

Sri Lanka News Articles from January 2020 to April 2022



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<https://www.icsf.net/news/>



2020: Thirty years of displacement for fishermen at Neethavan IDP camp, Sri Lanka

https://lawandsocietytrust.blogspot.com/2020/03/1990-2020-thirty-years-of-displacement.html?fbclid=IwAR0qFbuuwp8Xao1xSwILjsiXAkOrNXGXxt5ENdyWGW1Z3sPpt2kGq_Pwmew

"Located off the Kankesanthurai Road in Mallakam, Jaffna, is the Neethavan camp for internally-displaced persons (IDPs), or what is conveniently referred to by authorities as the Neethavan Welfare Centre. Its residents are families who were forced to leave their homes due to the conflict, when combat between the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE escalated on the peninsula in the early 1990s. The families living here are those whose homes were located close to the northernmost coast, currently within the bounds of the Palaly High Security Zone (HSZ). Some of them were relocated to the camp at the time of displacement, while others were displaced as far as the Wannai, and returned to Jaffna in the mid 90s. Before their displacement, their proximity to the coastline meant they engaged in traditional fishing as a means of gaining an income and providing for their families.

Fishermen used the shores of Myliddy, just minutes from their homes, to moor their boats and also set them out to sea. The HSZ has severely restricted access and movement of the people to their traditional homelands, and therefore to their means of livelihood. The Zone and the Myliddy fisheries harbor, now a commercial fishing port, means that these small-scale fishermen are forced to take up more difficult alternatives. Some men travel as far as Mannar everyday, a 124 kilometre journey or four-hour roundtrip by road, to engage in fishing to earn money. At present, there are 61 families and 261 people in the camp. They all use 9 units of common toilets and bathing space. Two water tanks, operated by motor, supply water to all the residents. Each family pays Rs.100 monthly for the motor, which can be considered as their water 'bill'. Electricity can cost about Rs. 500 monthly, for each house.

Midwives make regular visits to pregnant mothers, when they have been identified by a public hospital or physician. When these families were displaced in the 90s, they were provided with building materials by the state, from which they were to construct their own houses in the camp. At that time, non-governmental aid organisations distributed food and clothing rations regularly, for the first few years of their displacement. This aid came to an end in 2009. In addition to the delay in Samurdhi payment, the amount received is also barely enough to meet a family's basic needs. The head of a family of five stated that they receive Rs. 3,000 every three months; this calculates to about Rs. 600 per person for that period, and therefore to Rs. 200 per person per month. For families who have both school-going children and ageing individuals, this ration is far from adequate.

Previously, the children in these families attended schools in Myliddy and Valikamam, closer to their homes. Currently, they attend schools close to Mallakam, where the camp is located. An issue facing families with children of this age is the expenses required for education. Several parents share that the teaching in the upper grades in schools is not adequate, with teachers either not completing syllabi, or not attending classes at all. Therefore, several are meant to rely on tuition classes to gain a complete knowledge of the syllabus. This, in addition to a necessity for their future examinations, also comes with a social pressure, because all the other students - those who don't live in the camp - are seen to be attending these classes. Families living in the camp are now reaching three decades in living in displacement.

Two generations have now been born since they came to live here, and these individuals have only ever known the camp as 'home'. It is necessary to consider the likelihood of their return home, in the current political climate. A complete or partial release of land currently under the Palaly HSZ would be required for these families to be able to regain their land. However, demilitarisation is the anti-thesis of the current government's agenda, and troops have already been empowered with more responsibilities in civilian administration and surveillance. In this setting, families believe the sliver of hope they had for return under the previous government has now slipped away.

A festering crisis in the Palk Strait

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-festering-crisis-in-the-palk-strait/article37167165.ece>

"A moratorium on bottom trawling and support to the fishermen is a good first step towards a solution of the Sri Lanka-India (Tamil Nadu) issue of transboundary crossings. Rajkiran, 30, from Tamil Nadu's coastal Pudukkottai district, is the fifth Indian fisherman to lose his life in the Palk Strait this year, after Samson Darwin, A. Mesiya, V. Nagaraj and S. Senthil Kumar from Ramanathapuram, who died in January.

The boat that Rajkiran was on, with two others, sank late on October 18 after reportedly colliding with a Sri Lankan Navy patrol vessel. The two other fishermen were remanded in Sri Lanka until November 1, while Rajkiran was reported "missing", until his body was recovered by the Navy a few days after the incident. Tamil Nadu fishermen's associations have accused the Sri Lankan Navy of brutally attacking Rajkiran, while Sri Lanka has denied the allegations. In both instances this year, what we know is that the fishermen died while trying to earn a living

Artificial reefs: Sri Lanka minister dismisses Indian concerns, says ban bottom trawling first

<https://economynext.com/artificial-reefs-sri-lanka-minister-dismisses-indian-concerns-says-ban-bottom-trawling-first-83114/>

"Dismissing objections raised by Indian fisherman against Sri Lanka's artificial reef project, State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekara said India must ban the destructive practice of bottom trawling instead. Fisherfolk in Tamil Nadu have objected to a Sri Lankan initiative to submerge discarded buses in the island's northern waters in an effort to create an artificial reef. Twenty such buses were submerged near the Delft Island off Jaffna on June 11. The New Indian Express reported July 16 that experts in India have called the move irresponsible while fishing communities have expressed fears that the buses would drift underwater into India's territorial waters affecting their fishing industry. Defending the project, State Minister Wijesekara told EconomyNext June 17 said it was the result of years of study.

"It is not irresponsible project but one that is globally proven and practiced. We don't accept their claims or the statements they are making," he said. According to Wijesakara, this is the fourth phase of a project initiated about six months ago by the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to cultivate artificial reefs around Sri Lanka. The first phase was in Trincomalee, while the second and third phases were carried out in Galle and Matara respectively. The fourth phase, this time in the country's northern waters, is ongoing. Marine research in Sri Lanka is carried out by the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), which is currently dealing with the aftermath of the X-Press Pearl shipping disaster, one of Sri Lanka's worst ecological disasters in history.

"For about two to three years, NARA and the Department of Fisheries have been studying how we can develop artificial reefs for fish spawning. That is the main idea behind this project. Similar projects have been done all over the world, even in developed countries. Sri Lanka is the first country in the region to do it," said Wijesakara. "We did a couple of underwater museum galleries as well," he added. Responding to claims made by the Indian fishermen and experts, the minister said they're probably baseless, as artificial reef building has been tried globally. Marine conservationists worldwide have, indeed, attempted to construct artificial reefs with varying degrees of success.

Large steel structures such as shipwrecks are considered suitable, while smaller unsecured structures are considered less so. "If a scientific agency is saying this is an irresponsible move, then they probably don't have scientific research to back it. The most irresponsible act of the Indian marine research institute is not banning bottom trawling. This is a banned and illegal practice globally which damages marine environment and reserves," said Wijesakara. Indian fishermen encroaching into Sri Lankan waters in the north has been a long-drawn issue, as has the alleged robbing of Sri Lanka's marine resources thanks to bottom trawling.

Fishing vessels from South India had got into the habit of straying over the Indo-Lanka maritime border during a 30 year civil war when Sri Lanka fishermen were banned from entering the

Northern waters – a practice that didn't quite end with the war. Wijesekara said that despite requests made on numerous occasions to stop bottom-line trawling by Indian fishermen, nothing has been done to minimise it, while Sri Lanka banned the practice entirely in 2017.

“I don't know who these fishermen are that are objecting to [the reef project], but I assume they engage in bottom trawling. Their concern might be that the submerged vehicles would affect their fishing gear. But this is a 100% scientifically proven method; it doesn't cause any damage to the sea bed,” he said.

“This will create more artificial fish spawning spaces and coral beds so I urge our Indian counterparts to make a move on banning bottom trawling instead and to consider its impact to the ocean,” he added. According to US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an artificial reef is a manmade structure that may mimic some of the characteristics of a natural reef. These are often made by submerged shipwreck, oil rigs, gas platforms and other offshore structures.

Marine resource managers also create artificial reefs in underwater areas that require a structure to enhance the habitat for reef organisms, including soft and stony corals and the fishes and invertebrates that live among them, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said on its website. Materials used to construct artificial reefs have included rocks, cinder blocks, and even wood and old tires. Nowadays, several companies specialise in the design, manufacture, and deployment of long-lasting artificial reefs that are typically constructed of limestone, steel, and concrete.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan: Women with farming future

<http://www.slguardian.org/2020/07/women-with-farming-future.html>

"South Asia's record on gender equality is quite depressing, to say the least. The region has the world's highest rate of child marriage, and domestic violence against women is pervasive. Women are over-represented in unpaid work, and under-represented in the labour force, even in countries, such as Sri Lanka, which has invested heavily in girls' schooling. Yet, there is one sector where women are taking over agriculture that could present a much needed opportunity for women economic empowerment.

As South Asian economies develop, men are increasingly chasing jobs in manufacturing (or overseas), leaving women responsible for a growing share of agricultural labour. In Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, the share of economically active women working in farming now ranges from 60 percent to 98 percent. In each of these countries' agricultural sectors, women outnumber men. A comparable shift occurred in some high-income countries during the Second World War. As men left for the battlefield, women filled the vacant civilian jobs, including

farming. In America, for example, the share of women agricultural workers jumped from 8 percent in 1940 to 22.4 percent in 1945.

When the war ended, women were not simply going to return to the pre-war status quo. In some sectors, especially higher-skill positions, the Second World War labour shock seems to have directly and permanently changed women's paid employment. More generally, however, women had sampled the economic and personal freedom that employment provides, gained marketable skills, and proved their capabilities. Women's wartime experience thus gave powerful impetus to the movement for gender equality.

The number of European farming women has been slowly increasing in recent years. The most recent data suggests that, on average, around 30 percent of farms across the European Union are managed by a woman. We should also notice that, even if agriculture remains the main employment sector for women in low-income and lower-middle-income countries, it accounts for a huge part of the population in the western world as well. Within the European Union, in 2016, for example, women working in agriculture accounted for 35 percent of the total working population in the sector and more than 40 percent in some member states such as Austria (45 percent), Romania (43 percent) Poland, Greece, and Slovenia (41 percent in each).

But, will the feminisation of farming in Asia's transition economies have a similar effect? There are no guarantees. Evidence so far has shown that increased representation in agriculture does not necessarily contribute to women's socio-economic empowerment. In fact, even as women take on more agricultural duties, their decision-making power remains limited. In Bangladesh, for example, the microfinance revolution and non-government-organisation-led training programmes have enabled thousands of rural women to become frontline workers and even start their own small businesses since the 1990s.

The country now leads South Asia in closing the gender pay gap. Yet, in agriculture, women have about half the power of men, measured by variables like asset ownership and control over income. On top of that, a research carried out in India has found that women's growing participation in agriculture is strongly linked to several indicators of poverty. This at least partly reflects the fact that women's entry into the paid workforce is not accompanied by any reduction in their already-heavy burden of unpaid labour. And a rising proportion of women employed in the agricultural sector are not paid for their work at all.

Add to that the unpredictable nature of agricultural production, and, as researchers in India say, 'The feminisation of agriculture may better be described as the feminisation of agrarian distress.' In the Indian state of Maharashtra, mounting debts have led to a doubling of suicides among women farmers in the past four years. By contrast, in rural Bangladesh, empowerment, such as the ability to influence purchasing decisions and join voluntary associations, has contributed substantially to their life satisfaction, regardless of their economic status. How, then, can South

Asian governments translate rising women participation in farming into genuine empowerment? One approach focuses on income earned outside the home,

Data from rural Bangladesh show that it is not paid employment per se that increases women farmers' autonomy, but rather employment outside of their husbands' farms. In Bangladesh, the microfinance revolution and non-government-organisation-led training programmes have enabled thousands of rural women to become frontline workers. Yet the fact is that most women in agriculture in South Asia are working on family farms, where they cannot earn an independent income (or, in many cases, any income at all).

One way to tackle this could be to promote exports of high-value-added agricultural products, such as seafood. Formalising the production process could encourage the monetisation of women labour and improve working conditions, as export-oriented manufacturing of readymade garments, textiles, and footwear has done in many emerging Asian economies. Technology can also help by enabling women to circumvent barriers rooted in social norms. For example, even as Bangladeshi women do more on farms, they are traditionally excluded from aquaculture. The USAID-funded Aquaculture for Income and Nutrition project's low-cost gillnets, however, have enabled Bangladeshi women to harvest small fish from small local ponds quickly and easily, so that they do not have to compete with men for access to larger sources.

