF-Malaysia. The detectors have yielded nine months of baseline data, which is being fed into the parks response plan. Jomitol believes the effort to end fish-bombing needs everyone to be involved. Communication is a key part of this, she said. How are we going to frame this fish-bombing messaging so that it will build awareness and enable the public to take informed actions about it? Involving the community It is critical that local people see the connection between sustainable fishing and better livelihoods.

During a 2018 dialogue with local fishers, Fazrullah Abdul Razak of Sabah Parks emphasized the importance of protecting habitats and biodiversity conservation for food security and human wellbeing. Including local people in sustainable marine resource programs has become even more important in the face of pandemic-related lockdowns and economic hardship. We believe that the community is part of the solution and [are] our coastal frontliners, said Tommy Cheo of WWF-Malaysia. Cheo works in Semporna, a district on Sabahs southeast coast whose waters contain the largest coral concentration in Malaysia. Semporna is also home to one of Sabahs largest fisher communities and two marine parks.

Cheo said island communities in the district have been provided with training and resources to help manage their marine resources sustainably through locally managed marine areas, and indigenous and community conserved areas . Cheo believes this approach has helped local people find alternatives to fish-bombing. Hodgson from Oceanway agrees, but added: You need to look further than the fish-bombing . . . You see, the bombing is an indicator of the other illegal activity happening in an area. With the major effort seemingly targeting just this activity in the small-scale grassroots local fishing community, most other illegal, unreported and unregulated [IUU] fishing has probably increased in some areas.

Especially with the larger-scale fishers. China Dialogue Ocean was unable to verify increases in other IUU fishing in Sabah with government agencies or NGOs. Hodgson said: In areas where we see massive reductions in fish bombing “ like more than 90 percent “ one would expect an increase in fish populations. Well, this doesnt happen in most areas. What we see happen is an increase in electric and other IUU fishing.

According to Reef Check Malaysias 2019 Status of Coral Reefs in Malaysia report, populations of high-value species such as grouper and shellfish are not recovering well from past overfishing, while live coral cover declined between 2015 and 2019. The report mentions fish-bombing as a

threat in all seven sites surveyed in Sabah, along with unregulated tourism and lack of waste management. But monitoring is not easy. In the Semporna area, WWF-Malaysias Cheo said detectors have been stolen in the past, with another destroyed by a blast. WWF-Malaysia do not own enough detectors to monitor the whole of Semporna, and there is still a huge gap for monitoring, he added.

Consumers Association of Penang expresses concern over threats to Malaysia's water resources

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2021/03/675752/cap-expresses-concern-over-threats-malaysias-water-resources>

"The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) today expressed concern over threats to the country's water resources in conjunction with World Water Day 2021. CAP president Mohideen Abdul Kader urged the Environment and Water Ministry and the state governments to enhance their efforts and improve water management to meet the basic needs of the people in this country. At the same time, he also called on the public to value water in their lives by practising frugality and not wasting it. ""In conjunction with this year's World Water Day, with the theme 'Valuing Water', CAP hopes that everyone works together to restore and protect water resources that have been seriously affected in recent years. "

"CAP's field investigations found that threats to water resources such as destruction of catchment areas due to logging activities, pollution of rivers and seas by industrial waste, sewage, agrochemical residue and sediment from agricultural areas, animal manure and livestock waste including garbage disposal have increased, causing deterioration of water quality. ""We also found that drainage in agricultural areas were used as a dumping ground of pesticide containers by a handful of farmers causing the water to be polluted and threatening aquatic life,"" he said today.

Elaborating, Mohideen said the recent incidents such as the depletion of water in reservoirs in several dams such as the Muda Dam in Kedah and river pollution in Selangor and the Kim Kim River in Johor were evidence of deteriorating water quality which had affected the lives of the population in the area. He said the water quality in the Timah Tasoh Lake in Perlis and Tasik Chini in Pahang had also been affected by environmental pollution from the surrounding areas.

He added that the seawater in the country's waters had been polluted by various waste including waste oil from merchant ships, which happened often such as in Port Dickson, Negri Sembilan, causing marine life to be endangered and the source of income of fishermen severely affected. In Kedah, Mohideen pointed out, tens of thousands of residents in the state were complaining and worried that their health would be affected because the supply of tap water was not only reduced but also dirty and with silt. "

"Communities sourcing water from the hills, known as 'community water', also complained that the supply was contaminated with mud as a result of uncontrolled logging and extractive activities in the catchment area. ""The threat to water resources also affects the agricultural sector where many agricultural areas, especially paddy fields, have experienced declining yields, thus threatening farmers' source of income. "

"In general, the problems related to water not only affects the health of consumers, the agriculture, fisheries and food supply sectors but also our country's economy. ""Therefore, the slogan to save our forests, our rivers and our sea should not remain mere slogans. ""We should all play our part in protecting our water resources from being threatened and ensure that water is safe to use,"" he stressed. Water-related laws, Mohideen said, needed to be reviewed in line with the current situation. "

"The party who commits an offence of affecting water resources should be punished more severely, commensurate with the offence committed. ""As such, CAP recommends that more cooperation between the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) be established in an effort to raise awareness of the global water crisis and measures to safeguard this critical resource for everyone's benefit,"" he added.

Malaysian govt. registering fishermen to ensure they are eligible for allowance

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/03/08/govt-registering-fishermen-to-ensure-they-are-eligible-for-allowance>

"The Agriculture and Food Industries Ministry of Malaysia is proactively tracing and registering fishermen in Sabah who have not obtained licenses to ensure they are eligible for an allowance. Its minister Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee said registration with the Fisheries Department would allow the fishing community to receive government assistance, particularly the RM300 allowance for fishermen. He said Sabah had many fisherman without proper licences, a problem not unique to the state. "

"The ministry is taking action to solve this issue through the Fisheries Department with the help of Persatuan Nelayan Kawasan (PNK) and the state fishermen association (PNN)," said Ronald after attending a gathering with the fishing community of Pulau Jambongan Paitan in Beluran on Monday (March 8). Ronald said there are 210 'authentic' fishermen in Jambongan Island who do not have fishing licences. "

"The government wants the special allocations for fishermen to reach the target groups so that they can receive help like the livelihood allowance and fuel subsidy. ""Under Budget 2021, RM151mil has been set aside for the fishermen's allowance,"" he added. At the same time, the Beluran MP said the ministry was also updating and rechecking the list of registered fishermen nationwide to ensure that they are full-time fishermen. He also said PNK and PNN play active

roles to ensure that the registration and legalisation procedures run smoothly, and also to determine that only legitimate fishermen are registered for licensing.

Malaysian programme aims to get fishermen to plant crops

<https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2021/01/28/programme-aims-to-get-b40-fishermen-to-plant-crops>

"The Agriculture and Food Industries Ministry of Malaysia has come up with a programme to help fishermen in the B40 group generate more income. Malaysian Fisheries Development Board (LKIM) Johor director Intan Suhaila Othman said 245 fishermen have been selected to take part in the programme called the B40 Fishermen Additional Income Development Project. The fishermen will be involved in planting cash crops such as chillies, ladies fingers, sugarcane, banana, ginger and turmeric, which can be harvested within six months after they are planted. If successful, they can gain an additional income of RM250 per month, she said.

She added that the fishermen would be divided into groups of 10 and there were nine area fishermen associations in the state. Participants will be given RM1,000 worth of seeds, fertilisers, tools, equipment and pesticide, Intan Suhaila said, adding that each group would have 8sq ft of plantation area, which would be expanded if successful.

Each area will plant a different type of crop and planting is expected to start next month. For example, Gelang Patah will grow chillies while bananas will be planted in Kukup. Kampung Pasir Gudang Baru in Johor Baru will focus on sugarcane. There are also three types of fertigation that the participants could choose from, namely group fertigation, mini fertigation and individual fertigation.

Aside from providing them with the basic equipment and tools, they will also be given technical training, she said, adding that the Johor Agricultural Department would also be involved in the project. She said LKIM was currently in the final phase of distributing all the equipment and tools. The distribution process, which began last October, is expected to be completed next month. We hope those who have chosen to take part in this project will do their best to produce high-quality products that are marketable so that they would have another source of income aside from going out to the sea, she added.

Debris washed ashore by king tide cause hardship to fishermen in Sarawak, Malaysia

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2021/01/27/debris-washed-ashore-by-king-tide-cause-hardship-to-fishermen/>

"Twenty-five fishermen from Batu Satu Lutong want the authority concerned to help remove debris washed ashore during the king tide last week which now occupy the compound of their

fishing boat huts and blocking the outlet to the sea. Because of that, it is very hard to move their fishing boats from the huts through the outlet to the sea, lamented one of the fishermen, Abdul Hamid Assnan. The debris is a stumbling block for fishermen to push their boats to the sea from the huts, he told The Borneo Post yesterday.

According to Abdul Hamid, he had to scoop the debris every morning so that he could push his boat from the hut to the outlet to go out to the sea. He said the debris would get stuck to the wheels of the pull-cart of the fishing boat, causing fishermen to struggle in pushing the boats to the sea. Sometimes, he added, he had to seek assistance from fellow fishermen to push his fishing boat when going out to sea early in the morning.

He said all the fishermen had to help each other to push their boats to sea and later push them back to the huts when they returned. Its an extra burden for us to push our boats when the debris get stuck to our pull-cart wheels, he lamented. He said most of the fishermen had to push their fishing boats from the huts in the middle of the night and in the wee hours when sea water rushed to the shore during high tide.

RM1mn allocated for flood-hit fishermen in Malaysia

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/01/11/rm1mil-allocated-for-flood-hit-fishermen>

"The Malaysian Fisheries Development Authority (LKIM) has allocated a grant of RM1mil via the Natural Disaster Assistance Scheme to help fishermen affected by the floods throughout the country. LKIM chairman Datuk Syed Abu Hussin Hafiz Syed Abdul Fasal said the assistance covered aid for damaged boats, equipment and houses, but added that the authority had not received the report on the number of fishermen involved.

He said LKIM officers and fishermen organisations in each state were conducting an exercise to assist registered fishermen to evaluate their losses. He said eligible fishermen would receive aid of up to RM10,000 under the scheme if their boats were damaged, RM3,000 for damage to nets and other equipment, up to RM10,000 for homes and RM1,000 to cover home appliances.

Besides that, RM20,000 worth of food supplies and cleaning equipment, as well as RM20,000 of basic necessities, will also be considered for eligible fishermen, he told a media conference after the presentation of the Fishermen Natural Disaster and Welfare Assistance Scheme to the Matang Fishermen Association here yesterday. At the ceremony, 22 fishermen received RM300 to RM1,000 each from an allocation of RM11,400 after their houses in Kampung Matang Gelugor, Matang and Kuala Sepetang were inundated recently.

Syed Abu Hussin, who is also Bukit Gantang MP, said the authority believed that not many fishermen were affected by floods in the east coast as most of the areas hit were not inhabited by fishermen. He said the supply of fish was adequate even in the face of floods. The landing of

fish is normal and we have enough supply. About 60% of the fish landed here comes from the sea, 20% from aquaculture and 20% imported, he added.

Monsoon season a windfall for Malaysian trawl net mender

<https://www.thesundaily.my/local/monsoon-season-a-windfall-for-trawl-net-mender-AE5402615>

"The monsoon is never good news for most fishermen whose source of income depends on the sea, as it is dangerous for them to continue with their fishing activities during the Northeast Monsoon season. For Mat Yeh Mamat (pix), 62, of Kampung Pulau Gajah, Sabak, Pengkalan Chepa, near Kota Bharu, the capital of the Malaysian state of Kelantan, the monsoon season is the time he takes a new vocation, from a fisherman to a trawl net mender and patcher. It is the time of the year when he is most sought after for his skills in mending and patching trawl nets, which is what he has been doing since the past 10 years to ensure his family continues to have food on the table, even during the monsoon season, when he could not go out to sea. Mat Yeh said he learned the skill from his late father.

"The monsoon season should not be made an excuse by fishermen to waste time doing nothing because it is dangerous to go out to sea. As for me, the monsoon season allows me time to earn a living mending and patching fishing nets, he added. The father of two children, aged 17 and 24, said not many people dare to take up the job as mending and patching the fishing nets can only be done by the truly skilled in order to produce quality nets.

"To produce a trawl net takes six to 10 days and due to my age, I can only spend about six hours a day to sew, mend and patch the fishing nets, he said, adding that he is able to earn RM1,000 per month doing that. Mat Yeh said he normally receives orders for drift nets, which are used to catch fish species like kembung, selar, bawal, kerisi and prawn.

"My customers will normally get or buy the items needed. They only pay me for the work done, and the charge is RM50 per net, depending on the type of net they order, he added. One of his customers, Ahmad Firus Juhari, 30, said he would only send his fishing nets to Mat Yeh for mending. "He (Mat Yeh) is very meticulous in his work, he added.

Trawlers a big threat to marine life, says Malaysian NGO

<https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2020/11/30/trawlers-a-big-threat-to-marine-life-says-ngo>

"Studies show that more than two-thirds of the world's fisheries have undergone over-fishing or are completely harvested while the rest are in declining condition. Sahabat Alam Malaysia president Meenakshi Raman said that in Malaysia, trawlers and illegal fishing nets were among the main factors in the decline of marine resources.

“These trap young fish that have no commercial value unlike mature fish and fry, she said in a statement marking World Fisheries Day celebrated annually on Nov 21. “Trawlers and illegal nets damage the seabed and marine life breeding areas.

“Trawlers cause conflict and tension with coastal fishermen as they often infiltrate coastal catchment areas and damage fishing gear there. Meenakshi said that in addition, serious attention should be given to encroachment by foreign fishermen, especially in the waters off the east coast of Malaysia.

“The encroachment in the waters off Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang is costly. “The invasion of foreign fishermen from neighboring countries, especially Vietnam, has caused the country to lose about RM6bil a year. “The use of trawlers by foreign fishermen threatens the safety of local fishermen, she said. Meenakshi welcomed the move by the Fisheries Department to increase fishery resources through the use of artificial reefs. “These artificial reefs will be a good breeding ground for fish.

“The reefs will serve as a barrier, helping to stop trawler fishing activities in the coastal zone. “The disposal of confiscated boats using the sinking method will benefit fishermen as the sunken boats will become new fishing habitats. “This will add to the total number of fish breeding areas, she said. She also hoped efforts to preserve mangrove forests would be intensified. “Existing mangrove forests need to be maintained and well-preserved.

“Deteriorated areas need replanting and treatment. “Mangrove forests are a habitat for marine life to breed. “They are essential to the life cycles of young fish, shrimp and crabs. “At the same time, mangrove saplings are one of the best plants in stabilising the Earth's temperature and controlling global warming, she said.

World Fisheries Day: ~Time to act to protect fishers

<http://www.heraldmalaysia.com/news/world-fisheries-day-time-to-act-to-protect-fishers/56690/2>

"The Prefect of the Dicastery of Promoting Integral Human Development, Cardinal Peter Turkson, highlights the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need for a renewed effort from international organizations and governments, to strengthen their commitment to implement legislations to improve the living and working conditions of fishers. His call comes in his message to mark World Fisheries Day which is observed on 21 November.

At the heart of Cardinal Peter Turkson's message for World Fisheries Day is the impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the fisheries sector. The Cardinal notes that due to governments' strategic responses to the Coronavirus, such as social distancing, the closure of fishing markets, and reduced patronage of hotels and restaurants, “this has created challenges for the sale of fresh fish and related products.

In this current situation, he points out, “fishing, fish-processing, consumption and trade have steadily decreased. Cardinal Turkson also draws attention to other “chronic problems which bedevil the industry. Challenges to sector These challenges, he continues, which constitute “fisheries crime, are the problems of “Overfishing and Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing which continue around the world under different flags and by groups who dispose of powerful fleets and are better resourced.

“This state of affairs victimizes authentic fishers and fishing communities with unfair competition and depletes fish-stocks at a rate that does not allow the fishes to recover. It is a practice that is not sustainable and that leads to decreased fish populations and to reduced future production, says the Cardinal. Working Conditions Another area highlighted by the Prefect, is that of working conditions for fishers, especially at a time of a global pandemic.

He goes on to say that fishers at sea have been affected by the closure of fishing ports and the impossibility of making crew changes. “Additionally, the lack of Personal Protective Equipment has increased the risk of transmitting the virus because fishers work in restricted and enclosed spaces, he says. As a direct consequence of this, the Cardinal stresses that “crew members have been infected in a number of fishing vessels, and unable to receive immediate medical assistance, they perished and were quickly buried at sea by their worried companions. Often the families know nothing about the fate of their loved one. In his message, Cardinal Turkson underlines that the issues of human trafficking and forced labour still remain.

Furthermore, he says, “the vast majority of fishers around the world have been, for different reasons, excluded from the basic ‘social protection’ provided by some national governments and have been forced to rely upon the generosity of charitable organizations or the assistance of the local community for survival.

Solidarity In this time of pandemic, the Cardinal appeals for a greater solidarity with the most marginalized people, as it is explained in Fratelli Tutti by Pope Francis: “Solidarity finds concrete expression in service, which can take a variety of forms in an effort to care for others.”” And service in great part means “caring for vulnerability, for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people.

Time to act: The Prefect describes the path to full protection of human and labour rights of all categories of fishers as “a long and winding road. Yet again, he says, “we raise our voice to call for a renewed effort from international organizations and governments, to strengthen their commitment to implement legislations to improve the living and working conditions of fishers and their families and to toughen their fight against forced labour and human trafficking.”“The time for talking is over. It is time to act! Fishers in difficulty Concluding his message, Cardinal Turkson turns his thoughts on this World Fisheries Day to all the fishers around the world who are experiencing hardships and difficulties.

In particular, he mentions “the eighteen fishers of different nationalities from Mazara del Vallo - Sicily, who have been held incommunicado in Libya since 2 September. “Their families,” he notes, “ continue to wait anxiously for information about their whereabouts and the opportunity to talk with their loved ones. Most of all they long to be reunited with them.” “For this simple, humanitarian reason, I appeal to the appropriate national governments and authorities to resolve this acute situation, and find a positive solution through open and sincere dialogue.

Indonesia seizes Malaysian-flagged vessel for illegal fishing

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-11/19/c_139528067.htm

"Indonesia has seized a Malaysian-flagged fishing vessel with Myanmar crew in the Malacca Strait, according to the Ministry of Marine and Fishery Affairs on Thursday.

The ministry's Director General of Marine and Fishery Resources Supervision, Tb. Haeru Rahayu, said the vessel with the hull number KHF 1923 was accused of catching fish illegally in the Indonesian waters when it was arrested last Tuesday.

The ministry took the vessel and its crew to its agency responsible for supervising the marine and fishery resources in Riau province's city of Dumai for further legal process.

Malaysian-flagged vessels with Indonesian crews captured for alleged illegal fishing

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2020/11/12/malaysian-flagged-vessels-with-indonesian-crews-captured-for-alleged-illegal-fishing.html>

"Three Malaysian-flagged vessels from Vietnam sit at port after being seized for illegal fishing off the Riau Islands on Oct. 14, 2016. Authorities from the Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Ministry have captured two Malaysian-flagged fishing vessels with Indonesian crews for allegedly fishing in Indonesian waters in the Malacca Strait.

The ministry's director general of marine resources and fisheries supervision, TB Haeru Rahayu, said a directorate vessel, KP Hiu 01, had intercepted the foreign vessels during a patrol of Indonesia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) on Tuesday morning. Codenamed KM SLFA 5223 and KM PKFB 1786, the two vessels had three and four crew members on board, respectively. "When we checked, all of the ships' crew members turned out to be Indonesian nationals, Haeru said.

The Malaysian-flagged vessels were brought to the nearest supervision station. The crew members had allegedly violated multiple articles of Law No. 45/2009 on fishing, including Article 92, which carries maximum sentence of 8 years in prison and a Rp 20 million (US\$ 1.41

million) fine. "The arrest has further shown the ministry's commitment to continue protecting and guarding our waters," Haeru said. Pung Nugroho Saksono, the directorate's supervision and operation director, said the ministry's teams were constantly on the watch for foreign vessels operating illegally in the country's waters and were prepared to counter all kinds of methods used to elude Indonesian authorities.

"We always anticipate [those methods] and ensure that the ministry's fisheries supervision vessels will always keep our waters safe from illegal and destructive fishing," Pung said. He acknowledged that it was common for Malaysian-flagged vessels to employ Indonesian citizens. However, he warned citizens not to accept offers from foreign vessels recruiting for illegal fishing in Indonesian waters.

"We urge Indonesian fishermen to instead take advantage of capital access provided by the ministry, Pung said. The arrest came only days after the Indonesian Navy captured three Malaysian-flagged vessels with foreign fishermen on board for alleged illegal fishing within Indonesia's EEZ along the Malacca Strait on Sunday.

Navy personnel found more than 11 tons of fish aboard the three vessels, which employed Burmese and Thai crew members. Illegal fishing has been common along Indonesia's maritime borders in the Malacca Strait and the Natuna Sea. With the latest capture, the Maritime and Fisheries Ministry under minister Edhy Prabowo has apprehended a total of 59 foreign-flagged vessels and 19 Indonesian-flagged vessels for illegal fishing, kompas.com reported. The foreign vessels included 27 from Vietnam, 17 from Malaysia and 16 from the Philippines.

Ahead of monsoon, a lifeline for fishermen in Kuantan, Malaysia

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/10/635926/lifeline-fishermen-ahead-monsoon>

"This year has been a roller coaster ride for fisherman Zairi Zainal Abidin from Kampung Kempadang near Kuantan, the capital city of the state of Pahang on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. When the east coast monsoon season came to its tail-end in February, the 35-year-old started to net a good income from his catch but the Covid-19 pandemic and the Movement Control Order (MCO) changed things almost overnight.

Compounded by uncertain seafood prices and supplies, fishermen here face a challenging situation. Now, the year-end monsoon is just around the corner. Zairi, a father-of-one, said the majority of fishermen who were badly hit when the Covid-19 pandemic reached the country's shores were thus grateful for the Bantuan Prihatin Nasional 2.0 (BPN2.0) under the government's Prihatin Supplementary Initiative Package (Kita Prihatin). "

"It has been a challenging year and we are certainly thankful to the government for the handout. Our catch has dropped and sales has been slow. During the good times (before the MCO) I

earned about RM500 a day. Nowadays, I struggle to even bring home RM100. "The state government also provided cash aid and essential items. The BPN aid certainly brought some relief to the fishermen and the payout allowed us to make necessary preparations to face the rainy season," he said when met at the village.

Zairi described the cash aid as timely saying that once the monsoon season struck, fishermen would be forced to remain on-shore to take up odd jobs in the village or collect mud crabs and "lokan". Meanwhile Luqmal Hakim Abdullah, 75, said he would set aside some of the cash aid from BPN2.0 to help his son open a small foodstall in the village to support the family. Luqmal Hakim said his son, Mohamad Safuan Luqmal Hakim, 32, had been helping him at sea but due to uncertain times, it was better for his son to venture into something new. "

"The aid will be useful for Safuan to set up his business. "These are certainly tough times for many fishermen but we are grateful that the government is providing cash aid. It helps those of us from low-income households to weather the impact of the pandemic to a certain extent," said the father-of-six. The BPN 2.0 payments will be distributed in two stages the first was paid out this month, while the second will be disbursed in January next year.

Heightened security measures employed in Malaysia during pandemic

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/10/635354/mmea-heightened-security-measures-employed-during-pandemic>

"While the country wrestles with the Covid-19 pandemic, Malaysian maritime authorities are diligently ensuring that foreigners do not illegally enter our waters. Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) chief Admiral Datuk Mohd Zubil Mat Som said the agency has beefed up enforcement operations to curb cross-border crimes and illegal fishing activities in the South China Sea. "

"When the government implemented the Movement Control Order (MCO) to stem the transmission of Covid-19, many fishermen from Vietnam took advantage of it to intrude into our waters and rob us of our marine resources. "We chased away 83 Vietnamese and 74 Indonesian fishing boats between March 18 and June 23. As of Oct 23, 719 Vietnamese crewmen of 66 fishing boats and five 'motherships' have been arrested under Op Kuda Laut, which was introduced on June 24," he said in a statement. Zubil said a total of 129 foreign fishing boats and 1,290 fishing crew were detained under Op Naga Barat in April 2019.

As of Oct 26, another 886 foreign fishermen from 102 fishing boats were arrested for intruding and robbing Malaysia's fishing resources under Op Naga Timur in Sabah and Sarawak. Zubil said the agency's participation in the national-level, multi-agency Op Benteng since May has led to 82 arrests for various offences, the seizure of 18 boats without owners, chasing away of 14 foreign vessels, 47 sightings of "suspicious activities" and a sea robbery. The agency's Op

Dalal also crippled syndicates smuggling illegal migrants, especially Rohingya, in the northern Peninsula area, after arresting several agents and ground coordinators between April and July this year. Zubil said the country's maritime borders present a unique challenge, as it cannot be guarded by erecting gates and fences, unlike land borders. "

"Therefore, MMEA ensures that seven sea assets operate round-the-clock daily at each of the nation's maritime borders with the help of two aircraft and our Sea Surveillance System (Swasla) radar station. ""Elite personnel from our Special Task and Rescue team are also on standby with our air assets to be deployed for special operations, especially in Sandakan, Semporna and Klang. "

"Recently, we have also received seven Benteng class boats (fast interceptor craft) from the government... (these boats) can travel at speeds of around 60 knots. ""This new addition is timely as these assets can intercept and block speed boats of smugglers from neighbouring countries from coming in to Malaysian shores. Last week, we nabbed four cigarette smugglers from Indonesia with these boats,"" he said.