Similarly, digital technology can improve women's ability to sell their products. In many places, women are excluded from markets, and a male family member must be present for the sale of crops; that would not be the case online. Governments should support the development and dissemination of such technologies, which could also enable women to assert more purchasing power, such as over agricultural inputs, and put an end to the digital divide so that women can have more of such opportunities.

Another crucial element of an effective strategy for empowering women in South Asia's agriculture sector is the reduction of unpaid labour for which they are responsible. Pursuing this objective is tricky, given that in patriarchal societies, interventions that empower women at the expense of male family members are sure to provoke formidable resistance. But productivity-enhancing schemes can help to pave the way for the more equitable distribution of domestic duties. The tale of women's vulnerability is shamelessly corny, and many groan at the old cliché: 'Women are vulnerable and powerful victimised and empowered through food.' With the right policies and effective use of technology, we can tip the scale in the right direction.

Bottom trawling ban produces good catch for fishermen in Puttalam and Kalpitiya lagoons in Sri Lanka

<https://www.sundaytimes.lk/220220/news/bottom-trawling-ban-produces-good-catch-for-fishermen-in-puttalam-and-kalpitiya-lagoons-473718.html>

"A temporary ban on bottom trawling in the Puttalam and Kalpitiya lagoons in Sri Lanka from December 31 has resulted in a good catch of prawns, fish and shrimp after years for local fishermen who use traditional fishing methods. At least 3,000 fisher families from 23 fishermen federations in the district depend on fishing as their sole livelihood in and around the lagoons.

Earlier, some 22 local vessels engaged in bottom-trawling in the lagoon which is included as part of the Wilpattu Ramsar wetland cluster. According to the demarcation brief of the wetland cluster, its Western boundary covers up to ten kilometres from the western coast that includes the Battalangunduwa and Palliyawatte islands.

Sinnakudiyiruppu fishermen Pappai Maraikkaar Mohammed Basheer said local fishermen had been protesting against the illegal bottom trawling for years but a temporary ban brought some relief to fisher families. The local fishermen who engage in traditional fishing methods alleged that their catch was reduced significantly due to extensive trawling carried out by bottom trawlers.

Centre asks Tamil Nadu govt for list of fishermen for India-Sri Lanka talks

<https://www.dtnext.in/News/TamilNadu/2021/12/21100510/1335025/Centre-asks-Tamil-Nadu-govt-for-list-of-fishermen-.vpf>

"India's Union Ministry of External Affairs has directed the Tamil Nadu government to provide a list of people representing fishermen associations in the state for talks between the Indian side and the Lankan side on the dispute over fishing. The Tamil Nadu government, according to sources, will be soon sending the list of participants after consulting the fishermen associations and leaders.

The move assumes significance after the arrest and subsequent prison of 55 Indian fishermen from Rameswaram and Mandapam in Tamil Nadu. The fishermen were arrested on December 19 by the Sri Lankan Navy and according to information they were produced before a Sri Lankan court and subsequently remanded in a Jaffna prison.

According to information available, the arrested are remanded in judicial custody till December 31. Eight mechanized fishing boats belonging to the fishermen from India are also in the custody of the Sri Lankan navy.

CEO of vessel operator apologises for impact of sunken container ship off Sri Lanka coast

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/sri-lanka-container-ship-x-press-pearl-operator-ceo-apologises-14941088>

"While Sri Lanka braces itself for a possible oil spill from a sunken Singapore-registered container ship, the vessel operator's chief executive on Thursday (Jun 3) expressed "deep regrets and apologies" for the impact that the incident has caused on livelihoods and the environment. The container ship X-Press Pearl was carrying 1,486 containers, including 25 tonnes of nitric acid, when it caught fire on May 20 off the west coast of Sri Lanka. It burned for 13 days before the blaze was finally put out on Tuesday.

In an interview with CNA on Thursday, vessel operator X-Press Feeders' CEO Shmuel Yoskovitz said his company has enlisted environmental experts, such as the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation, to monitor the situation. It has also started engaging and working with the Sri Lankan authorities, and contributed "some heavy equipment" to help with the clean-up of beaches.

"I'd like to express my deep regrets and apologies to the Sri Lankan people for the harm this incident has caused to the livelihood and to the environment of Sri Lanka," Mr Yoskovitz said. Mr Yoskovitz told CNA that the aft portion of the container ship has sunk and is "now laying on the seabed at (a depth of) about 21m". The ship's forward section is also "slowly sinking". "To assess the real situation, we will need to wait for the wreck to settle on the seabed and then see what really can be done," he said. "Currently what the salvors are doing, they are monitoring the wreck and making sure that any debris or god forbid, the oil spill will be detected quickly and handled accordingly."

He added that as of 5pm on Thursday, "there has been no oil pollution detected". Sri Lanka is facing its worst marine ecological disaster. Millions of plastic pellets from the ship's containers have fouled the country's beaches and fishing waters, forcing a fishing ban and a major clean-up involving thousands of soldiers. The Sri Lankan government has said it would seek compensation for the incident. Asked how much that could amount to, Mr Yoskovitz said: "This is now being assessed but we need to bear in mind that this will be a long process ... first of all, to see when this incident will be over and then to assess the total damages."

It is "very hard" to estimate any cost or damages at the moment, he added. "But we are insured. The direct financial burden on X-Press (Feeders) will be very limited," he said. Sri Lankan officials have said they suspect the fire was caused by a nitric acid leak, which the ship's crew had been aware of since at least three weeks ago. Mr Yoskovitz confirmed that the crew had been aware of the leak, but said they were denied permission by both Qatar and India authorities to unload the leaking container before the fire broke out.

Providing a timeline of events, he said the container was first loaded on the ship on May 10 at the Jebel Ali port in Dubai. "It was discovered leaking while alongside Hamad, which is a port in Qatar. When it was detected, we asked to discharge it. The port authorities did not allow it since they had no manpower or the equipment readily available to discharge," he said. "Afterwards, the vessel sailed into Hazira, a port in India, where we requested the Hazira port to

allow us to discharge the container. Again it was rejected, more or less for the same reasons as it was in Hamad,” he said.

The X-Press Pearl then arrived in Sri Lankan waters on May 19. Smoke was detected the next morning. “Until that time, there was only leakage from one container, which was handled and controlled by the crew,” Mr Yoskovitz told CNA. Asked if the incident could have been avoided if the leaking container was allowed to be discharged at the ports in Qatar and India, he replied that “it is very hard to assess what caused the fire”.

While the leak from one container was “the most probable cause”, he stressed that the company is “not 100 per cent sure”. “There are many incidents like that at sea. Sometimes, terminals and ports are able to help, and sometimes not,” the chief executive added. He said that the ship’s crew attended to the leak in accordance with guidelines from the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Convention.

Mr Yoskovitz was then asked how inadequate packaging of chemical contents could cause such fires, and if this is an urgent problem that needs to be addressed. He said that shipping companies have been trying to raise awareness about this issue for the past few years and there have been “countless incidents of fires”.

“Not to talk about leaks which happened probably on a weekly (basis) which we don't hear, thank god, because a catastrophe has not happened,” said the chief executive officer. “You need to remember that we load containers that are signed and sealed and we don't open them. We are dependent on the declaration and the professionalism of our shippers that they will pack the containers correctly and that they will declare them correctly,” he added.

China extends US\$500mn to Sri Lanka in Covid-19 support

<https://www.gtreview.com/news/asia/china-extends-us500mn-to-sri-lanka-in-covid-19-support/>

“The Sri Lankan government has signed a US\$500mn deal with China Development Bank to help the country better mitigate the financial impact of Covid-19, as it continues to struggle with fiscal debt. The facility has “concessional terms on both interest and tenure, says a statement issued by the Chinese foreign ministry. The loan has a tenor of 10 years and a three-year grace period, along with interest rates linked to the US dollar-Libor rate.

The funding is set to be disbursed by the end of March, with the aim of increasing the official foreign reserves of Sri Lanka to enable it to better manage the financial effects Covid-19 is having on the country. As part of its response, the Sri Lankan government has imposed a nationwide curfew and closed all international commercial flights into the country. Despite criticism that Sri Lanka has depended too heavily on Chinese loans in the past, particularly for

infrastructure projects relating to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and as such has seen its sovereign debt spiral, the loan was “urgently requested, says the statement.

Countries which depend on China, the country where Covid-19 originated, could suffer the most economically at the hand of the novel coronavirus. “Countries that are most dependent on China stand to be hit the hardest; these include countries in Asia and the Pacific, due to their economic relations with China. Sri Lanka is no exception, given its close links to China in terms of trade, investment, and the movement of people over the past decade, says Talking Economics, a Sri Lanka-focused socio-economic policy think tank.

China's BRI project was launched in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping. With the goods trade volume between China and countries involved in the initiative surpassing US\$6tn from 2013 to 2018, it has been criticised for creating ‘debt traps’ by burdening fiscally weak countries with unsustainable debt. Another country with high sovereign debt and many BRI projects underway is Pakistan, which turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a US\$6bn bailout in July 2019.

According to IMF data Sri Lanka's debt-to-GDP ratio is 82.7% (see figure 1), one of the highest ratios in South and Southeast Asia. Concerns over the sustainability of Sri Lanka's debt to China peaked when the government was unable to pay back loans issued by China to build its Hambantota Port, which subsequently saw Beijing take control of the port under a 99-year lease at the end of 2017.

There are worries that Covid-19 will trigger more problems for countries already battling debt problems, as public spending increases and fiscal revenues decrease. Earlier this month, Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa revealed a six-month debt moratorium for tourism, apparel and SME businesses.

Cyclone to hit east Sri Lanka: Rain, rough seas forecast

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/12/02/local/235014/cyclone-hit-east-sri-lanka-rain-rough-seas-forecast>

"The Meteorological Department of Sri Lanka yesterday informed that the deep depression in the south-east Bay of Bengal was likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm and cross the eastern coast of Sri Lanka between Batticaloa and Point-Pedro in the evening or night today. “The sea area around the island will be very rough to high as the wind speed can be increased up to (80-100) kmph at times.

Naval and fishing communities are warned not to venture to the sea areas around the island from December 1 until further notice. Those who are out at aforementioned sea regions are advised to

return to coasts or move to safer areas, the Department warned. “The deep depression in the south-east Bay of Bengal lay centered 500 km southeast to Trincomalee yesterday noon.

It is expected to intensify further into a cyclonic storm and very likely to cross Sri Lanka. Due to this situation the rainy and windy condition is expected to enhance considerably over the island. “Intermittent showers or thundershowers will occur in the Eastern, Northern, Northern-central, North-western, Central and Sabaragamuwa provinces.

Very heavy rainfall above 200mm can be expected at some places. Showers or thundershowers will occur elsewhere. Heavy rainfall above 100mm can be expected at some places. “Very strong gusty winds (80-90) kmph can be expected in Northern, North-Central, Eastern, North-Western, Western, Central and Sabaragamuwa provinces. Strong gusty winds (60-70) kmph can be expected elsewhere, the weather bulletin said.

Dead turtles and waves of plastic show Sri Lankan ship disaster’s deep ramifications

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/07/24/asia/sri-lanka-ship-disaster-aftermath-intl-dst-hnk/index.html>

"For almost two weeks, a thick, black smudge stained the sky off Sri Lanka's western coast -- smoke from a burning container ship nine nautical miles out to sea. The Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl caught fire on May 20 en route to Colombo carrying 350 metric tons of oil in its tanks and at least 81 containers of ""dangerous goods,"" including nitric acid -- a highly toxic chemical used to make fertilizers.

As the Sri Lankan navy and coast guard teams fought to douse the flames, the inferno tore through the ship's cargo, releasing a cocktail of hazardous chemicals into the air and sea, prompting authorities to issue a toxic rain alert, and compounding fears of an oil spill. The fire released 80 tons of plastic pellets -- raw materials used to make plastic products -- into the ocean, blanketing beaches along Sri Lanka's western coast. The environmental impact was immediately clear. Plastic pellets became lodged in fish's gills and mouths.

And dozens of rare sea turtles washed up on Sri Lanka's beaches, some with what appeared to be scorch marks on their shells. Fish, dolphins and even a whale were found dead. As of late June, about 200 carcasses had been counted. Two months on, billions of plastic particles have washed up on nearly every shore of the island and are expected to disperse throughout the Indian Ocean. Fishing communities have been heavily impacted, and locals fear it will take years for the island to recover from what environmentalists have called the worst disaster in Sri Lanka's history.