Investigate our fishermen ‘fairly, China tells Malaysia

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2020/10/12/probe-our-fishermen-fairly-says-china-beijing-tells-putrajaya/>

"China today asked Malaysia to “fairly investigate the Chinese fishermen detained for allegedly operating illegally in Malaysian waters. The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) had detained six foreign fishing boats and 60 Chinese crew members at two locations off eastern Johor for entering the country's waters without permission last Friday.

“We have requested the Malaysian authorities investigate the case fairly in accordance with the law, protect the lawful rights and interests of the Chinese citizens involved and report the progress of the investigation in a timely manner, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian was quoted as saying by AP.

Zhao said China had sent representatives to visit the detained crew members and provide them with personal protective equipment and other assistance. MMEA said the boats were believed to be heading for Mauritania to fish and were anchored in the country's waters as they had suffered damage.

Malaysia is among the countries exercising overlapping claims with China to territory and resources in the South China Sea, which straddles vital shipping lanes and covers rich fishing grounds, making it a potential flashpoint for conflict.

Penang South Reclamation project: State govt finalising compensation package for fishermen

<https://www.theedgemarkets.com/article/penang-south-reclamation-project-state-govt-finalising-compensation-package-fishermen>

"The Penang state government in Malaysia is finalising a compensation package for fishermen affected by the implementation of the mega Penang South Reclamation (PSR) project. State Transportation and Infrastructure Committee chairman Zairil Khir Johari said the Fishermen Taskforce, chaired by Deputy Chief Minister I Datuk Ahmad Zakiyuddin Abdul Rahman is also refining initiatives, mitigation steps and also the implementation mechanism of the Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP).

“The state government will take all the views and feedback from fishermen seriously, he said when answering a supplementary question from Goh Choon Aik (PH-Bukit Tambun) at the Penang State Legislative Assembly Penang here today. Zairil Khir who is also Tanjung Bungah assemblyman said under SIMP for PSR, the state is finalising various ex-gratia packages and a monthly allowance for the affected fishermen.

He said the state government was also in the midst of studying empowerment packages that would benefit fishermen in the area by building a new fishermen's jetty, a fishermen's cooperative as well as providing tuition schemes and education for their children. “We are also planning to provide training schemes for fishermen and their children, employment opportunities and give them priority for the registration of affordable housing to help fishermen who have yet to own a house, he said.

Zairil Khir said the state government, through relevant offices and agencies, is gathering more detailed information to draw up the packages to meet the needs of the fishermen. He said at the moment, the PSR project had obtained all the necessary approvals from the federal government.

Penang finalising ex-gratia package for fishermen impacted by PSR project

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/10/631596/penang-finalising-ex-gratia-package-fishermen-impacted-psr-project>

"The Penang government in Malaysia is finalising an ex-gratia package for fishermen who are likely to be affected by the controversial Penang South Reclamation (PSR) project. State Transportation and Infrastructure Committee chairman Zairil Khir Johari (DAP-Tanjung Bungah) said the state government is currently refining the details of the numerous packages.

He said the first package is ""Pakej Bantuan Hidup"", which includes ex-gratia payment and monthly allowance. ""The second is 'Pakej Pernerakasan". Under this package, a new

fishermen's jetty, a fishermen's cooperative, a tuition scheme and education for fishermen's children, a training scheme for fishermen and their children, and employment opportunities for those eligible are provided for. "

"Lastly, is priority for affordable housing registration (to help fishermen who have yet to own a house,"" Zairil said when answering a supplementary question from Goh Choon Aik (PKR-Bukit Tambun) on the first day of the state legislative assembly sitting here, today. Goh had asked about the fishermen's objections to the PSR project. Zairil said the Penang government, through relevant offices and agencies, is gathering more detailed information for the numerous packages to meet the needs of the fishermen. "

"A Fishermen's Task Force Committee, chaired by Deputy Chief Minister I Datuk Zakiyuddin Abdul Rahman, is refining the initiative, as well as mitigation measures and the Social Impact Management Plan (SIMP) implementation mechanism." Earlier, Zairil said the Penang government had obtained all the necessary approvals for the PSR project to proceed from the federal government. He said pursuant to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approval, one of the conditions is to prepare the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for approval by the Department of Environment (DoE). "

"The EMP is to ensure that contractors appointed for the project fulfil all the EIA approval conditions during reclamation works. ""At present, the EMP (Amendment 1) report has been submitted to the state DoE and pending approval. ""The state government, together with the project delivery partner (PDP), is refining mitigation measures to minimise social and environmental impacts before the physical works begin,"" he said, adding that the state government is preparing the design and tender documents. Early last month, fishermen in the state, likely to be impacted by the PSR, had again reiterated their objection to the project, a stand they have made since 2015.

This was despite a recent statement by Penang Infrastructure Corporation (PIC) Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Seri Farizan Darus, who said fishermen are more receptive to the proposed PSR project now after they learned more about the project. The Penang Fishermen's Association (Pen Mutiara), however, said the principles of the fishing community remain unchanged. On July 16, the Penang government announced the establishment of state-owned company, PIC, to undertake mega infrastructure projects under the Penang Transport Master Plan (PTMP), encompassing the paired roads, undersea tunnel and PSR off the southern coast of the island.

PIC will also be involved in planning and developing the PSR area, including topside development. The PSR project will see the creation of three man-made islands, measuring 1,800ha. The PSR project, off the southern coast of the island, had obtained EIA approval from the DoE, which came with 72 conditions. Various quarters, including environmental-based non-

governmental organisations and the fishing community, had vigorously opposed the project and raised concerns on its adverse socio-economic and environmental impacts.

Bleak and stormy times for fishermen in Malaysia

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2020/09/16/coastal-fishermen-are-sinking-dragged-down-by-shrinking-catches-and-falling-prices/>

"Zulkifli Subran sighs heavily as he gazes out to sea, dreaming about better times when making decent money from coastal fishing in Malaysia was possible. After three decades as a fisherman, the 46-year-old is well aware that his source of livelihood isn't always under his control. External factors like unpredictable weather, and temporary inconveniences like the movement control order make it hard for him to catch in-demand fish and sell them at a reasonable profit. It's becoming more and more difficult for fishermen like him to sustain themselves.

"I often go down to the water, only to see that it's not flowing, as older fishermen say. When I haul in the nets, they're empty, there's no fish, he told FMT. Whatever he catches he takes to town to sell to local fishmongers. They only want certain fish, so that means, he can't sell all of his meagre catch. "We look at the size of the fish. Bigger is obviously better price wise. For a croaker fish, sometimes it's RM1.50, sometimes just RM1. He shrugs as if to say, "What can you do?"

This burdensome life is shared by Saiful Baharain Ab Khair, 49, a fellow fisherman. Saiful first took to the sea at 13 because of the poverty in which his family lived. "As far as school was concerned, we had no money for it, we had no transport to take me there, and it was too far away for me to walk, so I was inclined to start work, he said. At first, he only accompanied and helped out his father, getting paid RM3 a day. "Sometimes on a good day he'd give me maybe RM5. Whatever I got, I saved it all. Thanks to his prudence, Saiful eventually managed to become the proud owner of his own sampan while his peers were stuck in their secondary school classrooms gazing forlornly out of the windows.

In those days, a fisherman with his own sampan could make a pretty decent income given satisfactory catches and reasonable selling prices. Those days have vanished. Yields have been decreasing of late, particularly for coastal fishermen. The numbers of cockles, snails and clams on the shores are also decreasing. Saiful believes that's caused by sewage water from paddy fields polluting the seawater.

Fishermen all along the coast are currently in dire straits because of the costs of purchasing necessary equipment and maintaining their boats as their catches continue to be underwhelming and uncertain. "The highest we can get in a month is around RM1,000, but we usually get as little as RM300, these days. Saiful says that it's imperative for coastal fishermen to be

introduced to ways of earning additional income which will help them ease their ominous economic condition. He looks as though he may soon get to the end of his mooring tether.

“If it's possible for the Maritime Department to act on fishermen who aren't supposed to be at sea, then why don't they help out broken fishing homes? “We only want to be able to earn a decent living, just enough to feed our families. “I want the Fisheries Department and Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia to come and see just how we live and what our real conditions are like. “Maybe then something will be done to help us.

Malaysia detains two vessels, 26 Vietnamese fishermen

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/crime-courts/2020/09/622929/mmea-detains-two-vessels-26-vietnamese-fishermen>

"Two Vietnamese fishing vessels with 26 crew members were detained by the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) for encroaching into the state waters yesterday. The two vessels were spotted about 33 nautical miles off Pulau Tioman during the Op Kuda Laut operation about 2.30pm. Pahang MMEA director Marine First Admiral Amran Daud said upon realising the presence of MMEA's patrol vessel at sea, the suspects tried to flee before they later surrendered. ""Based on the vessel registration number, the fishermen were from Vietnam and both the vessels were laden with three tonnes of catch.

The 26 crew members and two skippers were between 17 and 50 years old, and did not have any documents with them. ""MMEA seized fishing equipment, diesel supply and the vessels worth about RM2 million. The seized vessels were taken to Tanjung Gemok maritime post while the crew members have been detained for further investigations,"" he said in a statement today. He said the foreign fishermen were being investigated under Section 16 (3) and Section 15(1)(a) of the Fisheries Act 1985 for failing to inform the Malaysian authorities on their arrival and fishing in the Malaysian waters without permission respectively.

Amran said all the suspects who underwent Covid-19 screening will be also investigated under Section 6(1)(c) of the Immigration Act 1959/1963 for not possessing valid identification documents. If convicted, each crew member can be fined up to RM100,000, or a jail term not more than two years while the both skippers can be fined up to RM1 million each, or a jail term not more than three years.

Malaysian fishermen take pledge to ban shark and trawler fishing

<http://www.dailyexpress.com.my/news/157445/pledge-to-ban-shark-and-trawler-fishing/>

"Parti Warisan Sabah (Warisan) Vice-President Datuk Junz Wong pledged to table legislation that protects fisheries in the Malaysian state of Sabah and promotes marine conservation should his party regain power to form the next state government.

Wong, who is Agriculture Minister in the current caretaker State Cabinet, said previous plans to table the Sabah Fisheries Enactment Bill last April were halted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing Movement Control Order and also by the dissolution of the State Assembly.

“We never expected the MCO, we never expected the Dewan Undangan Negeri to be dissolved, so a lot of things have changed, he said, adding that this has pushed back the schedule for tabling the Bill. The new enactment would introduce a number of measures, including a ban on shark fishing and trawler fishing. Coral extraction and the sale of lobster eggs would also be banned to help preserve Sabah's marine ecosystem.

Aderick Chong, Sabah Shark Protection Association Chairman, said the new law was “crucial and “long awaited as it would empower the state government in protecting Sabah's marine resources. It would be a “historic change for our state, he said. The proposed law is part of a Sabah agriculture blueprint drawn up by the previous Warisan government to boost farming, fisheries and the livestock industry.

South China Sea: Fisherman shot amid increased competition for fishing rights

https://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=12358747

"A Vietnamese sailor has been shot dead this week in a clash with Malaysian authorities as competition for increasingly scarce fishing resources heats up in the South China Sea. A Vietnamese fishing boat reportedly attempted to ram a Malaysian coastguard vessel on Monday. ""The coastguard crew had earlier fired warning shots in the air. But after they rammed and threw a bottle of petrol, my men had no choice but to open fire in self-defence,"" said Malaysia's coastguard chief Mohamad Zubil Mat Som.

One Vietnamese fisherman was shot. He was pronounced dead after being rushed ashore for treatment. ""We are saddened by this deadly incident. But I can guarantee ... my men took this action to protect their lives and to protect our national sovereignty,"" Zubil added. The fishing boat was one of a pair intruding on Malaysian waters. Vietnam's government does not dispute ownership of that region. Both boats and their crews have been detained. Vietnamese fishers complain they are being driven further afield in an attempt to sustain their livelihoods.

Their boats have been rammed, boarded and crews interrogated, they say, as Beijing attempts to assert its arbitrary claim to the exclusive control of the South China Sea's resources. China's fishing militia – replete with political officers and military training – has become increasingly aggressive in recent years. The actions of its squid trawlers in the Sea of Japan appear to be

linked to a spate of North Korean 'ghost boats' – some with dead crew aboard – washing ashore throughout the region.

China's fishing fleet is now active again in the East and South China Seas after a four-month ban. Beijing imposed the seasonal prohibition in 1999 in what it says is an effort to allow fish stocks to recover. It is also enforced on Vietnamese and Filipino fishers operating in the Scarborough Shoal, Paracel Islands and Gulf of Tonkin. Neither nation recognises Beijing's claim of ownership over these waters. But that hasn't stopped Chinese state-controlled media from boasting that 1691 "illegal" fishing boats were seized this season, along with 630,000sq m of fishing nets.

Vietnam's fishing industry, however, has been increasingly accused of rampant illegal behaviour by its neighbours. There have been previous violent showdowns between its boats and Malaysia's coast guard. Since June 24, 43 Vietnamese boats and 487 crew have been detained. Thailand has also been apprehending intruding vessels. Singapore-based School of International Studies researcher Collin Koh told the South China Morning Post that "Vietnam does need to keep a tighter rein on its fishing community".

"It might be more helpful for such intra-Asean problems to be first properly addressed in order to foster co-operation on the South China Sea front in future." But Malaysian think-tank analyst Thomas Daniel says Vietnamese vessels are being "pushed south by Chinese fishing fleets and enforcement vessels". "There's been speculation that we're seeing more Vietnamese fishing ships here, and even afar as Indonesia and Papua New Guinea," he said.

Lecturer of International Relations at Vietnam National University Trang Pham told RadioFreeAsia: "This puts Vietnamese fishermen in a difficult position as they need to (move their) equipment to protect themselves from the aggressive behaviour of Chinese coast guards, which escort Chinese fishermen, and at the same time compete with a much larger number of Chinese fishermen in the area. "Those fishermen are not rich, they just barely survive each day, so when they become desperate, they may react awfully."

Chinese fishing vessels operating on the edges of the world heritage listed Galapagos Islands in the South Pacific have "gone dark", according to Ecuador. And Japan's defence forces have been placed on alert as boats begin to gather about the disputed Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. China operates the largest fishing fleet in the world. But it has stripped home waters bare, and the destruction of spawning grounds by the construction of artificial island fortresses may have done irreparable damage to the local ecology.

So the fleet – and Beijing – are looking further afield for vital food stocks. Ecuador raised an international alarm earlier this month after a fleet of some 340 Chinese fishing boats appeared off the Galapagos marine reserve. Beijing insisted its fishing militia would remain outside the protected waters. But this week Ecuador warned much of the fleet had turned off their location-

tracking beacons. "In this period, 149 ships have turned off their satellite systems ... we know the name of the ships," Rear Admiral Darwin Jarrin told reporters.

"It is a breach (of protocol) on the high seas because they do not want us to know what they are doing and the activities they carry out," Defence Minister Oswaldo Jarrin added. Meanwhile, Japan has again expressed deep concern at the constant presence of Chinese-government vessels about the Senkaku Islands during the past 18 months. Okinawa administers the uninhabited rocks. But Beijing claims them as its own.

"The repeated activities are extremely serious," Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said earlier this year. "Coastguard patrol ships have issued warnings, and we have protested to the Chinese side through diplomatic channels over and over again." Now dozens of Chinese fishing boats are nosing about the area.

Beijing insists Japan has no authority over the islands, and regularly sends coastguard vessels to escort its fishing boats. But Japan's Defence Minister Taro Kono said earlier this month that his forces were "ready to respond" – but refused to detail how. The Japanese Maritime Defence Force has since deployed more than 20 ships to patrol the islands.

Chinese boats return as South China Sea fishing ban ends

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/ban-ends-08182020184018.html>

"Chinese fishing vessels are pouring back into disputed waters, satellite images show, after China ended its annual summer fishing ban in the South China Sea and East China Sea, potentially heightening tension in the region as fleets compete for declining fish stocks. This year's ban started on May 1 and ended on Sunday, according to Chinese state media. Its imposition was opposed by neighboring countries, including Vietnam and the Philippines, who reject China's assertion of its jurisdiction over contested waters.

But the 3½-month ban, which China says is aimed at environmental conservation, passed with relatively few recorded incidents involving non-Chinese boats and fishermen. However, the end of the ban could usher in problems of its own. Vietnamese fishing associations and academics told BenarNews that the potential for conflict between fishermen from different countries will rise. China is known for sending paramilitary ships and its coast guard to back its fishing fleets as they assert resource rights in disputed waters, or even within other countries' exclusive economic zones.

Trang Pham, a lecturer of International Relations at Vietnam National University, says that without some agreement between China and Vietnam to share fishing rights in disputed waters, conflict is inevitable as ships jostle over prime catching spots. "This puts Vietnamese fishermen in a difficult position as they need to [move their] equipment to protect themselves from the

aggressive behavior of Chinese coast guards, which escort Chinese fishermen, and at the same time compete with a much larger number of Chinese fishermen in the area, she said. “Those fishermen are not rich, they just barely survive each day, so when they become desperate they may react awfully.

That's why the government needs to settle the dispute soon to, at the very least, guarantee the life of their own fishermen. China's unilateral ban had encompassed an area north of the 12th parallel in the South China Sea, covering waters and islets that are disputed between China, Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines, raising suspicions that the ban was an attempt to assert Chinese jurisdiction over the area. China's state-run Xinhua news agency said the ban, which has been instituted annually since 1999, was the “toughest in history, with thousands of patrols, seizing 1,691 illegal fishing boats and removing 630,000 square meters of illegal fishing nets.

State-run TV showed scores of Chinese fishing boats leaving port for the South China Sea on Sunday. Satellite images showed fishing boats on Sunday entering the Union Banks, an area of the Spratly island chain frequently visited by China's fishing fleets and maritime militia as well as fishermen from neighboring countries. Union Banks was notably not covered under the fishing ban, but other fishing boats, presumably Chinese, were farther north near Chinese-occupied features in the Paracels chain, such as Tree Island, Duncan Island, and Robert Island as of Monday and Tuesday.

Some fishing boats were visible Tuesday in the harbor of Woody Island, China's main base in the Paracels, a frequent stopping place for Chinese-operated ships moving through the South China Sea. In the East China Sea, Japan already warned China not to let fishermen near the Senkaku Islands, a string of uninhabited islets that is administrated by Japan yet claimed by China. The Japanese government previously expressed alarm over the constant presence of Chinese government-affiliated ships within 24 nautical miles of the Senkakus.

“The repeated activities are extremely serious. Japan Coast Guard patrol ships have issued warnings, and we have protested to the Chinese side through diplomatic channels over and over again, said Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga at a press conference in July. The Chinese fishing ban coincided with a period of heightened tension in the South China Sea, as Beijing presses its sweeping claims to virtually the entire strategic waterway, and the United States pushes back with its own displays of military might in the region.

While the ban passed off with relatively few incidents between Chinese authorities and fishermen from other countries, there were some confrontations. A Chinese ship was accused of ramming and sinking a Vietnamese fishing boat in early June around the Paracel Islands, in the north of the South China Sea, while video emerged of a China Coast Guard ship spraying another Vietnamese fisherman with a water cannon in July.

Tran Van Linh, chairman of a fishery association based in the central Vietnamese coastal city of Danang, contended that China's ambitions go beyond securing fish stocks. “They want to show

their power in the South China Sea for the purpose of hegemony, Linh told RFA's Vietnamese-language service, a sister entity of BenarNews, adding that about 17,000 fishing boats with special nets and lights had been sent to fishing grounds in the South China Sea. Illegal fishing is rife in the South China Sea, and disputes over fishing grounds are not limited to just China.

Members of the Malaysian coast guard on Sunday shot dead a Vietnamese sailor during a violent confrontation with Vietnamese-flagged fishing boats suspected of encroaching in Malaysian waters of the South China Sea, authorities said. And Thailand said it arrested 36 Vietnamese fishermen and confiscated four boats on Tuesday, suspecting the fishermen of poaching in Thai waters. But China operates the largest fleet of commercial fishing vessels in the world, and is also the number one source of illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing in Asia, according to the IUU Fishing Index put out by the Geneva-based Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime.

Even during the period of the ban, the moratorium seemed only to push Chinese fishermen further out rather than reel them in. Two trawlers were caught illegally fishing a protected species in Gabonese waters on Aug. 8, according to Sea Shepherd. Both trawlers are flagged by China and operated by Dalian International Fisheries, according to the International Maritime Organization database.

Also, a fleet of hundreds of Chinese fishing vessels have been operating near Ecuador's Galapagos marine reserve since late July, prompting the U.S. State Department to issue a statement in support of Ecuador's maritime law enforcement agencies and condemned China's fishing activity in the area, which threatens endangered species of shark. Ecuador reportedly reached an agreement with China for the flotilla to leave, but ship-tracking data shows the ships are still there.

Satellite imagery and ship-tracking data also showed that during the ban, Chinese fishermen and maritime militia were also active in areas of the Spratlys not covered by the moratorium, but plagued by over-fishing. Chinese maritime militia were spotted in Subi Reef, near the Philippine-occupied Thitu Island, just last week.

Over 40,000 fishermen in Malaysia can now enjoy social security benefits

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/08/09/over-40000-fishermen-can-now-enjoy-socso-benefits/1892366>

"A total of 42,000 fishermen in Malaysia, including those who are working independently in the fisheries sector, would be allowed to make contributions to the Social Security Organisation (Socso) under the Self-Employment Social Security Act 2017.

Agriculture and Food Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee said contributions under the Self-Employment Social Security Scheme (SKSPS) was to replace the fishermen's group

insurance contribution through the Malaysian Fisheries Development Authority (LKIM), beginning Aug 15 (Saturday). “Today is a historical day, because for the first time, self-employed workers in the fisheries sector are allowed by the Socso Act to contribute to Socso.

“This will open access to insurance protection for fishermen, with contributions taken from their cost of living aid allowance, he told reporters after officiating the Bukit Gantang Food Industry Mini Carnival 2020 and launch of the Fishermen's Socso Contribution scheme at the Bunga Raya hall in Changkat Jering, here today.

He said the proposed contribution amount is RM157.20 per year for all fishermen registered with LKIM, and who were eligible for the cost of living aid allowance. “The contribution amount will be debited directly through the Fishermen's Incentive Programme (FIP) system in stages. For the initial stage, the deduction will begin on Aug 15 involving 3,879 fishermen nationwide, he said.

Ronald was also confident that Socso would instate measures to extend insurance coverage to self-employed individuals in other agro-food industry sectors. Meanwhile, Socso chief executive Datuk Seri Mohamed Azman Aziz Mohamed said the SKSPS would provide cash benefits to contributors, besides medical treatment, physical recovery and vocational training.

“Under the scheme, their dependents or heirs are eligible for Dependent Benefits if the contributors die due to occupational disaster. “Education loans are also provided for the contributors' children if they die, or while they are receiving Permanent Disablement Benefit, he said.

Fijis Motibhai Group confirms no ban on Tan Mackerel in Malaysia

<https://www.fijivillage.com/news/Motibhai-Group-of-Companies-confirms-their-line-of-Tan-Mackerel-is-not-or-has-never-been-banned-in-Malaysia---FCCC-frx485/>

"The Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission say Motibhai Group of Companies has confirmed that their line of Tan Mackerel is not or has never been banned in Malaysia contrary to statements made in parliament.

NFP parliamentarian Lenora Qereqeretabua had raised concerns in parliament about the Tan Mackerel that was distributed by the National Disaster Management Office in Kadavu. Qereqeretabua had claimed that in June 2018 Malaysia's Ministry of Health ordered this very brand to be taken off supermarket shelves because it had been found to contain roundworms. She had said and yet this is what the government gave to people in Kadavu, and who knows where else.

FCCC General Manager Operations, Seinikavika Juita says they started receiving complaints and concerns from Fijians after this statement and a Facebook post. Juita says they urge Fijians to be

responsible and do proper research before making statements, especially if they hold some degree of influence adding that people must realize that they are responsible to uphold ethics and not spread misinformation.

FCCC has confirmed with Motibhai that as for the claims that Tan Sardines or for that matter any other Tan canned fish were banned in Malaysia is highly inaccurate and incorrect. She says Motibhai has raised this with their supplier Zhangzhou Tan Co. Ltd, who have confirmed that they have not exported any Tan brand of canned mackerel or sardines to Malaysia and also that they have never received any ban or restriction from the local government or Sanitary & Health Department due to any quality issue.