Sri Lanka is a tourist hotspot. Its unspoiled beaches and turquoise waters not only attract tourists, they are home to abundant sea life, including 28 species of marine mammals, such as blue whales and five species of endangered nesting turtles. It is not unusual for marine animals to

wash ashore at this time of year, after becoming entangled in fishing nets or simply victims of the rough monsoon seas. While no records were kept of how many dead animals washed ashore in previous years, local environmentalists say this time is different. "

"We are seeing this exponential increase of marine deaths, including dolphins, turtles. What is noticeable is the exponential increase started soon after this accident," said Don Muditha Katuwawala, coordinator for Sri Lanka marine conservation group Pearl Protectors. "We are seeing 30 to 40 cases reported daily." Thushan Kapurusinghe, a turtle conservationist with 28 years' experience who helped establish Sri Lanka's first marine turtle sanctuary, believes the deaths were caused by the ship disaster.

Usually, if a turtle was caught in a net or rough seas, Kapurusinghe said, you'd see cut marks on their fins or broken shells. Often they are bloated from weeks in the water or have bite marks from other predators, he said. But the turtles he has seen on the beaches, and in photos sent to him from residents, had apparent scorch marks on their shells, swollen eyes and salt glands, and red engorged blood vessels and lesions around their mouths and bellies, he said. "

"What you can see with most of these turtles found along the beaches in recent weeks, particularly after the X-Press Pearl disaster, these are fresh specimens," he said. "Now when you see newly dead carcasses, there are clear burn marks on top of the shell ... Around the mouth you can see red patches and bleeding, that means internally they are bleeding." He said this suggests they may have been exposed to chemicals or injured in the fire.

Sri Lanka is home to leatherback turtles, green turtles, loggerheads, hawksbill and the small Olive Ridley turtle. Kapurusinghe, the conservationist, said most of the turtles washing up are the latter -- among the world's smallest sea turtles. From images he's seen, most are juveniles, which spend their days feeding in the shallower waters close to the western coast, he said. While nesting sites are found all over the coast, turtle migration and nesting routes, he said, start at the southern coast and make their way north up Sri Lanka's western coast between March and July.

The carcasses were found on beaches around the capital Colombo -- up the western shoreline -- where the ship was. "This is not normal. When you observe them you can say they did not die because of becoming tangled in fishing nets," he said. Several prominent marine biologists have warned against jumping to conclusions about the animal deaths and urged the community to wait for necropsies -- examinations of the carcasses -- to be completed, though it is unclear when that will be.

Other factors could be at play in the deaths, including reporter bias, when people are more likely to note carcasses as they're acutely aware of the disaster. Ultimately, no one can be sure what is causing the deaths, said Katuwawala of Pearl Protectors, and a lack of comparable data is adding to the confusion. "We don't have a proper base-line data that we can compare to previous years. Because of the lack of it and the delays in the post-mortems there is a lot of confusion as to understanding why these marine deaths are happening," he said. "

"All this needs to be accounted for and tested as to how they died and what really caused this disaster for them." Sri Lanka's fisheries were also deeply affected. In some areas they were closed, worsening the financial losses from communities already suffering from pandemic lockdowns. Fear and confusion spread over whether the fish were safe to eat. "We also heard about what was in the ship and the chemicals, so we are scared. So now for weeks we have not consumed any seafood.

The fishermen are saying its safe. But there is no guarantee," said Sarika Dinali, a resident from Negombo beach. D.S. Fernando, a fisherman also in Negombo, said "now the situation is even worse." "People are now scared of eating fish because it might be contaminated. Prices have also dropped drastically. The situation is hopeless," he said. Others have urged the government to speed up testing on samples and be clear with the public. "We are most affected because people are refraining from buying fish. It is the government's responsibility to do proper tests and educate the public on what's going on. Otherwise people are afraid to consume fish," said local fishing community leader Aruna Roshantha.

The Sri Lankan government, Department of Fisheries and the MEPA have not responded to CNN's requests for comment. On July 11, state Fisheries Minister Kanchana Wikesekera said Rs 420 million (\$2.1 million) in compensation will be paid to fishermen as part of an interim claim from the X-Press Pearl. On July 12, X-press Feeders said made an initial payment, through the vessel owner's P&I insurers, of \$3.6 million to the Sri Lankan government to help compensate those affected by the consequences of the fire and sinking of the vessel.

As communities wait for answers, government and environmental investigators are determining the extent of the disaster. Independent and international oil experts are on site trying to ensure any oil remaining on the half-sunken ship does not spill into the environment, causing further disaster. "We continue to contribute to the cleanup and pollution mitigation efforts, having flown in additional oil spill response assets on a chartered flight from Singapore in response to a request from the UN-EU team in Colombo," the ship's operators said in a statement.

Salvors remain at the wreck site on a 24-hour watch "to deal with any debris and report any form of a spill with drones deployed daily to help with the monitoring activities," it said. Investigations into what caused the fire are ongoing, but the boat had one container of nitric acid -- a highly toxic chemical used to make fertilizers -- that was leaking. The captain of the ship, Vitaly Tyutkalo was arrested on June 14 and later released on bail, according to police spokesperson Deputy Inspector Ajith Rohana. He has been accused of allegedly violating the country's Marine Environment Pollutions Act but hasn't been formally charged.

The government has named another 14 people as co-accused in cases over the damage caused, according to Reuters. Meanwhile, the Centre for Environmental Justice has filed a fundamental rights petition in the Sri Lankan Supreme Court. For decades, de Vos has been pushing for

greater rules on ships that pass by Sri Lanka's waters as part of her work to protect non-migratory blue whales.

The southern coast of Sri Lanka is the main artery through the Indian Ocean, and one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. Pushing such lanes farther out to sea or shift to cleaner fuel could help to avoid further disasters, de Vos said, and help safeguard the future of endangered turtles, too. ""The shipping lanes were put in place at a time when we didn't have this wealth of knowledge about species and how they use these areas, or about safety concerns,"" said de Vos. ""And now we do have to use the best available information, to try to understand how we can coexist in a way that will make sure that we're doing a better job and looking after oceans.""

Dialog to provide weather and disaster warning data to Sri Lankan fishers

<https://economynext.com/dialog-to-provide-weather-and-disaster-warning-data-to-sri-lankan-fishers-55010/>

"Dialog Axiata Plc, Sri Lanka's largest mobile telco, will be providing location-specific weather and disaster warning data to Sri Lankan marine fishers free of charge, a statement said. The text messaging service will be provided in partnership with the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Department and the Meteorological Department.

Those engaged in marine fishing (coastal and deep sea) around Sri Lanka can make use of the service, named 'Sayuru' in Sinhala, English and Tamil languages. Around 600,000 Sri Lankans are directly and indirectly employed in fisheries, most of whom are in low-income segments, official data showed. Of income from fisheries, over 80 percent was from marine fishing and aquaculture, and the rest from inland fishing.

Unanticipated weather causes severe risks to the coastal communities, of which many are engaged in fishing-related activities, Dialog said. Sayuru will provide up-to-date weather and warning messages to communities based on where the mobile users are located, the firm said. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa launched the service at his hometown Tangalle, situated along the island's southern coast.

Fishing made up 1.2 percent of Sri Lanka's gross domestic product in 2018, and has peaked at 1.5 percent in 2014, central bank data showed. The industry is the tenth largest merchandise export earner for Sri Lanka earning 262.5 million US dollars in 2019, which is 2.2 percent of the country's total exports. Most of the exports are destined for the US, Europe, Japan and Hong Kong, according to the International Trade Centre.

Disguised role of women in Sri Lanka's Blue Economy growth

<https://island.lk/propelling-blue-craft/>

"Small, developing island states like Sri Lanka are gradually moving from a Green Economy Focus to Blue Economy Focus, aiming at exploiting ocean resources for employment creation, earning incomes, strengthening the economy and improving the wellbeing of the people. During 20-22 June 2012, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) held in Rio de Janeiro, coastal states requested an extension of the Green Economy to encompass the Blue Sector, due to their small resource base which was limiting further expansion of their economies.

A major characteristic of Sri Lanka's blue growth in respect of fisheries is that the new technology did not compete with the traditional/artisanal technology, displacing the fishers operating such non-motorised vessels. The new fishing technology also demanded that fishers spend more and more time in fishing-related activities such as net mending, gear preparation, craft repair and engine repair work, search for purchased inputs, etc.

All this meant a heavy burden on women in taking care of household and social onuses. Interestingly, women willingly take up these challenges because the fishing incomes are several fold high and they enjoy a better living standard than their fellow fishers who still operate artisanal crafts in nearshore waters. Read more: <https://island.lk/propelling-blue-craft/>

End silo approach to marine research, Sri Lankan scientist urges

<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/210221/news/end-silo-approach-to-marine-research-scientist-urges-433244.html>

"It is to Sri Lanka's credit that there are so many bodies engaged in ocean science research but it is vital that data is pooled so that the country can learn how to use marine resources without destroying them, a leading scientist said. Professor Charitha Pattiaratchi's call comes at the start of the United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-31), aimed at raising awareness of the challenges and opportunities provided by the oceans.

Among the many government agencies involved in marine research are the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), Department of Fisheries Resources, Department of Coast Conservation, the navy and coast guards, as well as the Department of Meteorology and the Disaster Management Centre, which collect data on specific aspects of oceans. Then there are the universities conducting oceanic research, with the Ocean University and University of Ruhuna in the lead. Added to this are non-governmental organisations and private research bodies studying ocean sciences.

"It is important to share data and to have proper coordination of the different responsibilities in order to achieve better results in the area of ocean science" said Dr. Pattiaratchi, Professor of Coastal Oceanography of the University of Western Australia's Ocean's Institute. "Sri Lanka also has an International Centre of Excellence on the Marine Environment sponsored by the

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). This has been dormant for many years and the ocean decade could be a good starting point to reactivate it,” Prof. Pattiaratchi pointed out. Research is critical for Sri Lanka’s fishing industry.

Lack of scientific data has led many fish species to the brink of extinction due to overfishing, marine biologist Daniel Fernando, co-founder of Blue Resources Trust, told the Sunday Times. Mr. Fernando recommends that the government increase monitoring of the fishing industry and work closely with NGOs in research. NARA said it wants to increase research activity in the Ocean Decade. It said it continues to collect data on fish stocks in Sri Lankan waters, building on the survey initiated by the Norwegian research vessel, Dr Fridtjof Nansen in 2018.

NARA’s research vessel, Samudrika, has been conducting marine research around Sri Lanka since 2012, the head of NARA’s Marine Biological Resources Division, Dr. Sisira Haputhantri, said. The Chairman of the National Science Foundation, Prof. Ranjith Senaratne, points out that while the country has about 200 degree courses, only a handful of these relate to oceanic science. “Only about six courses (less than 3 per cent) deal with fisheries and ocean sciences.

This is despite the fact that Sri Lanka has an Exclusive Economic Zone (maritime area) eight times its landmass,” Prof. Senaratne, a former vice chairman of the University Grants Commission, said. “Given the fact that Sri Lanka’s future prosperity lies in the ocean, Sri Lankan universities should offer more courses related to fisheries, marine science, marine engineering, ocean resource engineering, port management., sea sports and maritime recreation, nautical science, fibreglass technology and boat-building and so on.

“We need to harness the biological, chemical and physical marine resources of the country which hitherto remain almost untouched and untapped,” Prof. Senaratne said. Prof. Pattiaratchi said that while the populations of Australia and Sri Lanka are similar in numbers, there were about 1,000 times more scientists working on ocean research. “Lack of interest in studying ocean sciences could also be cultural,” he pointed out, noting that in Sri Lanka, most people aspire to become doctors and engineers, with very few taking up ocean sciences.

“Sri Lankans have very limited interaction with the sea. We do not have a culture of using the sea for recreation work such as swimming, surfing or diving so, there is a lack of interaction with the ocean and a lack of new blood wanting to become ocean explorers,” said Dr. Pattiaratchi, adding that he had been determined from the age of 14 to become a marine scientist.

EU provides Rs48 mn in emergency relief to victims of cargo ship fire in Sri Lanka

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21A/Jun23_1624418333CH.php

"In response to serious oil and hazardous chemical spills triggered by the fire that broke out on a ship carrying hazardous substances in May, the European Union is directing €200,000 (over 48

million Sri Lankan rupees) in humanitarian funding to provide crucial assistance. The aid will benefit 15,000 people who have been heavily affected by the disaster in the districts of Colombo, Galle, Gampaha, Kalutara, Puttalam and Matara.