FCCC has obtained written confirmation on this. Jiuta says if any Fijian, Member of Parliament or otherwise, believes there is a consumer rights breach, they need to follow the proper channels and report it to the FCCC instead of putting out false information which can cause national panic. Meanwhile, Minister for National Disaster Management and Rural and Maritime Development Inia Seruiratu had apologised if the tinned fish that was part of the assistance provided to recipients in Kadavu was of inferior quality. However Seruiratu confirmed that there was a health certificate confirming that the product is safe for human consumption.

Agencies must work together to battle graft in growing animal trade: Malaysian officials

<https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2020/08/03/agencies-must-work-together-to-battle-graft-in-growing-animal-trade>

"Inter-agency cooperation is vital to combat corruption in the growing and lucrative international wildlife trade, say enforcement authorities in Malaysia. Sabah Wildlife Department (SWD) director Augustine Tuuga said corruption was multifaceted and could occur at every stage of the wildlife, forestry and fisheries value chain. "It can include bribes for information on the movement of animals or patrols, or to obtain rights and quotas, or grease the wheels of shipments, to ensure that they are not inspected or seized, he said during a workshop on laws governing anti-corruption, witness and whistleblowers protection.

The workshop was attended by Sabah and Sarawak wildlife crime investigators as part of efforts to fight against the illicit international trade of fast diminishing wildlife. Tuuga said it was important for his department to work with all partners to build understanding and ensure that wildlife, forest and fisheries agencies were trained and equipped to respond to corruption. "The department is also looking forward to collaboration with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

We will work towards the creation of an Organisational Anti-Corruption Plan, he said during the workshop organised by SWD, MACC and Danau Girang Field Centre (DGFC) as part of training for the Working Group on Wildlife Crime Intelligence. The workshop was also a platform for

the different agencies to share their difficulties in tackling corruption related to wildlife crimes, according to a statement released by the working group. MACC Sabah director S. Karunanithy said the commission was concerned that graft involving wildlife trade was spreading rapidly and becoming hard to control.

“Worldwide, bribery in crimes involving wildlife smuggling is increasingly spreading at a worrying pace and has become one of the driving forces for illicit trade that is still hard to curb at the national and international level, he said during the workshop. “Bribery is no longer seen as only a local problem but has evolved into trans-boundary crime phenomena, he said.

Karunanithy said that trade and smuggling of wildlife internationally usually involved bribery, smuggling and money laundering, among others.

Danau Girang director Dr Benoit Goossens said he hoped that the workshop would help increase inter-agency collaboration in efforts to achieve the objectives of the Wildlife State Action Plans adopted last year by the Sabah Cabinet. “During the 2017 international workshops on proboscis monkey, Sunda clouded leopard and Bornean banteng, it was recognised that poaching, hunting, and illegal killing and trade, were real threats to these and other species in Sabah.

“The information compiled at the workshops was included in the state action plans for each species, specifically to increase the capacities of wildlife law enforcement government agencies and of key partners in conservation, he said. In particular, he said they aimed to train crime analysts, investigators and intelligence gatherers, and a certified forensic technician at the Sabah Wildlife Health, Genetic and Forensic Laboratory (WHGFL).

This training is part of the programme to boost enforcement and forensic capacity to deter wildlife crimes in Sabah. He said the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs had provided almost RM4mil for the enforcement and forensic programme for specialised training for members of the Working Group on Wildlife Crime Intelligence.

Virtual gathering gives coastal communities chance to discuss global challenges

<https://www.miragenews.com/virtual-gathering-gives-coastal-communities-chance-to-discuss-global-challenges/>

"Researchers and local representatives from across the world will gather virtually this week to discuss some of the major challenges facing coastal communities. The third GCRF Blue Communities Annual Meeting had been due to take place in Hoi An, Vietnam, but had to be cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, partners in the UK and Southeast Asia will be meeting online to discuss the various aspects of policy, planning and management required to support sustainable marine ecosystems.

The annual meeting – with an adapted agenda of talks, workshops and debates – will take place from July 15-22 and is being hosted by the University of Plymouth, from which Professor Mel Austen of the School of Biological and Marine Sciences leads the Blue Communities programme.

It will be attended by up to 100 people and include presentations by academics at the University and the nine project partners, including Plymouth Marine Laboratory. This will also be the first annual meeting to feature stakeholders in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, where the programme's research projects are taking place, and the schedule has been adapted accordingly to take account of time differences with Southeast Asia.

Blue Communities is a four-year programme launched in 2017 with £6.7 million of funding from UK Research and Innovation's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). It seeks to create new ways of helping coastal communities in Southeast Asia to maintain and enhance their marine-based ecosystems, with an emphasis on improving health, wellbeing, and economic and food sustainability.

Twelve underpinning and interrelated research projects are underway and, in conjunction with coastal community stakeholders, are helping to provide an understanding of the impacts and opportunities of overfishing/sustainable fishing, rising tourism, renewable energy, climate change, coastal area management, rising populations, economic improvement and transport.

A key emphasis of the programme is to build research capability that will support and underpin stakeholders and their decisions on marine spatial planning for the sustainable management of marine ecosystems. All projects across the region will share data and findings, and it is hoped they will also be able to roll out the projects to other communities that suffer from similar challenges. Representing 3000 staff, researchers and students, the University of Plymouth's Marine Institute is the first and largest such institute in the UK.

ECERDC: Strategic projects to revitalise Malaysian regions economy post-Covid-19

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/money/2020/07/09/ecerdc-strategic-projects-to-revitalise-regions-economy-post-covid-19/1882982>

"The federal government of Malaysia, through the East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECERDC), will continue implementing strategic projects and attract new investments to revitalise the East Coast Economic Region's (ECER) economy post-Covid-19. ECERDC chief executive officer Baidzawi Che Mat said the council would remain focused on its primary agenda of enabling the region's socio-economic transformation and growth.

“As such, in addition to the recovery agenda, the strategic projects that have been earmarked in the ECER Master Plan 2.0 (EMP 2.0) will continue in full force to ensure long-term growth in

the region, he said in a statement. In the manufacturing sector, the biggest contributor to ECER's economic development, infrastructure projects including the expansion of industrial parks, logistics and services will be implemented to increase ECER's competitiveness and attract more private investment. Among the projects are the expansion of Kerteh Biopolymer Park in Terengganu, construction of Kuantan Port City port link road and the Kemaman-Gebeng water supply project in Pahang.

To further strengthen the region's appeal as a distinctive and dynamic destination for investments, ECERDC and the Pahang state government will establish a One-Stop Centre in Gebeng, Pahang within the ECER Special Economic Zone. "ECER has attracted RM122.6 billion in committed investments over the past 10 years, which will create 118,700 job opportunities and develop 10,720 entrepreneurs.

"Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, with the strategies laid out, we are confident that the EMP 2.0 target of RM70 billion in new investments, creating 120,000 job opportunities and 60,000 new entrepreneurs by 2025 can be achieved, he said. Meanwhile, the region is well-positioned to capitalise on the demand for domestic tourism as international travel restrictions will remain in force in the foreseeable future.

To further boost domestic tourism, the council said it is critical for key tourist attractions be completed, including the redevelopment of Kampung Laut in Kelantan, Kampungstay Air Papan in Mersing, Johor, and the upgrading of infrastructure in the islands in ECER. Covid-19 has also underlined the need for Malaysia to focus on food security, therefore, enhancing Malaysia's food production and other downstream activities will be an important focus for the council in the medium to long term.

Among the key projects are the establishment of Jemaluang Dairy Valley which is targeted to produce 4.8 million litres of milk a year, Tok Bali Integrated Fisheries Park which will focus on value-added processing activities, as well as, Endau Mersing Fish Processing Park which will establish a new fisheries hub in the district and provide small and medium enterprises with a platform to produce high value fish products.

In efforts to boosting cross-border trade, among the key projects that are critical for the region's macro-economic growth include the development of the Tok Bali Port as strategic trading outpost to the Indo-China Region, Tok Bali Industrial Park, Tak Bai-Pengkalan Kubor Bridge, Rantau Panjang-Sg Golok Bridge, and the Sungai Golok flood mitigation project, which will boost trade between Kelantan and Thailand.

COVID-19 impacts on fish and aquatic food systems: WorldFish and partners join forces in research response

<https://www.worldfishcenter.org/pages/covid-19/>

"As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread globally, many countries are putting in place unprecedented lockdown measures designed to contain its impact on public health. However, such measures are having significant impacts on other domains of human activity, including food and nutrition security, jobs, livelihoods, gender equality, and potential social unrest. The implications will be serious and particularly dire for the poor and vulnerable living in developing countries. It is estimated that the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic could plunge more than half a billion people into poverty, with communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East expected to suffer the most.

The impacts of this global health crisis and ultimately the economic crisis will disproportionately affect women and girls and reverse progress on gender equality on many levels. Unless sound and decisive measures are taken fast to keep global food supply chains going and to protect poor and vulnerable communities, a looming food crisis - with serious socio-economic consequences - will become inevitable. Fish and other aquatic foods are a key part of our global food systems and a highly nutritious food group of major social, cultural and economic significance. Disruptions in supply chains for fish and aquatic foods are already happening due to disruptions in transportation, trade, and labor.

Falling production from reduced fishing efforts and delayed stocking of aquaculture systems will lead to lower supplies, access, and consumption of these foods. Decreased consumer demand and increased transaction costs will have a knock-on effect that will push the price of fish and aquatic foods up and make them less affordable for poor consumers. Many people employed in these supply chains, such as fish vendors, processors, suppliers or transport workers will lose their jobs. ••• Already, coronavirus 'lockdowns' in developing countries are triggering a mass exodus of the urban poor migrating to their rural homes. With no jobs, no incomes or savings, and limited means and space to practice good hygiene and social distancing, millions of women, men, children, and elderly people will face death, disease or slow starvation.

Those who can rely on subsistence agriculture, fishing and fish-farming to weather this crisis may have a chance at survival. Governments, like other critical decision-makers, donors and private sector investors - the world over - will need to be guided by sound scientific data and knowledge to understand the severity and complexity of these issues. They will need solid scientific evidence to be able to formulate appropriate responses in terms of concrete policies and actions that work and work fast.

WorldFish, together with the CGIAR Research Program on Fish Agri-food Systems and its many partners - across the public and private sectors - are already working to shed light on the nature and magnitude of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on fish and aquatic food systems in several developing countries where we work across Africa, Asia, and the Pacific.

Research responses are already being formulated to examine and understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in fish market systems and in poor and vulnerable communities, where fish

and aquatic foods are vital to food and nutrition security, human health, wellbeing, and livelihoods. Our genetics research teams in Malaysia, Egypt, and Bangladesh have taken early actions to manage critical aquatic genetic resources that are invaluable to millions of fish farmers and the aquaculture sector in Africa and Asia.

In Bangladesh, WorldFish is collaborating with several One CGIAR centers, the FAO and the World Food Program to provide timely evidence-based insights to shape and inform government advisories and policies to keep value chains operating in safe ways. The goal is to orient social protection schemes towards the most vulnerable and to keep food production and market supplies functional under enormously challenging conditions. Our researchers in India are working closely with the Odisha state government to develop advisories for fishers and aquaculture farmers, hatcheries and markets.

In Timor-Leste, we are using high-resolution digital technologies to track and record pattern changes in small-scale fishing activities. We are also supporting local partners to keep tilapia hatcheries operating safely. We have launched a multi-country survey on fish supply chains in Bangladesh, Egypt, Myanmar, Nigeria, Timor-Leste, and India in the states of Odisha, Assam and Andhra Pradesh. Weekly telephone interviews are being conducted with women and men farmers, fishers, input suppliers, processors, traders, and retailers, who enable the production and supply of captured and farmed fish across local and regional markets.

The purpose of these surveys is to gather data on changes in the availability and price of aquatic foods and production inputs in key regions. The survey data is informing COVID-19 advisories and risk management guidance that is being disseminated to local fishing and fish-farming communities via our in-country partner networks. Our nutrition and value chain experts have also provided inputs to the Interim Issues Paper on the Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition by the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) to the Committee on World Food Security. With telework being the new normal, all our country teams are now using a number of enabling digital technologies to continue and maintain close collaboration with partners and communities.

To assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are collecting data on people's priorities, needs, and coping strategies, and also seeking to identify and articulate science-based responses and solutions to support effective measures from local and national governments, partners and communities to this crisis. These early research activities are not exhaustive, and we remain agile and responsive as the situation evolves, as needs are assessed, and as more data become available.

While responding to the COVID-19 outbreak challenges, we take enormous pride in the work of our researchers, our partners and the communities where our work is embedded. Our mission to harness the power of science to build a better world for healthy people and a healthy planet through fish and aquatic foods research could not ring truer for many of us. We also recognize

that responding to this unprecedented situation requires us to pool ideas, talents, resources, and efforts like never before, both within WorldFish as an organization, but also with our research partners within and outside One CGIAR, as well as governments and other public and private sector stakeholders.

This is not the first nor the last pandemic. Close transdisciplinary and international research collaboration – across the public and the private spheres - is necessary. Meanwhile, governments and individuals with the wealth to do so must continue to support scientific research so that we can ride the COVID-19 storm out, minimize its devastating impacts on the world's poor and vulnerable, and find ourselves better prepared the next time.

Sound data and scientific evidence to shape effective responses to the impacts of this global pandemic on the food and nutrition security and the livelihoods of millions of poor and vulnerable communities in the developing world are critical if we are to ensure its impacts do not exacerbate the many inequities that already exist in our globalized world.

Nutritious fish and aquatic foods, made safe, available, accessible and affordable, are part of that inclusive prosperous future we must imagine - now more than ever before - to secure healthy and nutritious diets for all. They are an indispensable part of the solution to ensure sustainable and resilient global food systems in the face of climate change, and the related global health crises such as the one under which we are now living and working.

Mangrove collapse ‘inevitable unless emissions curbed: research

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/06/mangrove-collapse-inevitable-unless-emissions-curbed/>

"The threshold beyond which the world's mangrove forests can survive could be reached within the next 30 years if sea levels continue to rise at their current pace and greenhouse gas emissions are not curbed, according to new research. Mangroves have two particularly important roles: they buffer vulnerable coastlines from severe weather systems such as cyclones and storm surges, and are considered to be some of the most valuable carbon sinks of any terrestrial forests.

Researchers studied samples of sediment from 78 tropical or subtropical mangroves that built up between 10,000 and 7,000 years ago, part of what are known as the final stages of the Holocene period, when glaciers were melting and sea levels rose as a result. They determined that mangroves can only withstand a maximum relative rise in sea levels of 7 millimeters, about a quarter of an inch, per year: “a limit beyond which mangrove systems cease to function, according to a statement that accompanied the report.

Mangroves are able to adapt to fluctuations in sea level, but they have their limits, said one of the report's co-authors, Neil Saintilan, a professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. If the process of accretion, in which soil

deposits build up around mangrove roots in response to rising sea levels, cannot keep up with these changes, then “mangroves cannot stay in place (they drown), Saintilan wrote in an email. He said mangroves have what is known as elevation capital, which is the point beyond which they drown.

“[H]owever, once the 7mm per year sea-level rise threshold is reached, it is only a matter of time before the world's existing mangrove forests collapse it is from that point inevitable, he wrote. “Sea-level rise has huge lag times, so even if emissions from that point come under control, the high rates of sea-level rise will continue for a very long time after (centuries). Saintilan said the study had found instances where mangrove peat was more than 10 meters (33 feet) thick, “so we know mangroves can easily cope with 10 metres of sea level rise. But what is critical is the rate at which the levels rise over longer, sustained periods of time.

“[T]heir response is very sensitive to the rate of rise over the timescale of decades to centuries. That's where the 5mm per year and 7mm per year thresholds come in. If we control warming under the low emission scenarios, we are suggesting that there is no reason to think the rate of sea-level rise will reach a point that poses a threat to mangroves, so that's the good news story, Saintilan said in his email. In February, research found that the last time carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere were as high as they are today, sea levels rose by 15-25 meters (49-82 feet).

According to a study released in 2018, undisturbed mangrove forest soil was found to have stored up to 6.4 billion tons of carbon in 2000, but at least 122 million tons of this was lost over the next 15 years. In addition to sea level changes, mangroves are particularly at risk from erosion and deforestation. Asked if the drowning of these forests could affect existing carbon stocks, Saintilan said that if more exposed mangroves die off, the carbon-rich soil could be affected by wave attack, but that research continues in this area.

But it's not only mangroves' abilities to grow vertically that are under threat. While he was not involved in the study, John Howes, a Malaysia-based wetland ecologist and associate expert with Wetlands International, has studied how mangroves respond and adapt to tidal changes, wave surges, changes in currents and sea levels. In addition to growing vertically, mangroves will also grow or retreat back toward the land.

“[B]y in-land migration, he wrote in an email, “mangrove systems colonize lands behind their existing boundaries. He said that across Southeast Asia, these “elastic ecosystems are under increasing pressure as coastal developments and man-made dikes, bunds or embankments are built around their edges. “This bund will prevent any opportunity for in-land migration of mangrove systems in response to sea level rises, and mangrove systems will ... be squeezed between the sea and the bund.

As such, I imagine that initially the mangrove zonations within a system will become narrower, and the most diverse back-mangal communities will be likely reduced most.

Malaysia to detain, charge crew of illegal Vietnamese boats

<https://in.reuters.com/article/malaysia-vietnam-fishing/malaysia-to-detain-charge-crew-of-illegal-vietnamese-boats-idINKBN23V0U8>

"Malaysia will detain and charge crew members of Vietnamese vessels caught illegally fishing in its waters instead of turning them away as authorities had done previously, the country's coastguard chief said on Wednesday. Vietnam and its neighbours have for years been involved in disputes over fishing in the resource-rich South China Sea, most of which is claimed by China. Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Taiwan have overlapping claims.

Malaysia usually turned away Vietnamese boats found fishing in its waters but will now arrest them after higher numbers were tracked following the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in mid-March, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) director general Mohd Zubil Mat Som said.

Coastguard officials would also fire warning shots towards Vietnamese boats which carried out dangerous manoeuvres to escape or failed to comply with the MMEA's directives, he said.

"They have been a constant thorn in our side and we want them out, he told a news conference, adding that authorities were also seeking higher penalties for those charged.

Vietnam's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Since March 19, the MMEA has recorded 88 cases involving Vietnamese boats, Mohd Zubil said. Authorities have also detained a Thailand-registered tanker suspected of supplying fuel, food and other items to Vietnamese fishing vessels last week, he added.

Washed up fish carcasses not sign of impending disaster, says Fisheries Dept of Penang, Malaysia

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/06/04/washed-up-fish-carcasses-not-sign-of-impending-disaster-says-fisheries-dept>

"The carcasses of dead fish washed up along several beaches here are not a sign of an impending disaster, says the Penang Fisheries Department in Malaysia. It said that its investigation found that the red snappers and trevallies were from nearby fish farms, adding that the fish died due to a sudden bloom of algae in the water – a natural phenomenon which occurs annually.

Its director Noraisyah Abu Bakar said the department has received reports of fishes dying in stages at Kuala Kurau, Kuala Gula and Tanjung Piandang. "According to the Fisheries Research Institute (FRI), the high presence of *Cochlodinium* algae in the water which occurs annually worldwide is the cause as they are toxic to various fish and shellfish. However, it does not affect humans, said Noraisyah.

She added that the fish found floating in the water and decomposing along shores died due to the algae bloom. "The algae bloom reduces oxygen in the water, causing the fish to surface and eventually die," she said. Noraisyah added that fish in the wild are not affected as they are able to escape. "Wild fish are not dying in large numbers and fishermen are still reporting good catches at sea," she said.

On Wednesday, social media went abuzz with videos and photos of the fishes lying dead along shores in Teluk Kumbar and various beaches in the area, with some weighing over a kilogram. This led people to speculate that a tsunami had happened, while others blamed pollution.

Asia's fishermen and farmers go digital during virus

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-52767227>

"During a national lockdown, farmers from Malaysia's Cameron Highlands were faced with throwing away tons of fresh vegetables. Wet markets were shut down as social restrictions were introduced to stop the virus spreading. E-commerce was their saviour as they went online for the first time to connect with customers. It has been a similar story for farmers and fishermen across South East Asia as they embrace a new way to sell.

Malaysia's national lockdown, which it calls a Movement Control Order (MCO), has been in place since March and was recently extended to 9 June. Steve Teoh is the owner of the Deoness Plantation in Cameron Highlands, 200km north of Malaysia's capital Kuala Lumpur, where he sells corn and flowers. "

"When the Movement Control Order happened, I was looking at probably throwing away the harvested flowers since the demand abruptly stopped overnight as florist shops had to close," he said. Thankfully, Singapore-based e-commerce platform Lazada stepped in to bring Mr Teoh onboard and connected him with an online florist to sell his flowers to a new customer base. The company also helped other farmers facing the same problem in Malaysia, with piles of fresh fruit and vegetables they couldn't sell in the traditional way. In the first weekend of the lockdown, more than 1.5 tons of vegetables were sold, according to Lazada. "

"Without an online channel, I will probably have to throw away my flowers," added Mr Teoh. Audrey Goo is the owner of Malaysia-based MyFishman, a fresh seafood subscription and delivery service in Malaysia. She also faced the problem of not being able to sell at wet markets or deliver fresh fish before she joined the e-commerce platform. "Our business has definitely been affected by Covid-19, given that we aren't able to supply to restaurants, wholesale fish markets, grocery stalls or coffee shops, as most had to close, but being able to sell online is still keeping us in business," she said.

During the MCO, MyFishman saw sales increase by about 150% during the first two weeks as people stocked up with food at home. Lazada said from mid-January to mid-May fresh produce orders have more than doubled in the South East Asia region. "Businesses in every industry and sector, including those in agriculture, are pivoting online to capture the new opportunities arising from changing consumer preferences," said Pierre Poignant, group chief executive at Lazada.

Pandemic exposes gap in rural resilience and preparedness in Malaysia

<https://www.malaymail.com/news/what-you-think/2020/05/05/pandemic-exposes-gap-in-rural-resilience-and-preparedness-winnie-ong/1863330>

"For the first time in 30 years, poverty is set to rise. Global institutions warn that millions will be pushed into poverty this year with far-reaching consequences for health, education and living standards. During this period, most self-employed workers have been affected by income or job losses and reported savings of up to one month. One of the worst affected sectors were agriculture, livestock and fisheries, where 70 per cent of workers have seen their income reduced and 21 per cent have lost their jobs as of end of March.

Natural disasters, like cyclones or floods, demand early preparedness and addressing risks and vulnerabilities before these events occur. The same applies to the current crisis. Even before the pandemic hit, rural communities in Malaysia already face higher levels of poverty, lower income levels, and lower levels of educational attainment than urban areas. Over seven million of our population lives in rural towns, villages or settlements.

The states of Sabah, Kelantan and Perlis the most financially affected by the partial lockdown have significant rural populations. Rural communities are exposed to the global turmoil but are excluded in multiple ways from what urban households can access leading to widening of existing disparities. Building resilience, the ability to use resources and recover from shocks without compromising long-term prospects, is essential. Without resilience, vulnerable rural individuals and households fall deeper into poverty and debt, educational opportunity is reduced, leading to even lower capacity to respond to the next shock.

Promotion of decent work is integral to a strong social safety net. Daily wage workers, small farmers and informal workers are the most vulnerable to economic shocks. Working conditions for them does not automatically lead to uplifting of their socioeconomic condition, and retirement savings if any are dismal. Rural women in particular will benefit from a conducive and supportive environment to upgrade informal work into micro- or small enterprises.

In carrying out its rural development policy for 2030, the government should identify local actors in local government, city councils, civil society, businesses, artists, institutions like universities, to drive community aspirations and inclusive development. Inclusivity a word that is used

widely implies a shift in policy making that is more consultative and conscious of unique characteristics of each rural locality.

Shifting from process indicators to outcome indicators aligned to community needs will need the participation of researchers and public policy specialists. The impact of rural transformation centres should be evaluated from the qualitative perspective of users and businesses over time, beyond aggregate indicators of how many participated in its programs. Services offered should continue to evolve with the needs of the community.

Rural research can help policy design by capturing how different policies link to each other and how they are performing in each location, and to inform planning policies for governments. The future of rural communities is closely related with that of urban towns and cities, and their resilience to withstand and recover from challenges is essential to the nation as a whole.

COVID-19: Increasing number of undocumented Indonesian migrant workers returning from Malaysia by illegal routes at sea

<https://www.theonlinecitizen.com/2020/04/28/covid-19-increasing-number-of-undocumented-indonesian-migrant-workers-returning-from-msia-by-illegal-routes-at-sea/>

"20 undocumented Indonesian migrant workers returning from Malaysia were caught illegal-border crossing at sea after sneaking past the Indonesian Navy in the early hours on Sunday (26 April). Border authorities caught them aboard a fishing vessel near Asahan, north Sumatera. There were seven women, 13 men, and a toddler on the vessel. Commander of Tanjung Balai Asahan Naval Base, Com. Dafris Datuk Syahrudin told The Jakarta Post on Sunday that the vessel's passengers are now being tested for COVID-19.