Lanka Red Cross Society in delivering emergency relief assistance to those most affected, especially small-scale fishing communities, through the delivery of cash assistance. This will help meet the immediate needs of those whose day-to-day livelihoods have been impacted by the fishing ban implemented following the incident. The aid will also focus on supporting local authorities to clean hazardous and toxic materials along the country's west coast.

Necessary training and materials, such as personal protective equipment, goggles and boots, will also be provided to volunteers involving in the cleaning activities. Special attention will be paid to the most vulnerable groups, including female-headed families, people with disabilities and the elderly. The funding is part of the EU's overall contribution to the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Sri Lanka is witnessing what is considered one of the worst marine environmental disasters after the X-Press Pearl cargo vessel carrying a large number of toxic chemicals and plastic granules caught fire some 16 kilometers off the coast of Colombo on 20 May. The fire that continued for 12 days resulted in a massive spillage of damaged containers, micro plastics, plastic pellets, chemicals and other harmful substances into the sea.

Following the incident, small-scale fishing has been banned on a 50-kilometre stretch of coastline in Colombo and Gampaha. In addition to the severe damage to the marine and coastal ecosystems, the incident has also affected over 16,000 fishing communities in six coastal districts who are dependent on fishing for a living. The Sri Lankan fishing sector has already been largely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and monsoon weather conditions.

Fishermen – the 'blue soldiers' of the Maldives

<https://edition.mv/sports/23383>

"Fishing in the Maldives has been a long life blood of the country's economy while it still employs half of the Maldivian workforce even to this date. There was a time when the island nation was identified for its fishing industry and the fishermen themselves who are under scorching sun or through storms to ensure they catch enough fish for the respective island communities to which they belonged to – after all, this was what put food on their tables, literally.

Initially, Maldives shipped 90% of dried tuna to Sri Lanka. However, following Sri Lanka's decision to cut back on their imports of fish the island nation looked elsewhere for prospective opportunities to export their fish.

Various types of fish and fish related products remain the most exported commodity from the Maldives, which covers more than 50% of the country's total exports. All of this will not be possible without the blood, sweat and hard work of those who are at the 'spine' of the industry – the fishermen. Read more: <https://edition.mv/sports/23383>

Fishermen in Sri Lanka badly affected by fuel hike

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/03/15/fishermen-badly-affected-by-fuel-hike/>

"Fishermen in Sri Lanka allege that they too have been severely affected by the increase in fuel prices.

The Secretary to the Matara District Fishermen's Association Limited stated that they have a huge problem with the current increase in fuel prices in the country which is causing great injustice to fishermen.

He said that with the current economic crisis and high cost of living, retail prices are bound to rise, including that of ice cubes. He added that at present fishermen cannot sell fish for a good price..."

Fishermen in Sri Lanka losing livelihoods due to fuel crisis

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/03/27/fishermen-losing-livelihoods-due-to-fuel-crisis/>

"Fishermen in Tangalle in Sri Lanka say they have been badly affected by the fuel shortage in the country, and due to them not being able to engage in fishing, they have difficulties in purchasing essentials such as rice as well.

Many fishermen say they are forced to give up on their livelihoods due to the crisis, and have sought fuel subsidies from the Government to help them out of this situation as well.

Meanwhile, small-scale fishermen say they have been badly affected by the shortage of kerosene, as the President of the Chilaw United Fisheries Association, Roshan Fernando says, no kerosene has been available along the Chilaw coast for the last few weeks.

They further stated that none of the filling stations have enough fuel, and fishermen are only being given about 20 litres, although they need about 100 litres a day to engage in fishing..."

Foreign investors urged to invest in Sri Lanka's fisheries sector

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/03/05/local/243227/foreign-investors-urged-invest-fisheries-sector>

"The Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Development Ministry of Sri Lanka encourages foreign investors to upgrade the fisheries sector in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces. Rs 100 million will be allocated by the Government to develop the industry in the Mulathivu District alone.

Fisheries minister Douglas Devananda participated in an official tour in the Mulathivu District and discussed the issues of the sector with officials and members of the fisheries societies recently.

The Minister said that livelihoods of the fisheries community will be uplifted with the new development schemes in the district. He said that new laws and regulations will be formulated to repeal old ones that hinder development.

Fishing folk in Mutathivu undergo numerous difficulties due to illegal fishing methods being used extensively in several areas, the Minister said. He said that the fishing community will be facilitated in such a way that they can carry out their livelihoods sans difficulties.

Former peace facilitator Norway to help Sri Lanka monitor fish stocks

<https://menafn.com/1101950569/Former-peace-facilitator-Norway-to-help-Sri-Lanka-monitor-fish-stocks>

"Former peace facilitator Norway is to help Sri Lanka better monitor its fish stocks. Norway played a crucial role in facilitating peace talks between the Government and the LTTE. The Norwegian Embassy in Colombo today said that the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) in Sri Lanka and the Institute of Marine Research, Norway (IMR) have joined hands to continue their cooperation in fisheries research in Sri Lankan waters. The two institutions will engage in research on fish stocks in the waters of Sri Lanka, with the aim of improved and sustainable management of marine resources in the country.

Norway's financial assistance enabled an ecosystem survey in the coastal waters of Sri Lanka by the Norwegian Research Vessel Dr. Fridtjof Nansen in Sri Lanka in 2018. After the successful completion of the first phase of the project, the Norwegian Embassy was pleased to approve the second phase of the project for development of fisheries management tools at a cost of close to NOK 8.75mn (approx. 1 Million USD), which will be operational until 2022.

Speaking at the event, the Norwegian Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Trine Jøranli Eskedal, underscored that Norway is 'committed to bilateral cooperation on oceans and to

helping Sri Lanka put in place data-based management systems for ocean resources, which will enable Sri Lanka to better monitor its fish stocks.' She added that the Norwegian fisheries cooperation with Sri Lanka, which dates back to the 1970s, includes fisheries management, research and education, and private sector development.

From 2013 to 2020, NOK 20.3 mill. (approx. 2.4 mill. USD) have been disbursed to the fisheries sector. Ambassador Eskedal also highlighted the importance of sharing these research findings with other Sri Lankan stakeholders, both in the public and private sector, to make informed decisions related to oceans and fisheries and to bringing in new and advanced technology to Sri Lanka's fisheries sector.

She also reiterated the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) – to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources, and the importance of the fisheries sector to advance more sustainable economic growth in Sri Lanka. Speaking at the event Hon. State Minister Kanchana Wijesekara mentioned that the Government's strategy for enhancing the marine fisheries sector in Sri Lanka aims at developing and managing the sector in a successful way using scientific evidence and modern technology.

'To obtain science-based recommendations for managing the fisheries, capacity building of Sri Lankan scientists is essential,' the State Minister underscored. Speaking at the event, the Minister of Fisheries, Douglas Devananda, mentioned that the Government of Sri Lanka is looking for renewed opportunities to strengthen the fisheries sector.

'Research projects of this nature are an opportunity for our Sri Lankan fishermen and for the sector as a whole. Sri Lanka and Norway have a longstanding bilateral relationship within the fisheries sector and wish to ensure the livelihoods of fishermen and the local economy,' he stressed.

The Minister added that Sri Lanka is an island nation blessed with abundant marine resources. It is the government's mandate to sustain such resources, while bringing in research-based advanced technology to boost the sector. The Minister also thanked the Government of Norway for its continued support during these unprecedented times.

Hollowed Lands: In Sri Lanka's rural hinterlands, the slow-onset impacts of our warming world are forcing families apart

<https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/magazine/entry/hollowed-lands>

"There is no water, Udayanthi says. "My husband used to work in our paddy field, but he cannot cultivate anymore. Udayanthi is from Bakmeegama, a small village in northeastern Sri Lanka's Trincomalee district where small brick homes nestle into surrounding vegetation. "Without paddy, there is no money. That is why he had to go to [Sri Lanka's capital city] Colombo to find

work, explains Udayanthi, who, like other villagers here, would give only her first name. Her husband sends money from Colombo, but it is barely enough for her to run the household and buy food.

A wooden fence separates Udayanthi's home from the village road, and clothes are strung up to dry on wires that run alongside it. Her only son, about three years old, clutches a tiny cricket bat and a ball, pounds the bat on the road, and laughs with excitement. Palm trees line the horizon and provide shelter from the harsh sun that burns down on the bare earth, the fields, and trees nearby. Farther ahead, in the brown and yellow-green fields, women and children go about barefoot, and a few men in sarongs tend to the crops. Yes, some of the plants look discolored.

White layers of sodium cover the soil, and water levels in village tanks seem low. But if you are not from here, you might not be able to tell that this region is in a drought. The drought is real, however, and it persists. Like many other villages in Sri Lanka's dry zone which covers more than 75 percent of this pear-shaped tropical island nation's land area Bakmeegama was still recovering from a severe drought that hit the region in 2016 and 2017 when it was subjected to another season of below-average rains in 2019.

In August, major reservoirs in the country were at 19 percent capacity, compared to 33 percent during the same period in 2018. The low rainfall followed by another long spell of dry weather has impacted drinking water access as well as the agricultural livelihoods of more than 600,000 people in the country. Nandasiri, another farmer from Bakmeegama, stands in front of his small brick house with a red terra cotta roof, just down the road from Udayanthi.

He is back from Colombo for a short time to visit his family, and tells a similar story: "My wife, my daughter, and I lived together in this house. I am a farmer. I own one acre of paddy land, but because it did not rain, I have not cultivated for the last two years. Sri Lankan agriculture revolves around two seasons, Maha (major), which runs from September through March, and Yala (minor), from May to August. These seasons coincide with the two monsoons that travel across the country from different directions, bringing rain to the east and north during Maha, and to the west and southwest during Yala.

Dry zone farmers depend on water collected during these monsoons to grow rice, the nation's staple food that is cultivated across some 700,000 hectares of farmland, as well as commercial crops like tea, rubber, and coconuts. In recent years, however, both agricultural seasons have produced diminished or no harvests due to unreliable rainfall. For farmers who are still working the land, the water shortage means that where they used to harvest 70 bags of rice from one acre of paddy fields, they are now getting just 30.

The failing rains affect more than just the harvests. For many households, drinking water comes from deep wells and rivers. In Trincomalee district, fewer than half the households have access to tap water. Nandasiri's family, for example, has no pump in their house. People without a well

have to walk long distances, sometimes even to the next village, to get clean water. With rising temperatures and extended periods without rain, the wells dry up and the water turns muddy.

The health impacts of drinking unclean water are visible in the red and yellow eyes of the people, a sign of kidney disease, which is more and more common. Poverty exacerbates these and other health issues. In Nandasiri's family, medical expenses pose a huge challenge: “My daughter is not well at all; she has had five surgeries [for a brain-related illness]. I migrated to Colombo to find work at a construction site, and I use that money for my daughter's medicine and clinic visits, but we do not have enough to live day by day.

He's not alone. Farmers struggling with poverty and the after-effects of the nation's 26-year civil war that ended in 2009 have been leaving their homes in search of higher incomes for years. Now, confronted by alternating droughts and floods that will only get worse with progressive climate change, even more are leaving their homes in search of secure livelihoods. They are moving across districts, across provinces, and even across international borders.

“What climate change means for the people of Sri Lanka is that their life has been disturbed, says Anura Dissanayake, who was secretary to the Sri Lanka's Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment at the time of the interview, prior to the country's presidential election in late 2019. “We do not see it because the roads and schools are all there, but people are moving away. Across the world, deteriorating environmental conditions caused by global warming are forcing a rising number of people to abandon their homes.

By most estimates, the number of climate refugees will reach 100-200 million people by 2050. Some estimates are as high as one billion. When we think of climate displacement, however, the images that come to mind are often dramatic: a hurricane hammering an island, a landslide washing away a village, raging tropical storms. We envision long treks of refugees along flooded roads, families crammed into trucks, or people living in tent encampments. These images deserve our attention.

But as the plight of the Sri Lankan farming families indicates, there is a quieter type of climate migration happening as well, one that has been poorly documented so far. It is the departure of adult, able-bodied family members from rural areas to cities in search of work as the slow-onset impacts of our warming world—soil degradation, saltwater intrusion, water scarcity, crop failure, ocean acidification—make subsistence fishing and farming livelihoods no longer viable. It is a movement that tears families apart and hollows out rural communities..

How technology is helping Indian, Sri Lankan fishermen amid climate change patterns

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/climate-change/how-technology-is-helping-indian-sri-lankan-fishermen-amid-climate-change-patterns-72322>

"Climate change has brought monumental shifts in weather patterns, fishing zones and migration of fish population to different areas. The phenomenon has impacted the source of livelihood for many in coastal India pushing them to turn to technological assistance to practice sustainability. Numer8 Analytics Pvt Ltd, a data science firm, has come to their rescue: The firm analysed changes in the cyclical pattern of potential fishing zones in 2018. It found that nearshore fishing zones had drifted away further into the deeper seas.

It also analysed the coastal vulnerability index for Kerala and Odisha post-2018 Kerala cyclone and Cyclone Fani in 2019. Following this, it developed an app, 'OFish', which provides fishermen with weather updates, helps them identify fishing zones and ensure that government guidelines on fishing are practiced. The technology helps fishermen on the sea as well as on the coast. "About 170 million people in India are at the forefront of climate change and experience sea-level rise, tropical cyclones and storms, according to a United Nations report. The latest cases being of the Cyclone Amphan in Bay of Bengal and Cyclone Nisruga in the Arabian Sea, said Devleena Bhattacharjee, founder of the data science firm.

"Think of it like a Google Map for fishing. A fisherman opens the app before he goes out to fish and the platform shows him fishing zones near his chosen port, said Nandhini Karthikeyan, chief technical officer, Numer8. The high-precision marine and ocean data helps them to venture in safer areas of the sea. "Every trip made by fisherman and its details can be recorded in the app, allowing traceability to the end customers.

Once the fishermen reach the shore, the aggregator helps him sell fish directly to buyers, earn a higher sales margin and realise faster payments, said Karthikeyan. The firm enables marine and port authorities in India and Sri Lanka to monitor overfishing and unregulated fishing in the Indian coasts. It is currently working with fishermen in Maharashtra and Kerala in India. The firm build their work on the 11 climate factors identified by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), said Karthikeyan.

These were: -- Sea level -- Sea surface temperature -- Sea surface salinity -- Wind patterns -- Seasonality and seasonal patterns -- Rainfall -- Natural disasters -- Waves and currents -- Tidal action -- Mud flows and turbidity -- Shoreline changes "The above elements combined with pollution, increase in number of fishing boats, unregulated means of fishing and a highly unorganised fishing sector has led to a decline in fisheries through the years, Karthikeyan said.

Importance of Environmental Impact Assessments and the turmoil in Sri Lanka's coasts

<http://www.ft.lk/columns/Importance-of-Environmental-Impact-Assessments-and-the-turmoil-in-our-coasts/4-700089>

"Recently, Mount Lavinia beach in Sri Lanka sparked the attention of the public especially due to a beach nourishment project that commenced amidst curfew. Significantly, at the centre of this entire episode is the Director General of the Coast Conservation and Coastal Resource Management Department (CCD) who quite dubiously admitted that no Environmental Impact Assessment was done prior to the commence of this project.

According to Article 14 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which Sri Lanka ratified in 1994, EIAs should be introduced due to two main reasons: firstly, to avoid or minimise adverse effects, and secondly, to allow for public participation in such EIA procedures. In Sri Lanka, the EIA process was first mandated for large-scale developmental projects located in sensitive ecosystems by Gazette no. 772/22 of 1993.

This Gazette also specified the types of projects falling under the EIA requirement. If there is no complex environmental impact, an Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) can be prescribed instead of an EIA. If a project is outside the coastal zone, then it falls under the ambit of the Central Environmental Authority. However, if the project is located within the coastal zone, such as in the aforementioned case in Mount Lavinia, the duty of identifying whether a project requires an EIA is vested with the Director General of the CCD.

This is according to Section 14 of the Coast Conservation and Coastal Resources Management Act No. 57 of 1981. Section 14 (1) mandates a permit from the Director General for any development activity proposed. The Director General thus has the discretion to prescribe projects which do not require EIAs. In any case, EIA is a process. It involves two main types of actors: project proponent (PP) and the Project Approving Agencies (PAAs). The PAAs are EIA administrative agencies that are responsible for guiding the EIA for projects and for issuing EIA approval or rejection.

The issue of coastal erosion in Mount Lavinia is now spiralling into a tangled list of unanswered questions due to the lack of an EIA. However, there are two key issues which cannot be left in confusion surrounding the turmoil. Firstly, the issue of the CCD being both the PP and the PAA is deeply concerning as it clearly violates the very principles of natural justice. Secondly, the fact that a beach nourishment project facilitated by a mammoth of public funds without an EIA or at least an IEE is even more problematic.

The statement made by Justice Amerasinghe in the *Bulankulama v Ministry of Industrial Development* case (2000 3 SLR 243) shares some valuable insight in respect of these concerns. According to his Lordship: "EIAs are intended to foster sound decision making, not to generate paperwork.

The EIA process should also help public officials make decisions that are based on understanding environmental consequences and take actions that protect, restore and enhance the environment. In this light, although anthropogenic climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing this century; it is alarming to witness the lack of diligence on the part of the

very authorities primarily vested with the duty of preventing and mitigating its adverse impact.

In Jaffna waters, India sinks China bid, but an old net problem rises

<https://indianexpress.com/article/world/in-jaffna-waters-india-sinks-china-bid-but-an-old-net-problem-rises-sri-lanka-govt-7875678/>

"The Sri Lanka-India Memorandum of Understanding for the project was among several signed in March during the visit of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, as Delhi extended a helping hand to Colombo during the economic crisis with financial assistance worth \$2.4 billion.

The Sri Lanka-India Memorandum of Understanding for the project was among several signed in March during the visit of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, as Delhi extended a helping hand to Colombo during the economic crisis with financial assistance worth \$2.4 billion.

All of 50 sq km, Delft, also known by its Tamil name Neduntheevu, is located in the Palk Strait. A choppy one-hour boat ride from a Jaffna jetty called Kurikattuwan, Delft lies just 45 km north-east of Tamil Nadu's Rameswaram. In between is Katchatheevu, which India ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974.

Sri Lanka's territorial waters in this entire area are a matter of severe contestation between Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen. "300 to 500 boats. They come at night on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Those are their fishing days, and they come that close," said 42-year-old Regeeswaran, pointing to a buoy not far from the shore.

His neighbour, J Arokiyadas, complains that when the Sri Lankan naval unit stationed on the island arrests Indian fishermen trespassing in these waters, "they get calls from the big guys in Colombo ordering their release".

India and Sri Lanka: 1974 Indo-Lanka boundary deal suffers from legal infirmity

<https://thefederal.com/opinion/1974-indo-lanka-boundary-deal-suffers-from-legal-infirmity/>

"The recent arrest of 68 Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Coast Guard for transgressing their maritime boundaries at the Palk Strait and Adam's Bridge area has once again triggered a renewed debate on the legality and the binding nature of the 1974 Boundary Agreement between India and Sri Lanka. This forty-eight-year-old agreement had sought to resolve, once and for all, the contentious boundary issue between both the countries.

However, that has not happened it seems. Immediately after the conclusion of this agreement there has been perceptible tension between the fishermen on either side of the Palk Strait. The exercise of 'historic' fishing rights beyond the national maritime boundaries and its interpretation have given rise to many unclear international legal issues. Since 2010, on an average, annually, nearly two hundred Indian fishermen are arrested around Katchatheevu island area for fishing in Sri Lankan waters. Sometimes such arrests have resulted in fatalities as well.

Since 2009, after the ending of the Sri Lankan internecine civil war, this number has been steadily rising. Each time, after such arrests the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu dash off letters to the Prime Minister and also to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to review or to rescind the existing 1974 Boundary Agreement between India and Sri Lanka. They have been arguing that on account of the narrow interpretation (or even not making any reference to it) of the term 'historic' and 'traditional' fishing rights of the Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait, has given rise to this recurring problem of arbitrary arrest by the Sri Lankan Coast Guard.

For this reason, the implementation of the 1974 Agreement has become a contentious issue. After the most recent incident that occurred last week, Tamil Nadu CM Stalin wrote a comprehensive letter outlining his government's concerns over the plight of the fishermen and the consequent viability of this agreement. The arrest of the fishermen by the Sri Lankan authorities is followed by the impounding of their vessels under the Sri Lankan civil and criminal code.

This has resulted in an inevitable long legal process thereby affecting the livelihood of the Indian fishermen. Some view this as a tactic to deter the Indian fishermen from venturing into the Sri Lankan side of the Palk Strait. Although the government of India, in particular, the MEA, has been elaborating upon the efforts being made by its Consulate to ameliorate the plight of the incarcerated fishermen in Jaffna and other places, tactically, it is silent on raising the concerns relating to the legal and contextual nature of the 1974 agreement. On the contrary, it has been stoically defending the agreement as resolving the long-standing boundary dispute between both the friendly countries.

To a RTI question on the larger issue of resolution of Katchatheevu Island or the Palk Bay issue raised on November 13, 2014, the MEA, (as publicised in its own website) had categorically stated: "The information sought above pertains to delineation of Indo-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). Applicant is requested to note that Katchatheevu Island lies on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) that was delineated by the 1974 Agreement". "(The Agreement on the boundary in historic waters between the two countries and related matters (with map) signed at Colombo on June 26, 1974 and at New Delhi on June 28, 1974).

Under the Agreement, Indian fishermen are allowed access to Katchatheevu island for rest, for drying of nets and for the annual St Anthony's festival. The Katchatheevu island issue is,

however, currently sub-judice with two writ petitions [Nos. 561 (2008) and 430 (2013) filed in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. It may also be noted that the issue of Katchatheevu and IMBL pertain to the government of Sri Lanka, a friendly neighbouring country.”

The above contention of the Indian government on the contents and interpretation of the 1974 Agreement however is not in consonance with the views of the Tamil Nadu state government. This also raises the larger issue of implementation of an international agreement keeping in mind the federal structure of the Indian Constitution. Article 246 of the Indian Constitution in its Seventh Schedule provides that the central government has the sole prerogative to enter into and implement (under Article 253) any international agreement.

However, in matters that affect the interests of state governments it should normally seek their views as well. In this regard, one should recall the unanimous resolution passed by the Tamil Nadu legislative assembly in 2013 opposing the transfer of sovereignty on the Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka. The Tamil Nadu government has also been pointing out that the 1974 agreement being a transfer of sovereignty issue of Katchatheevu Island has not been formally ratified by the Indian Parliament.

This essentially raises the issue of adjustment and delimitation of maritime boundaries and accordingly needs the approval of the Indian Parliament as it has the sole prerogative to decide the territorial sovereignty and claims of the Indian state as per Part I (Articles 1 to 4) of the Indian Constitution. For this reason, two writ petitions on the issue of cession of maritime territory in relation to Katchatheevu Island, as noted above by the MEA, are pending before the Supreme Court.

The 1974 Agreement, despite its confirmed finality, continues to raise issues from both the domestic and international legal angles. On the domestic angle about the legality of the transfer of territorial sovereignty by the executive (the Central government) the Indian Supreme Court's decisions have gone through a trajectory of legal ambivalence in different contexts. The important question before the Supreme Court in several cases has been whether the territory could be ceded to another country through an executive decision or whether it should have been done through a constitutional amendment.

The adjustment of an undefined boundary through marking was regarded as something that could be effected through an executive act. The adjustment of the boundary or territory pursuant to an order of the arbitral tribunal was regarded as a ceding of the territory, necessitating a constitutional amendment. This resulted in the 9th amendment of the Indian Constitution. The ceding of Indian sovereignty of Katchatheevu Island in a 1974 agreement by an executive action needs legal clarity.

The available official records show that this tiny island was historically part of the Indian territory. Can it be ceded without proper Parliamentary intercession? From the international legal angle, the 1974 Agreement between India and Sri Lanka was concluded at a time when the basic

principles relating to maritime delimitation had yet not crystallised. The negotiations for the third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) had just been launched in 1973. There was no unanimity among countries on the extent of the limits of territorial sea on which states could have exercised their sovereign rights. The idea of other territorial delimitations such as Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Continental Shelf and other related maritime zones had not yet crystallised as well.

Even the Indian legislation on the maritime zones i.e., the Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, were passed in 1976. It is not clear as to why India had to cede its sovereignty in 1974 of certain parts of the Palk Strait to Sri Lanka, including a 283 acre Katchatheevu Island without sufficiently preserving and articulating its historic and traditional rights. According to one view, such a transfer at that point of time was on account of a close alliance that existed between the prime ministers of both countries than anything else.

Even now, in 2021 perhaps, similar sentiments prevail and accordingly India must find it difficult to overturn the agreement. It is also true that almost ten years after the conclusion of the 1974 agreement, the third UNCLOS had ended in 1983 with more clarity and unanimity on the global scene over the exact delimitation terms for the maritime zones. Despite all this, a silver lining in the 1974 agreement is its repeated reference to 'historic' and 'traditional' rights in its Preamble.