He added that the migrant workers appeared healthy on the outset and did not show any symptoms of COVID-19. Belawan I Naval Base commander Adm. Abdul Rasyid said that there has been an increase in the number of undocumented Indonesian migrant workers returning from Malaysia by sea through illegal routes.

"In recent weeks, we've caught many undocumented Indonesian migrant workers returning from Malaysia through illegal routes. We have tried to catch them so that they don't enter the country without going through medical check-ups. It's important to curb the spread of COVID-19 from overseas, he said.

On 20 April, the local authorities also caught 22 undocumented Indonesian migrant workers returning from Malaysia on a fishing vessel in Asahan regency, North Sumatra. "We don't want to take any chances in this difficult time, as the country is on alert for the COVID-19 pandemic and its transmission – especially from overseas. The Indonesian Navy will increase border patrols, especially in suspected illegal routes, Abdul told The Jakarta Post on Sunday.

According to the government data as of 21 April, there are more than 64,000 Indonesian migrant workers who had returned from Malaysia since the country imposed COVID-19 lockdown. Around 46,000 of them are reported to have travelled by sea.

Coastal communities seek crowd funding for mangroves across India and South-East Asia

<https://www.sightmagazine.com.au/news/15428-five-trees-or-a-latte-coastal-communities-seek-crowdfunding-for-mangroves>

"Would you forgo a cup of coffee to plant mangroves aimed at helping coastal communities fend off climate change? A Singapore-based online platform is counting on crowdsourcing donations for projects to add a billion mangrove trees by 2025. The Global Mangrove Trust plans to launch an app and website in the next six months using blockchain technology to fund mangrove restoration projects across India and South-East Asia.

Users will be able to select a project and, once the funding target is met, track its progress through video, photograph and data updates, and monitor forest growth drawing on satellite images and algorithms. ""We provide an opportunity for people all over the world who have excess money [to] lay off one \$5 latte and plant five mangrove trees with a coastal community,"" said Ryan Merrill, the trust's managing director. The trees, together with related employment and conservation efforts, offer an opportunity to provide ""a disproportionate benefit for the most vulnerable"", he added.

Mangroves make up less than one per cent of tropical forests worldwide but are vital for the well-being, food security and protection of coastal communities, according to the United Nations Environment Programme. They protect coastlines against the ferocity of storms and rising sea levels, absorb planet-heating carbon from the atmosphere and boost fish stocks. But mangroves are being destroyed at rates three to five times higher than the average for forests, and more than a quarter of the world's mangrove cover has already disappeared, UNEP says.

Some mangrove restoration projects have approached the trust directly to seek funding via its new platform, called GROVE, while others were enlisted with the help of conservation groups. The projects are located along South Asia's Bay of Bengal and in South-East Asia, including the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. The platform plans to add initiatives in Africa, as well as North and South America.

The GROVE funding will reward communities that restore, maintain and expand their mangrove forests over time, rather than just providing one-off payments. ""There have been lots of projects in history where people have planted mangroves and three years later, all the saplings get chopped down and sold for charcoal,"" said Merrill.

The platform is also backed by expertise from the San Francisco-based Global Innovation Lab for Climate Finance, which since 2014 has developed and launched 41 innovative financing instruments to help meet global goals to curb climate change, attracting investment of about \$US2 billion.

Merrill said that if the GROVE platform proved successful in raising funds for mangrove restoration, the technology could be used to support other types of nature protection. "If we get it right for mangroves, other communities might find it's a useful software platform to adapt and adopt for fundraising for community forestry...or land use and habitat conservation," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Water wars: Coronavirus spreads risk of conflict around the South China Sea

<https://www.lawfareblog.com/water-wars-coronavirus-spreads-risk-conflict-around-south-china-sea>

"Washington and Beijing are using their militaries to signal that neither is letting down its guard on Taiwan and the South China Sea during the coronavirus pandemic. Soon after Taiwan's Vice President-elect William Lai Ching-te visited the United States in early February, People's Republic of China (PRC) military aircraft crossed the dividing line in the Taiwan Strait into Taiwan's airspace two days in a row. The incursions included Chinese H-6 bombers, J-11 fighter jets and KJ-500 early warning aircraft.

Taiwan responded by scrambling F-16s to shadow the Chinese aircraft out of Taiwan's airspace. On March 19, both USS Barry (DDG 52) and USS Shiloh (CG 67) launched SM-2 missiles for a live-fire exercise in the Philippine Sea. Some Chinese military analysts deemed the exercise to be an uncommon "warning to the People's Liberation Army [PLA]. Then, on March 25, USS McCampbell (DDG 25) conducted a Taiwan Strait transit the third such transit by a U.S. warship in 2020. In response to McCampbell's transit, the spokesman for China's Ministry of National Defense called U.S. actions "a serious violation of international laws on freedom of navigation. However, there is little legal grounding for this assertion.

The narrowest portion of the Taiwan Strait is over 70 nautical miles wide, well beyond the 12-nautical-mile territorial sea of either coastal state. The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea also allows for "continuous and expeditious transit passage through international straits as well as innocent passage of warships through the territorial seas of coastal states. The same week as McCampbell's transit, Taiwan held large-scale military exercises to simulate repelling an "all-out Chinese aerial invasion, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense.

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen added on March 24 that the Taiwanese "armed forces remain as vigilant as ever. Although the Chinese, U.S. and Taiwanese military actions are individually unremarkable, they collectively signal what one analyst called posturing to prove "combat

readiness remain[s] unaffected by the virus. Beyond Taiwan, security analysts have argued that China may be seizing the “COVID-19 advantage in the South China Sea. China has reportedly made gains in both new research facilities and resource extraction in the South China Sea since the start of the pandemic.

On March 20, Chinese media reported that China opened two new research facilities on its occupied features in the Spratlys. The Chinese Academy of Sciences will operate the two facilities on Fiery Cross (Tagalog: Kagitingan; Mandarin: Yongshu) and Subi (Tagalog: Zamora; Mandarin: Zhubi) Reefs for field studies on “deep sea ecology, geology, environment, material sciences and marine energy.

The International Business Times emphasized that China's “supposedly civilian scientific purposes come as the rest of the world is “distracted by coronavirus. Then, on March 26, China's Ministry of Natural Resources announced that it extracted and produced a record amount of natural gas in a single day in the South China Sea. The production process ran from February 17 to March 18, as COVID-19 began its rapid spread around the world.

Around the South China Sea, rival Southeast Asian claimants Malaysia and the Philippines are preoccupied with enforcing mandatory quarantine measures. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte previously self-quarantined as a precaution, and the Philippine Armed Forces chief of staff recently recovered from a positive case of COVID-19. Vietnam and Indonesia are also enforcing measures to limit the spread of the virus.

Coronavirus travel bans hit South Asia migrant workers

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/coronavirus-travel-bans-hit-south-asia-migrant-workers-200320160840164.html>

"Dinesh Bhandari spent two days travelling by bus from his village in rural Nepal to Kathmandu to get a permit to take up a factory job he had been promised in Malaysia. When he reached the Nepali capital, he found the door to the recruitment agency locked. A note on it read: ""No labour permits will be issued by the government until further notice due to the coronavirus."" The 22-year-old is one of a growing number of migrant workers hit by a wave of travel bans from Asia to the Middle East aimed at combating the virus.

Remittances are a crucial lifeline for families in Nepal and other countries in the region, including Bangladesh and India, which currently has more than 30 million people in jobs overseas, according to the International Labour Organization. But travel restrictions aimed at slowing the spread of coronavirus, which has infected more than 245,000 people globally and killed more than 10,000, threaten to leave millions of South Asian migrant labourers without work.

In India, the families of about 750 fishermen stranded in Iran - one of the countries worst hit by the epidemic - are demanding that the government bring them home.

The men have said the Gulf fishing firms that hired them confiscated their passports and then transferred them to the Iranian coast from the UAE. Fishermen largely from southern India have traditionally migrated to Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE for lucrative jobs on fishing vessels, but have sometimes been accused by Iranian officials of trespassing.

And despite repeated assurances from Indian authorities, the men say they have been left stranded and without food. ""Why are we ignored? We have families too,"" said Shanu Mariyadasan, a fisherman from India's coastal Kerala state. ""Are we supposed to die here?""

Why marine protected areas are often not where they should be

<https://phys.org/news/2020-03-marine-areas.html>

"There's no denying the grandeur and allure of a nature reserve or marine protected area. The concept is easy to understand: limit human activity there and marine ecosystems will thrive. But while the number of marine protected areas is increasing, so too is the number of threatened species, and the health of marine ecosystems is in decline. Why? Our research shows it's because marine protected areas are often placed where there's already low human activity, rather than in places with high biodiversity that need it most.

Many parts of the world's protected areas, in both terrestrial and marine environments, are placed in locations with no form of manageable human activity or development occurring, such as fishing or infrastructure. These places are often remote, such as in the centres of oceans. And where marine protected areas have been increasing, they're placed where pressures cannot be managed, such as areas where there is increased ocean acidification or dispersed pollution.

But biodiversity is often highest in the places with human activity we use these locations in the ocean to generate income and livelihoods, from tourism to fishing. This includes coastal areas in the tropics, such as the Coral Triangle (across six countries including Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia), which has almost 2,000 marine protected areas, yet is also home to one of the largest shipping routes in the world and high fishing activity.

What's more, many marine industries are already regulated through licenses and quotas, so it's hard to establish a new marine protected area that adds a different type of management on top of what already exists. This leaves us with an important paradox: the places where biodiversity is under the most pressure are also the places humanity is most reluctant to relinquish, due to their social or economic value.

Because of those values, people and industry resist changes to behavior, leaving governments to try to find solutions that avoid conflict. How can we resolve the paradox of marine protected

areas? A strategy used in the fishing industry may show the way. Fisheries have had experience in going beyond the limits of sustainability and then stepping back, changing their approach to managing species and ecosystems for better sustainability, while still protecting economic, social and environmental values. In the past, many of the world's fisheries regularly exceeded the sustainable limit of catches, and many species such as southern bluefin tuna declined significantly in number.

But strong rules around how a fishery should operate mean declines have since been reversed. So how did they do it? In recent decades, many of the world's large-scale fisheries implemented formal "harvest strategies." These strategies can flip downward trends of marine species in places not designated a marine protected area. Harvest strategies have three steps. First is pre-agreed monitoring of species and ecosystems by fishers, regulators and other stakeholders. Second, regulators and scientists assess their impact on the species and ecosystems. And last, all stakeholders agree to put management measures in place to improve the status of the monitored species and ecosystems.

These measures may include changing how fishing is done or how much is done. It's a commonsense strategy that's delivered successful results with many fished species either recovering or recovered. In Australia, the federal government introduced a formal harvest strategy policy to manage fisheries in 2007. It was evaluated in 2014, and the report found many (but not all) fish stocks are no longer overfished.

This includes species such as orange roughy and southern bluefin tuna in Australia, which were overfished but are no longer so. But unfortunately, this positive trend has not been replicated for biodiversity hit by the combinations of other human activities such as coastal development, transport, oil and gas extraction and marine debris. We need to adapt the experience from fisheries and apply a single, formal, transparent and agreed biodiversity strategy that outlines sustainable management objectives for the places we can't put marine protected areas.

This would look like a harvest strategy, but be applied more broadly to threatened species and ecosystems. What might be sustainable from a single species point of view as used in the fisheries might not be sustainable for multiple species. This would mean for our threatened species, we would be monitoring their status, assessing whether the total population was changing and agreeing on when and how we would change the way that they are impacted.

Such a strategy would also allow monitoring of whole marine ecosystems, even when information is limited. Information on trends in species and ecosystems often exists, but is hidden as commercial-in-confidence or kept privately within government, research or commercial organizations.

Still, a lack of data shouldn't limit decision making. Experience in fisheries without much data shows even rules of thumb can be effective management tools. Rules of thumb can include simple measures like gear restrictions or spatial or temporal closures that don't change through

time. Moving forward, all stakeholders need to agree to implement the key parts of harvest strategies for all marine places with high biodiversity that aren't protected.

This will complement existing marine protected area networks without limiting economic activity, while also delivering social and environmental outcomes that support human well-being. Our marine ecosystems provide fish, enjoyment, resources and simple beauty. They must survive for generations to come.

Southeast Asia's dugongs may disappear soon

<https://theaseanpost.com/article/southeast-asias-dugongs-may-disappear-soon>

"In 2019, two baby dugongs were found alive after they washed ashore in Krabi and Trang provinces, in Thailand, but sadly died not long after they were rescued. The event even caught the attention of Hollywood star, Leonardo DiCaprio who posted about it on social media, drawing much needed attention to the plight of Thailand's endangered dugongs.