More importantly, it is the scope of Article 6 of the 1974 agreement on which the Central government should seek a broader view and interpretation through a mutual negotiation with Sri Lanka. It, inter alia, states, "The vessels of Sri Lanka and India will enjoy in each other's waters such rights as they have traditionally enjoyed therein".

Further, international law, through its codified Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties (VCLT) in Article 31 through its general rules of interpretation clearly allows parties to renegotiate or to re-emphasise the provisions of a treaty through an appropriate addendum or annex. Perhaps, this is the way forward to end the decades of hardships of the fishermen.

Along with this, a proper regional fisheries zone agreement as per UNCLOS requirements between both the countries should also be negotiated to optimally and sustainably utilise the available fisheries resources.

India and Sri Lanka: Agree to find solutions to existing fisheries matters

<https://island.lk/india-and-sri-lanka-agree-to-find-solutions-to-existing-fisheries-matters/>

"India and Sri Lanka agreed to find solutions to the existing fisheries matters through the established bilateral mechanisms, including the Ministerial-level India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group on Fisheries.

The Indian HC in Colombo issued the following statement in the wake of Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda meeting the Indian High Commissioner Gopal Bagley on Dec 7 at the Foreign Ministry: The two Ministers discussed matters of mutual interest with the Indian High Commissioner, mainly focussing on the Palk Strait fisheries issue and possible post Covid-19 mutual cooperation. It was agreed to find solutions to the existing fisheries matters through the established bilateral mechanisms, including the Ministerial-level India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group on Fisheries.

The fourth Meeting of the Bilateral Working Group on Fisheries that was scheduled for last January was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation. Both sides endorsed to convene the Working Group meeting virtually at the earliest, while assurances were given to maintain the standard procedures in dealing with mid-sea encounters.

Both sides expressed satisfaction over the entire gamut of areas in bilateral cooperation, including the ongoing development assistance and Covid-19 pandemic joint action. The Indian side assured fullest cooperation to repatriate the Sri Lankans who are still stranded in South India due to travel restrictions.

The two Ministers thanked India for the assistance given to construct the Jaffna Cultural Centre, which is expected to become functional soon through joint collaboration. Both sides agreed to continue the close dialogue.

India and Sri Lanka: Appoints committee to look for permanent solution on fishermen issue

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-appoints-committee-to-look-for-permanent-solution-on-fishermen-issue/article33671717.ece>

"Sri Lankan government has appointed a three-member committee which will make recommendations on measures to stop poaching by Indian fishermen inside the country's waters, the Ministry of Fisheries said on Tuesday, a week after four people were killed when an Indian trawler capsized after colliding with a Sri Lankan Navy vessel. Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda has appointed the committee of senior officials from his ministry who would be talking to all stakeholders to try and find a permanent solution to this recurring issue, officials said.

Last week, India lodged a strong protest with Sri Lanka over the death of four fishermen in a collision between their vessel and a naval craft of the island nation, saying steps should be taken

to ensure that such incidents do not recur. The Indian fishing trawler sank in the Sri Lankan waters about 8 nautical miles within the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) northwest of Delft Island. The fishermen were from Tamil Nadu and they had set out for fishing on January 18. India expressed “deep anguish” over the incident and emphasised the need to deal with issues pertaining to fishermen in a humanitarian manner.

“Existing understandings between the two governments in that regard must be strictly observed. Utmost efforts should be made to ensure that there is no recurrence,” the Ministry of External Affairs said in New Delhi on January 21. Commenting on the incident, Sri Lanka’s Foreign Ministry Secretary Jayanath Colombage said that the issue was a people’s issue which needs to be looked at closely. “The incident happened within our waters, when the boat had collided with the Sri Lankan Naval patrol craft”, Colombage, a former Sri Lankan Navy chief, told a local TV channel.

The Sri Lankan Navy said that on January 18 they seized Indian fishing trawlers allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan waters, trespassing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). The Navy said one of the Indian fishing trawlers, with aggressive manoeuvres attempted to evade the scene and collided with the Naval craft in operation and ultimately sank at sea having lost its stability.

Fishermen from both countries are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other’s waters. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during his visit to Sri Lanka early this month held a meeting with Lankan Fisheries Minister and reviewed bilateral cooperation in fisheries. During his five-day visit to India in February last year, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi agreed to resolve the long-festered fishermen issue with a “humane approach”.

India and Sri Lanka: Demand Katchatheevu back in return of aid: Fishermen

<https://www.dtnext.in/News/TamilNadu/2022/04/11135018/1361342/Demand-Katchatheevu-back-in-return-of-aid-Fishermen.vpf>

"In order to extend a helping hand to Sri Lanka, India had agreed to provide \$1 billion credit to the island nation for extending support to procure food, medicines and essentials. At this juncture, the fishermen in Tamil Nadu, who are facing troubles in the Palk Strait due to the high-handedness of the Sri Lankan Navy, want India to initiate steps to retrieve the 285-acre Katchatheevu which was once under the control of Ramnad Zamindaris or ensure implementation of Article 5 and 6 of the Katchatheevu agreement, 1974.

“We are not objecting to extending of assistance to Sri Lanka. However, India shall ask its neighbour to stop its naval brutality, which has been unleashed on Tamil fishermen in the Palk Strait. India shall provide credit assistance to Sri Lanka on condition it should return the

Katchatheevu or follow the pact,” Armstrong Fernando, vice president, All India Fishermen Congress told DT Next.

He further pointed out that even as the agreement delineated Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka, Articles 5 and 6 of the Katchatheevu/ Indo-Sri Lankan maritime agreement made it clear that the traditional rights of Indian fishermen, including the right to fish near Katchatheevu were accepted and conceded.

On June 26, 1974, India and Sri Lanka had entered into an agreement regarding the right on Katchatheevu. Uthirapathy, a fisherman representative from Nagapattinam had also made the same demand to the Centre to retrieve Katchatheevu.

“As Sri Lanka has been facing the worst economic crunch, India is helping our neighbour on moral grounds. However, it can utilise this situation to retrieve our traditional rights on Katchatheevu. We can provide credit assistance and in return Sri Lanka shall give back Katchatheevu as it would save our fishermen’s livelihoods,” he told this paper.

When Fernando approached the Madras High Court seeking direction from the Centre to strictly implement Articles 5 and 6 of Katchatheevu Agreement on March 11, the first bench headed by Chief Justice Munishwar Nath Bhandari held that it could not intervene in foreign affairs matters.

Speaking about the issue, senior advocate KM Vijayan said that the fishermen have raised a sensible demand and it is up to the Union government to decide on it. “Katchatheevu was once occupied by India. The Constitution allows us to give and take the occupied parts. Since the Sri Lankan government is expecting assistance from India, the Centre can demand the SL to return the island to us.

Though it is a sensible demand and the Centre has to take a decision considering the political effects. It is purely under the purview of the external affairs ministry as they will take note of our diplomatic ties,” he told DT Next."

India and Sri Lanka: Discussions on India-Sri Lanka territorial waters dispute underway

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2021/10/20/discussions-on-india-sl-territorial-waters-dispute-underway/>

"The Ministry of Fisheries says that it is holding discussions with the Government of India regarding the fisheries issues caused as a result of Indian fishermen violating the territorial waters of Sri Lanka. The Secretary to the Ministry of Fisheries, Indu Ratnayake said that plans

are underway to hold discussions with the Indian and Sri Lankan fishing communities, adding that steps will be taken to resolve the issue expeditiously.

According to Ratnayake, eight Indian fishing vessels that violated the territorial waters of Sri Lanka and are currently in Sri Lankan custody. She said that two of the boats were seized by security forces last week and 23 fishermen aboard the vessels have been quarantined. The Fisheries Ministry Secretary added that the relevant authorities have already been informed to take legal action against the fishermen who have violated the territorial waters of Sri Lanka.

India and Sri Lanka: Ending the dispossession of Northern fishers by Indian trawlers

<https://island.lk/ending-the-dispossession-of-northern-fishers-by-indian-trawlers/>

"From the beginning of the early 1980s, trawlers, from Tamil Nadu, have been crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) and illegally fishing in the Palk Bay waters of northern Sri Lanka, damaging the ecosystem by bottom trawling, smuggling fisheries resources, belonging to the northern Sri Lankan fishers, damaging their fishing equipment, and undermining their livelihoods. Diverse types of interventions, by the two governments, dialogues between the fishers of the two countries, involvement of civil society actors, and others, have done little to prevent human suffering, economic losses and the volatile political situation disturbing the relations between two friendly countries that have emerged from this 40-year long story of resource piracy.

The northern Sri Lankan fishers, who suffered 30 years of civil war have had enough and there is an urgent need to end this crisis. Extracting and devastating resources: Both Sri Lankan and Indian fishers used to share the Palk Bay waters (historic waters) in the past, which they did in harmony. However, post-war developments saw radical changes in the structure and organisation in fisheries, the expansion of the market and the establishment of borders separating the Palk Bay region, all of which had tremendous influence on fisheries, especially on the type of technology employed (craft-gear combinations), target species, fishing pressure and area of operation.

In this process of change, a tremendous increase in Indian trawlers was observed, which finally resulted in a serious decline of fisheries resources on the Indian side of the Palk Bay and crossing of the IMBL by the Indian trawl fleet to fish in Sri Lankan waters. In northern Sri Lanka, over 37,000 fishers operate more than 11,650 boats, the majority of which are 18 feet FRP boats propelled by outboard engines of 8 to 25hp. Including post-harvest sector employment and dependents, about 200,000 people in the Northern Province are dependent on the sector. They don't stand a chance against the 2500 odd 30-60 feet trawlers from Tamil Nadu propelled by 70-190hp outboard engines.

Indian trawl boats are crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (which was established in 1974 and 1976) to fish on the Sri Lankan side of the Palk Bay. These boats are poaching in Sri

Lankan waters in large numbers as well as extracting and devastating the resources belonging to Sri Lankan fishers. Although the process of poaching commenced in a situation where Sri Lankan fishers in the North had limited fishing opportunities due to the civil war. Today the issue has become one of the most important economic and political issues in the country, because with the end of the war in 2009, the Sri Lankan fishers in the North has commenced fishing.

The Palk Bay Pirates Trawlers come at night, three days a week, smuggle colossal amounts of fisheries resources, and damage Sri Lankan fishers' nets, causing enormous financial losses. To avoid the trawlers, Sri Lankan fishers often stay at home instead of going out to sea, thus losing valuable fishing time. They are forced to adopt less-profitable, near shore operations and/or resort to destructive fishing practices (trawling, wing nets, purse seining, dynamiting, etc.). The social institutions of the fishing communities, particularly fisheries co-operatives present in every village, have been weakened due to the long decline of fishing incomes, where a fraction of such incomes are normally contributed to run the co-operatives.

Thus, participatory management and coastal support for fishing communities have been undermined. The long disruption of fisheries after the war has made it difficult for fishing communities to plan for the next season, and many are slowly moving out of the fishing sector to other forms of day wage labour. In the early years, arrests of Indian trawlers for poaching were made for security reasons, because the Sri Lanka Navy, which was fighting a war, was less interested in fisheries issues. But since the cessation of the war, the Navy arrested the intruders for illegal entry into Sri Lankan territory.

The arrests were made under the Foreign Fishing Boat Regulations Act No. 59 of 1979, Immigration Act of Sri Lanka and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The impact of the arrests in preventing Indian trawl intrusion was neutralised by the arrests of Sri Lankan multiday fishers for poaching in Indian Territory, and detained in Indian prisons. Often, through the intervention of the embassies of the two countries, the Indian trawler fishers arrested and detained in Sri Lankan prisons were released in exchange for Sri Lankan fishers detained in India.

Early Interventions: In trying to deal with this escalating crisis, the two governments drew up an MOU in 2005, which made provision for the establishment of a Joint Working Group (JWG), which among other things, would deal with issues of poaching and arrests. Although several rounds of discussions were held since 2008, no significant developments were reported, other than agreeing that fishers in both countries should be able to pursue fishing activity in a safe, secure and sustainable manner.

However, some progress was achieved in the front of fisher-fisher dialogues. Several such dialogues have taken place in the past, initially organised by ARIF (Alliance for the Release of Innocent Fishermen) and later with the active involvement of the two governments. The most important of such dialogues took place in August 2010, where the Indians agreed to stop

mechanised trawl fishing in Sri Lankan waters within a period of one year, during which time, only 70 days of trawling were to be allowed.

Unfortunately, the governments failed to back up these decisions, and the promises were not kept. Further dialogues took place under state patronage in March 2011 and January 2014, which did not produce any fruitful results. Post-2015 developments: In April 2015, President Maithripala Sirisena convened a meeting with the various arms of the state and the northern fisher leaders on the request of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA).

This high level meeting and continued engagement gave the fisher folk the confidence that their plight was a matter of serious concern to the Government, and initiated bipartisan engagement on the issue, leading to significant progress. The Parliamentary debate in October 2015 on the ecological and socio-economic damage by Indian trawlers, growing awareness through media coverage and the greater involvement of actors in Colombo, raised the fisheries conflict to the level of a national issue, rather than a problem confined to the North.

Fisher leaders also took their issue to court and actively sought legal recourse towards prolonged confiscation of trawlers, and a ban of trawling in Sri Lanka. An Amendment to the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act banning bottom trawling in Sri Lanka was passed by Parliament in July 2017. On another front, the Indian Government, in 2015, made unambiguous statements that Tamil Nadu trawlers should stop cross-border fishing. Furthermore, the increased media attention on the devastation caused to Northern Fishers exposed Tamil Nadu's hypocrisy.

The Tamil Nadu Government called for INR 1,520 crore (USD 225 million) package to convert the trawler fleet to deep sea vessels under the 'Blue Revolution Scheme', of which INR 450 crore (USD 66 million) was approved by the Government in Delhi, and the rest was to come from bank loans. By September 2019, close to 590 trawlers have applied for this facility. Although concerns were raised about whether such a conversion to deep sea fishing and buy back is realistic and sustainable, the engagement from Tamil Nadu pointed to an acknowledgement of the unsustainability of trawling and poaching.

An important development was the setting up of a Joint Working Group in November 2016 during ministerial talks held between India and Sri Lanka (revitalising what was formed in 2005), which would meet every three months and a meeting between the Ministers for Fisheries every six months. The Terms of Reference for the Joint Working Group (JWG) included: i. expediting the transition towards ending the practice of bottom trawling at the earliest, ii. working out the modalities for the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for handing over of apprehended fishermen, and iii. ascertaining possibilities for cooperation on patrolling.

Both Governments agreed on setting up a hotline between the two Coast Guards. Agreement was also reached on the request by the Fishermen Associations that there should be no violence and no loss of life in the handling of fishermen by the Navies and Coast Guards of the two countries. They agreed to encourage the Fishermen Associations of the two countries to meet every six

months to take further their dialogue. Yet, many of the decisions taken at the bilateral Ministerial talks were not followed through towards a permanent solution.

As a result of campaigns of small scale fishers from the North, the work of researchers and activists and engagement with the governments of the two countries, and more importantly, the enforcement of the Foreign Fishing Boat Regulations (amendment) Act, a significant reduction in the incidence of Indian trawlers illegally fishing in Sri Lankan waters was noticed by 2018. Yet, the Northern fishers did not even have a breathing space for a new beginning, because the country was hit by the Covid Pandemic in early 2020.

Very little action was paid against the poachers and there has been a resurgence of the incidence of Indian trawlers poaching in Sri Lankan waters, drastically affecting fishing livelihoods, which were already being threatened by the pandemic. The aggravated current situation, continues to dispossess the small scale fishers of the North; they were devastated by the war until 2009, crippled by the Indian trawlers in the decade after the war and impoverished by market disruptions with the Covid-19 pandemic since March 2020.

Moving forward: The decision to arrest and retain trawlers that are crossing over the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) by the Sri Lanka Navy, particularly since 2013, places significant pressure on the Tamil Nadu establishment. Yet, the lower levels of arrests over the last two years (71 vessels were arrested in 2017 while only nine were arrested in 2020) is in part due to fears of the Covid-19 virus spreading through arrests.

Evidently, expanding deterrence is of paramount importance in dealing with the present crises, which needs strict enforcement of the Foreign Fishing Boats Regulations (Amendment) Act, No. 01 of 2018 to arrest foreign vessels in Sri Lankan EEZ which has provisions for imposing heavy fines on trawl owners ranging from Rs. 4 – 15 million. The Trawl Ban Act. No. 11 of 2017 should also be implemented. Given that Indo-Sri Lankan relations are currently of great importance, where the priorities for both governments are in furthering trade, investment and defence ties between the two countries, deterrence is to be employed carefully.

There is the need for a broader strategy that asserts pressure at different levels to ensure that Tamil Nadu addresses the issue of poaching by their trawlers; particularly given that fisheries is a devolved subject in India. Pushing for joint patrolling operations by the Indian and Sri Lankan Navy could be strategic. The Indian side needs to be convinced to install vessel monitoring devices on their trawlers to track their location. However, these efforts will prove futile unless the incidence of Sri Lankan multiday boats violating Indian maritime boundaries is brought under control.

Raising the issue both by the Sri Lankan Government towards the Indian Government and the TNA and Tamil political actors towards Tamil Nadu would be strategic, given the political realities. Strong emphasis should be made on the devastating impact of resource smuggling on the livelihoods of Northern fishing populations of Sri Lanka. Strategies to work with the newly

elected Government in Tamil Nadu in relation to the fishing conflict will be necessary. Engagement by the Tamil fishing community and community leaders from the North will prove important for challenging a change of stance by Tamil Nadu Government and its leaders.

Thousands of nets worth millions of Rupees have been lost in the past decade, with no single fisherman ever being compensated and with no insurance being available. Fishers now deserve financial reparations for their lost assets and for lost fishing days. Financial reparations can also be asked from the Tamil Nadu fishers, the Tamil Nadu government or the Indian government. If such demands, however, are not met in the short term, the Sri Lankan government itself may need to find the required funds.

A campaign for reparations for northern Sri Lankan fishers will help consolidate the demand for a permanent solution to the fishing conflict. The larger aim of interventions in the Palk Bay should be to establish a sustainable, comprehensive, and socially just fisheries. Current data on the state of fish stocks in this region are highly deficient. Similarly, very little scientific knowledge on the damage caused to the environment by trawling is currently available. There is an urgent need for NARA to intensify research in the Palk Bay. This can provide the foundation for developing a rational and legitimate framework for fisheries governance.

Such research will also continue to weigh on the need for a permanent solution that ends bottom trawling in the Palk Bay. While the fisher-to-fisher negotiations conducted in Chennai in 2010 were initially widely acknowledged as promising, the follow-up was poor. Similarly, the Ministerial level talks in November 2016 were significant and even led to considerable changes, however, again follow up was poor. There is a need to build on the tremendous gains of those talks, regardless of the change of Government.

At the current moment there should be a clear plan recognising the realities in Sri Lanka and India, including the political changes in Tamil Nadu and the Covid-19 pandemic to work through a process of consensus building, but with firm resolve to end bottom trawling. There should be no setback on issues agreed at the Ministerial level talks in November 2016, and calls for licensing cross border fishing should be rejected outright.

Concluding remarks: The measures suggested above will be important steps towards resolving the Palk Bay fisheries conflict. Such measures along with the recent national attention on fisheries can also lay the foundation to ensure sustainable governance and management of the natural resource base and the people who depend on it.

The establishment of effective interactive platforms (e.g., strengthening fisher community organizations, co-management platforms) and clearly laid down rights and responsibilities of participating actors, along with consultation, collaboration and coordination of all concerned actors can lead to effective and sustainable policies. Indeed, sustaining small scale fisheries in addition to solving the Palk Bay fishing conflict will encompass dialogue among relevant actors,

capacity development, law enforcement and empowerment of coastal communities.

India and Sri Lanka: Fishing for workable solutions in the Palk Bay

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/fishing-for-workable-solutions-in-the-palk-bay/article65345894.ece>

"After a gap of 15 months, the India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group (JWG) on fisheries held its much-awaited deliberations (in virtual format) on March 25. But between the two meetings of the JWG, a number of events — some of them unfortunate — have occurred in the Palk Bay region that encompasses India's Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka's Northern Province. For instance, seven fishermen — five from Tamil Nadu and two from Sri Lanka — have died in "mid-sea clashes".

Just as sections of fishermen from the Palk Bay bordering districts of Tamil Nadu continue to transgress the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), cases of many of them getting arrested and their boats being impounded by the Sri Lankan authorities continue. What has precipitated matters is that in early February, the impounded boats, around 140 in number, were auctioned despite a bilateral understanding on the matter.

Trawling as an issue

Apart from poaching in the territorial waters of Sri Lanka, the use of mechanised bottom trawlers is another issue that has become a bone of contention between the fishermen of the two countries; the dispute is not just between the two states. This method of fishing, which was once promoted by the authorities in India, is now seen as being extremely adverse to the marine ecology, and has been acknowledged so by India. The actions of the Tamil Nadu fishermen adversely affect their counterparts in the Northern Province who are also struggling to come to terms with life after the civil war. The ongoing economic crisis in the island nation has only worsened their plight.

At the same time, the fishermen of Tamil Nadu experience a genuine problem — the lack of fishing areas consequent to the demarcation of the IMBL in June 1974. If they confine themselves to Indian waters, they find the area available for fishing full of rocks and coral reefs besides being shallow.

The distance between Dhanushkodi (Tamil Nadu) and the IMBL is nine nautical miles (NM) while the maximum distance — Devipattinam and the IMBL — is 34 NM. Under the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1983, mechanised fishing boats can fish only beyond 3 NM from the coast. This explains the trend of the fishermen having to cross the IMBL frequently.

Another factor is that the people of the two countries in general and fisherfolk in particular have common threads of language, culture and religion, all of which can be used purposefully to resolve any dispute. It is because of this factor as well as the plight of the fishermen of the Northern Province that the two governments have been repeatedly saying that the whole problem has to be looked at from humanitarian and livelihood angles.

Fisher-level talks

With the problem having been discussed by the JWG, and earlier during the visit of India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to Sri Lanka, in March as well, it is time steps are taken to take the process forward. The present situation, which is otherwise very stressful for Sri Lanka in view of the economic crisis, can be utilised to bring the fishermen of the two countries to the negotiating table.

This is because the Indian government's two-month ban on fishing on the east coast of the country began on April 15. It is up to Sri Lanka now to ensure that the talks take place as the Indian side is keen on resuming fisherfolk-level deliberations. As several substantive issues were discussed threadbare in the previous rounds of such meetings — the last one was in New Delhi in November 2016 — only some fine-tuning of the respective positions had to be done.

While Indian fishermen can present a road map for their transition to deep sea fishing or alternative methods of fishing, the Sri Lankan side has to take a pragmatic view that the transition cannot happen abruptly.

To elicit a favourable response from the fishermen of the Northern Province, the Tamil Nadu fishermen have to commit themselves to a short and swift transition for which the governments in India (Central and State) have to come forward to perform the role of guarantors.

Also, whenever there is a genuine complaint about Tamil Nadu fishermen having damaged the properties of the Northern Province's fishermen, the Indian government can compensate this through the proper channels of Sri Lanka.

Deep sea fishing

In the meantime, India will have to modify its scheme on deep sea fishing to accommodate the concerns of its fishermen, especially those from Ramanathapuram district, so that they take to deep sea fishing without any reservation. The revised scheme has to absorb satisfactorily not only the unit cost of long liners but also the running cost.

Also, there is a compelling need for the Central and State governments to implement in Tamil Nadu the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana in a proactive manner. The scheme, which was flagged off two years ago, covers alternative livelihood measures too including seaweed

cultivation, open sea cage cultivation, and sea/ocean ranching.

During Mr. Jaishankar's visit, India had signed a memorandum of understanding with Sri Lanka for the development of fisheries harbours. This can be modified to include a scheme for deep sea fishing to the fishermen of the North. It is a welcome development that the JWG has agreed to have joint research on fisheries, which should be commissioned at the earliest. Such a study should cover the extent of the adverse impact of bottom trawling in the Palk Bay region.

Northern Sri Lankan fishermen seek India's action over disputes

Simultaneously, the two countries should explore the possibility of establishing a permanent multi-stakeholder institutional mechanism to regulate fishing activity in the region. At the same time, Sri Lanka should take a lenient view of the situation and refrain from adopting a rigid and narrow legal view of matters concerning the release of 16 fishermen or impounded fishing boats (around 90 in number).

Any delay in this will only increase the bitterness between the two countries at a time when the economic crisis of Sri Lanka is generating empathy in India. What everyone needs to remember is that the fisheries dispute is not an insurmountable problem. A number of options are available to make the Palk Bay not only free of troubles but also a model for collaborative endeavours in fishing."