The two baby dugongs were taken into care and named, Marium and Yamil by Her Royal Highness Princess Sirivannavari Nariratana Rajakanya. In the local Yawi language of Southern Thailand, the names given to the two dugongs mean 'lady of the sea' and 'handsome man of the sea', respectively.

Unfortunately, 8-month-old Marium succumbed to an infection that was exacerbated by ingesting marine plastic waste. According to Chaiyapruk Werawong, head of the Trang province marine park, Marium died from a "blood infection and pus in her stomach," adding that small amounts of plastic waste was found in her intestinal tract.

The Department of Marine and Coastal Resources said the three-month-old Yamil died from a blood infection at the Phuket Marine Biological Centre. Thailand's Natural Resources and Environment Minister, Varawut Silpa-archa offered a public apology for failing to save Yamil's life. "We are so sorry, we still don't understand dugongs well enough," he said in a statement. Prior to the two dugong deaths, seven of these docile mammals were also found dead on Thai beaches in the same year.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species has listed dugongs as vulnerable to extinction on a global scale. Commonly known as "sea cows," dugongs graze peacefully on seagrass in shallow coastal waters. It has a large range in Southeast Asia's coastal waters. Human activities such as the destruction and modification of habitat, coastal development, pollution, fishing activities, vessel strikes, unsustainable hunting or poaching and tourism, have threatened the mammals' ecosystem.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) Borneo Marine Research Institute (BMRI) director, Professor Dr Rossita Shapawi said that the accelerating loss of seagrass beds is the most

important factor behind the dwindling dugong populations in Sabah and Malaysia in general. “Dugongs feed exclusively on seagrass, especially young shoots and roots. Excessive sedimentation due to uncontrolled anthropogenic activities mainly due to coastal development will smother the seagrass bed, she said.

This is the main cause of the dugong's disappearing habitat and food source. Dugongs are the world's only vegetarian marine mammal and can consume up to 40 kilograms (kg) of seagrass a day. Seagrass, dubbed ‘Flowers of the Ocean’, are unique flowering plants that have evolved to live in marine habitats.

Although seagrasses account for less than 0.2 percent of all plant life the world's oceans, they're responsible for 10 percent of the carbon stored in oceans annually, and they are up to 35 times far more efficient at sequestering carbon than the rainforest. Southeast Asia has the highest diversity of seagrass species.

Fisheries in Sabah, Malaysia, affected by coronavirus outbreak

<http://www.dailyexpress.com.my/news/146983/sabah-fisheries-affected-by-coronavirus-outbreak/>

"Sabah's fishery industry which exports particularly groupers to Hong Kong has been affected to a certain extent by the novel coronavirus outbreak in China, said State Agriculture and Food Industry Minister Datuk Junz Wong.

However, the impact on agriculture-based products is not as serious as Sabah is yet to have dealings with China on such products. ""The rest [agriculture-based products] is not that badly affected because we have not been dealing a lot with China yet, as so far we are just in the planning stage to move in [to the China market],"" he said.

Wong was speaking to reporters at his Ministry's Chinese New Year celebration and launch of its new website at Wisma Pertanian, Kota Kinabalu, Thursday.

Reclamation – a travesty of environmental justice for vulnerable coastal communities in Malaysia

<https://aliran.com/civil-society-voices/reclamation-a-travesty-of-environmental-justice-for-vulnerable-coastal-communities/>

"Penang Tolak Tambak (Penang Rejects Reclamation) and other civil society groups in Malaysia released the following media statement upon handing over the memorandum (reproduced below) to the National Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) on 16 January 2020. Environmental justice is about promoting a “fair distribution of environmental benefits and

burdens and ensuring that vulnerable low-income communities do not bear the brunt of pollution, environmental degradation, and climate change.

Penang Tolak Tambak is an alliance between the Persatuan Nelayan Pulau Pinang and Penang Forum formed in mid-2019 to stop the destructive large-scale coastal reclamation projects in Penang, particularly the Penang South Reclamation project. This memorandum focuses on the Penang South Reclamation project. The Penang government's project to reclaim three islands measuring 4,500 acres will produce major negative outcomes for environmental justice and human rights.

The creation of three supposedly “smart and green artificial islands which aims for affluent buyers and investors will be undertaken at the expense of vulnerable groups and future generations. This memorandum raises five issues of environmental justice affecting traditional/inshore/artisanal fishers and fishing communities which should be raised to the Penang state government as the project proponent and approver of the project.

A. The Penang South Reclamation project will inflict “permanent damage on Penang's richest fishery and sensitive coastal ecosystem, impacting the livelihoods of 4,909 fisherfolk and 511 marine aquaculture operations. Sand mining for the project will affect an additional 6,000 fisherfolk and aquaculture operations in northern Perak. B. Have the Penang government and the Department of Environment failed to observe the “precautionary principle in climate mitigation and environmental protection?

C. Are the state authorities ignoring, overruling and undermining the traditional fisherfolk's rights of tenure and access to the fisheries commons, by planning a project which destroys and pollutes the marine ecosystem? D. Are the state authorities violating the principle of free, prior and informed consent by deciding to proceed with the project despite the explicit objections of local fishing communities?

E. Did the authorities attempt to obstruct the fisherfolk's protest and memorandum handover on Hari Solidariti Nelayan (Fisherfolk Solidarity Day), 4 November 2019, by trying to deny them the use of a public space, imposing restrictive conditions, erecting a police barricade and – despite permission given in the police letter – denying entry to the state assembly venue?

Memorandum The current trend of coastal reclamation projects as a development strategy in Malaysia is creating thousands of “victims of development among vulnerable low-income coastal communities. Penang South Reclamation is an important test case for the defence of traditional fisherfolk's human rights against the “sea grab of the fisheries commons by state and business interests.

The deliberate erosion of fisheries rights for Penang and Malaysia's fisherfolk and the implications for our national food security and cost of living poses a direct and monumental threat to the wellbeing of the bottom 40% of the population. Two petitions to stop the Penang South Reclamation project have been signed by more than 250,000 supporters (see the

change.org and rainforest rescue petitions). The numbers clearly demonstrate the groundswell of local, national and international support for these fisherfolk and for the protection of our marine ecosystems.

We have appealed to the prime minister of Malaysia and the chief minister of Penang to observe the “precautionary principle for environmental protection and to stop/cancel the proposed project. We call upon Suhakam to advise the Penang state government, developers, government officers and fisheries authorities to respect the fishing communities' right to free, prior and informed consent and to conduct any consultations fairly and transparently with all legitimate representatives on board and observing mutually agreed due process.

Any attempt to undermine the Persatuan Nelayan Pulau Pinang's (Penang Fisherfolk's Association) collective position by any party – through eg one-to-one negotiations and the offering of incentives or the exertion of undue pressure through mala fide acts such as intimidation, coercion or abuse of power in the removal of normal subsidies or use rights, obstruction of access to fisheries, arbitrary demotion or disqualification of any fisherfolk, undermining the right to freedom of association or de-platforming of the fisherfolk's association in any manner – should be investigated.

We appeal to Suhakam to ensure that local fishing communities are not disenfranchised of their rights to the fisheries commons which has been their source of livelihood for generations. To protect the human rights of the fisherfolk, we call upon Suhakam to conduct a full investigation into the plight of the Penang and Perak fisherfolk threatened by the proposed Penang South Reclamation project.

We also call upon political representatives, government, civil society and the public at large to recognise coastal reclamation as an environmental justice issue affecting tens of thousands of fisherfolk and their fishing communities and to support the fisherfolk's rights by calling for the national proscription or ban on coastal reclamation proposals for urban development, as advised in the National Physical Plan 2020.

Indonesia complains as more fishermen are kidnapped in Malaysian territory

<https://jakartaglobe.id/news/indonesia-complains-as-more-fishermen-are-kidnapped-in-malaysian-territory>

"The Abu Sayyaf armed group kidnapped eight Indonesian fishermen in Malaysian territory on Thursday before releasing three of them and taking the other five hostage, the Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry said on Tuesday. The fishermen were taken from a Malaysian fishing vessel sailing in the Tambisan Sea near Lahad Datu in Sabah, Malaysia.

The three released fishermen sailed back from the Southern Philippines where the Abu Sayyaf group is based to Tambisan the following day, confirming news of the kidnappings. ""[They]

confirmed there were five Indonesian fishermen who were kidnapped [by the Abu Sayyaf group]," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry did not disclose the names of the fishermen involved in the incident. Philippine soldiers had rescued the last Indonesian hostage from an earlier kidnapping by another armed group with links to the Abu Sayyaf group on Wednesday, the day before the last kidnapping incident occurred. "

"The government of Indonesia strongly regrets this recurring incident of Indonesian fishermen being kidnapped in Malaysian territory," the ministry said. Indonesia will work together with the Philippine authorities to rescue the five hostages. "In the meantime, our fishermen should avoid sailing in oceans off Sabah since we can't guarantee their safety," the ministry said.

Malaysia's environmental laws don't relate to climate change: Academician

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2020/01/21/malysias-environmental-laws-dont-relate-to-climate-change-academician/>

"With climate change becoming a global emergency, nations all over the world are looking into numerous mitigation efforts starting from their own backyards, with the hope the collective efforts of nations will help save the world from catastrophic impacts of climate change. The required changes including reducing greenhouse gases and environmental degradation can only be achieved through strict and comprehensive laws.

The speakers at a forum entitled 'The Impact of Climate Change & Anthropogenic Hazards on the Marine Environment in Malaysia', here, yesterday found that while Malaysia has the Environmental Quality Act (EQA) 1974 to protect the environment and the Renewable Energy Act 2011 that indirectly contributes towards reducing carbon emissions, the laws have no direct correlation with climate change.

Lecturer on Environmental Law at Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Assoc Prof Dr Maizatun Mustafa who was a panellist at the forum, pointed out that a clear-cut connection between the EQA and climate change targets was needed as they were interrelated.

"Currently, the EQA covers environment and environmental pollution but strategies of the law are not directly connected to climate change as there is no provision for climate change....the definition of environment under the EQA is not targeting climate change.

"The Renewable Energy Act too is not enough because renewable energy is only focusing on reducing fossil fuel, though it is also important, she said, adding that the climate change phenomenon was also contributed by other sectors such as agriculture and fisheries. Last year, it

was reported that the Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Ministry was in the process of drafting the new legislation to replace the Environmental Quality Act 1974.

Meanwhile, Social Research officer of the Institute for Social Science Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Dr Hayrol Azril Mohamed Shaffril said it was vital for society to adapt in response to climate change impacts. “However, the adaptation depends on one's reliance towards nature's stability, with the more one relies on nature's stability, the higher the adaptation.

“For an office worker, the adaptation maybe more towards health needs. However, for those like farmers or fishermen, of course they are relying much more on nature's stability, so they have to adapt more. They may have to adapt by mastering new skills to help them be more financially independent when facing climate change, he said.

The forum also discussed the action plan to overcome the impacts of climate change and anthropogenic activities on the marine environment in Malaysia, as well as the development of policies that could also affect society's livelihoods and sustainability, including the fishing communities. The other speakers were Penang Fishermen's Association chairman, Nazri Ahmad and Penang Forum committee member, Khoo Salma Nasution.

Malaysian fishermen raise alarm over Penangs 3 islands project

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2020/01/20/fishermen-raise-alarm-over-penangs-3-islands-project/>

"A fisherman from Penang has sounded the alarm on the declining fish supply in the Straits of Melaka, which he feared may get worse due to drastic development plans in the state, especially the Penang South Islands (PSI) project, or better known as the three islands project.

Nazri Ahmad, chairman of the Penang Fisherman Association, said Malaysia was already importing fish from Thailand, Myanmar, Pakistan and Africa to meet local demand.

“We are a country with one of the world's richest marine life. We should be exporting fish to other countries, he said during a forum called “The Impact of Climate Change & Human Caused Hazards on Marine Environment in Malaysia at the Institute of Islamic Studies. He attributed the dwindling supply of fish to the failure in controlling the ecosystem and enforcing laws.

Nazri said that the imported fish would often have toxic chemicals which were used as preservatives. “Among the fishermen we call it ‘ubat mayat' or ‘corpse preservatives'.

The chemical is far more dangerous than acid, he said. Nazri also said that many species of fish were already extinct in Penang waters, such as “ikan kembung or chub mackerels. Others were dwindling and as a result, they fetched high prices in the market. “‘Ikan terubuk' or toli shad – a kilogramme can cost up to RM200. Even then, you might still not get it. He said the coastal

areas earmarked for the reclamation project were rich breeding grounds for many species of fish. Nazri also pointed at the destruction of bay areas that served as shelter for the fishermen during bad weather.