India and Sri Lanka: Fishing in troubled waters

<https://telanganatoday.com/fishing-in-troubled-waters>

"APJ Abdul Kalam, the late President of India, had once suggested a very sensible solution to the long-standing animosity between India and Sri Lanka over the two countries' fishermen's rights to fish in disputed waters. Kalam had suggested that fishermen of India and Sri Lanka may be permitted to fish in the disputed waters of the Palk Bay, Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar on alternate days. After him, many other commentators have also sung the same tune. But those have not been able to lift India and Sri Lanka out of their deep slumber. Both New Delhi and Colombo have been affirming their commitment to find 'a permanent solution to the fishermen issue' for a long time. But very little has moved in this direction.

A tragic incident occurred in the third week of last month when four Indian fishermen lost their lives after their boat collided with a Sri Lankan navy vessel and then sunk. There is an unofficial estimate that since the middle of the 1970s when the bilateral crisis raised its head first as India handed over the Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka, more than 700 Indian fishermen have been killed by the Sri Lankan navy. Deep Rooted Business The problem has now become a deep

rooted one and a piecemeal approach adopted by the Indira Gandhi-led government in the 1970s is responsible for it.

New Delhi handed over Katchatheevu to Colombo but India's then External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh asserted that Indian fishermen would continue to enjoy fishing rights in and around Katchatheevu. So how can any government in New Delhi face and deny the assertion made by the fishermen community of Tamil Nadu that Katchatheevu belongs to India? Let us look at the piquant ground reality surrounding the issue.

Tamil Nadu has a large fishermen population depending on deep-sea fishing — the number hovers around 2,70,000. On the Sri Lankan side, the figure is gigantic – nearly 12 lakh. The presence of such a large number of population in the trade indicates that the catches from the sea have a brisk internal and export market. An inevitable corollary is the investment of big capital in the fishing business of the area. So a giant-sized fishing industry has grown in five districts of Tamil Nadu bordering the Palk Bay, which has attracted large investments from several non-fishing communities thus elbowing out many traditional fishermen.

Had it been just a case of small-time fishings by the fishermen of India and Sri Lanka, the problem might not have grown into a festering sore in bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka. But the infusion of big capital has changed the scenario altogether. In 1986, the number of registered trawlers in Thanjavur, Pudukkottai and Ramanathapuram districts of Tamil Nadu was 1,568. But in 2000, this number shot up to 3,339. It is widely believed that Rameswaram alone has more than 1,000 mechanised trawlers today.

According to a recent estimate, small coastal stretches of Rameswaram, Mandapam and Pamban have 2,500 trawlers while Kottaipattinam and Pudukkottai have another 400. Add to it the number of trawlers in other coastal locations and the figure becomes stupendous. Blame Games Indulging in blame games will serve no purpose because socioeconomic conditions in certain parts of India and Sri Lanka have linkages with the disputed water. Local economies of three districts of Sri Lanka's Northern Province are dependent on fishing.

More importantly, the Northern Province of Sri Lanka accounts for more than one-third of the country's marine catch. So the marine products segment of the country's export economy has its stake in this region. At the same time, the fishermen of Tamil Nadu have also no other way but to cross the International Maritime Boundary Line because resources within the Indian exclusive economic zone are becoming more and more scarce due to the harmful practice of bottom trawling by Indian trawlers.

The crisis is no doubt a fall out of the hastily drawn up maritime boundary agreement between India and Sri Lanka in 1974. Neither the then Tamil Nadu government nor the fishermen were engaged by the Government of India in any detailed discussion. The agreement gives Indian fishermen the right to rest, drying up of nets and participate in the annual St Anthony's festival on the Katchatheevu island but it does not give fishing rights. So Swaran Singh's statement –

assuring fishing rights to Indian fishermen — was perhaps an exercise in assuaging wounded sentiments in Tamil Nadu. But it has made the issue more complex.

Solution: But where does lie the solution? Well, India will have to take the initiative as the bigger country. First, the use of trawlers in the Palk Bay must be prohibited. Sri Lanka has already done it in their side of the said sea route. Second, the fishermen in Tamil Nadu must be convinced not to cross the International Maritime Boundary Line till a permanent solution is found. This will be easy to achieve as any impounded foreign fishing boat in Sri Lankan waters is now charged a penalty of minimum LKR 6 million, which may reach up to LKR 175 million maximum.

Thirdly, New Delhi must correct its cardinal mistake of allowing mechanised infrastructure of fishing in Tamil Nadu and instead go back to traditional fishing methods. This will be justice for the traditional fishing communities many of whose members have been forced to become wage labourers in mechanised trawlers.

Quantity of marine catch within the Indian side of the exclusive economic zone is low due to bottom trawling and New Delhi has to look for an alternative mechanism. A good idea is to set up a Palk Bay Authority which would set up downstream processing industries for limiting the number of fishermen going into the sea.

Another fruitful step may be creation of fishermen's cooperatives comprising representatives from both the countries. Through mutual consent, limited fishing days — a 12-hour time limit for each fishing trip, and for the Indian fishermen, a prescribed distance of three nautical miles from the Sri Lankan shore may be introduced.

India and Sri Lanka: Fishing in troubled waters: Sri Lanka's war-hit fishermen frustrated over Indian bottom trawling

<https://economynext.com/fishing-in-troubled-waters-sri-lankas-war-hit-fishermen-frustrated-over-indian-bottom-trawling-87564/>

"Resettled after the end of Sri Lanka's 26-year war in 2009, Annalingam Annarasa had vowed to develop his family profession of fishing. Twelve years later, he struggles to continue his livelihood in the resettled Northern coastal island of Kayts. The reason is bottom trawling by fishermen from neighbouring India. The banned method of fishing still continues, and local fishermen are the most affected – fishermen who have just started to prosper from a livelihood they had been long denied as a result of being displaced by the war, fishermen who have finally allowed to resettle in their original fishing villages.

“We have lost around 40 percent of our daily fish catch due to bottom trawling by Indian fishermen,” Annarasa told EconomyNext over the phone. The 43-year-old, who is President of

the Federation of Jaffna District Fishermen Societies, says the local fishermen in Jaffna are deprived of fishing resources as Indian bottom trawling has reduced fish populations in Sri Lankan waters.

The banned practise results in even fingerlings being caught while also damaging fishing nets used by local fishermen. “Around 500 fishing nets have been damaged so far this year in Kayts,” he said, referring to an area where a number of small islands is situated in the Gulf of Mannar to the north-northwest of mainland Sri Lanka and to the south-southwest of the Jaffna peninsula. Bottom trawling is banned in Sri Lanka and the law is strictly implemented to maintain the sustainability of the fishing industry by preventing fingerlings being destroyed.

Thousands of fishermen like Annarasa who are rebuilding their lives after the end of a decades-long war are now desperate in the face of increased bottom trawling by Indian fishermen. Thousands of Sri Lanka’s northern fishermen have urged the government to make a final stand on the Indian trawler issue as the encroachment and the damage to their fishing equipment are hindering their livelihood and challenging Sri Lanka’s post-war resettlement efforts.

Around 800,000 people were displaced during the civil war that lasted from 1983 to 2009. The fighting escalated in Jaffna district in 1990, which saw many turn to state-run welfare centers or move to live with family elsewhere. Bottom trawling is a type of fishing net that’s pulled along the seafloor. Fishermen commonly use the technique to catch shrimp and bottom-dwelling fish. However, in addition to targeting fish, the nets also catch a variety of ocean life that’s usually thrown back into the water dead or dying.

Dragging heavy gear across the seabed can also damage sensitive seafloor habitat. The harmful effects of bottom trawling on bottom-dwelling organisms and their habitat can be reduced by modifying the fishing gear or limiting the trawling area. Annarasa says a fisherman needs up to 600,000 rupees to start fishing and if a net is damaged, the fisherman needs a quarter of that investment for repairs. “These fishermen use kerosene oil for their boats to cut the costs, and we have lost our income due to bottom trawling. Our fishing community is now reduced to 17,000 from 23,000 in the past few years,” Annarasa said.

After many failed discussions with India on its fishermen illegally entering and using bottom trawl nets in Sri Lankan waters in Palk Strait, the fishing community in Jaffna launched a flotilla protest on October 17, demanding that the government strengthen existing laws and protect their own fishermen and bring to a stop the damage caused to their livelihood as well as the environment. Resettlement is one of the key issues India has been pushing Sri Lanka towards since the end of the war as thousands of displaced Sri Lankan Tamils are still living in refugee camps in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Many international aid agencies including the United Nations Development Program and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have helped northern fishermen restart their livelihood after resettlement. Back to zero? The resettled fishermen had nothing but the

skills of fishing and fish resources in the northern sea. They started from zero and now they are compelled to hit reset because most of their fishing gear is damaged. “We need the government to strengthen the existing laws that already states entering into our waters and using trawler boats are illegal.

The government must also provide compensation for the damaged boats and provide a mechanism for fishermen who lost their livelihoods and are unemployed as a result of this,” N V Subramanian, Chairman of the Northern Fishermen Association, told EconomyNext. Sri Lanka amended provisions in the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act No 2 of 1996 in both 2017 and 2018 to charge foreign fishermen who trespass into Sri Lanka’s waters and are involved fishing without a permit, entering into territorial waters without keeping the fishing gear stowed in their vessels and using banned bottom trawling nets towed by a mechanised boat.

Most fishermen urged the government to implement the amended act strictly. Already the amendment had angered Indian fishermen. Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, an opposition lawmaker raised the issue in the parliament and said on July 22 alone 277 fishing nets in a small fishing village in Jaffna were damaged, with total damage estimated at 4 million rupees. “Indian fishermen have been encroaching into Sri Lanka waters. These are fishermen who come in large trawlers and they have literally destroyed the fishing assets of the fishermen of the Northern Province, particularly from Mannar to Jaffna and Mullaitivu,” he told the parliament on August 05.

Vincent Arulnathan, president of Annai Velangkanni Fishermen Association in Mullaitivu, expects another gloomy month in November as Indian trawler boats can be seen as near as 1 kilometre from the shore. “In November, it is shrimp season and these Indian trawlers will come for shrimp resources depriving many of our fishermen,” he told EconomyNext over the phone. “Our livelihood is fishing and it is now being destroyed. Resettlement hardly means anything for us without our livelihood, and we only know fishing.” The fishing issue between the two neighbours began when India and Sri Lanka signed four Maritime Boundary Agreements between 1974 and 1976 that defined a mutual understanding of the international maritime boundary between the two countries.

Katchatheevu Island, famous for its annual St Anthony’s festival, was ceded to Sri Lanka by India without consulting the Tamil Nadu state government. Since then, Indian fishermen have only been allowed to use the island for resting, drying their nets and for the annual church feast, but not for fishing. Since 2009, after the end of the war, the Sri Lankan navy has tightened surveillance of its northern maritime boundary to halt a potential return of Tamil insurgents, resulting in increasing the number of Indian fishermen arrests, even as Sri Lankan authorities argue that they are simply protecting the maritime boundaries of the country against poaching and are securing the livelihood of Sri Lankan fishermen.

Lingering bilateral discussion President Gotabaya Rajapaksa when he met Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla last month in Colombo pointed out that the long standing problems faced by the fishermen of the two countries could be resolved by identifying immediate solutions to the existing problems and providing the benefits rightfully owed by the fishing community. Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda also expressed his displeasure over the illegal fishing of Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters sabotaging the livelihood of Sri Lankan fishermen and ruining the aquatic resources in Sri Lanka, when he met the visiting Indian Foreign Secretary.

Minister Devananda had told the Indian official that a large number of Indian fishing trawlers enter the Sri Lankan waters daily for illegal fishing amid strong protest by Sri Lankan authorities. The Minister said that he had submitted a legal draft to the Indian authorities with a proposal to set up an India-Sri Lanka Joint Coastguard to halt the Indian bottom trawling during his visit to India as a member of the official entourage headed by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2020.

State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera said Sri Lanka has taken steps to ban bottom-trawler fishing practices and India too should do the same with its own fisheries act. "So far we have not got positive feedback on that," Wijesekera told EconomyNext. Sri Lanka has also requested both countries' coastguards to work together to find a mechanism to prevent either party crossing the border. Sri Lanka has already taken steps to use a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) in all the vessels and has requested India to do the same.

"If the Indian fishing ministry implements this, it could prevent illegal fishing," the state minister said. "According to the laws in the country, the vessels that cross our border or are engaged in illegal fishing: those vessels will be confiscated, the fishermen will be released, but not the vessels," he said. Many fishermen say they are considering moving to some other area in search of new jobs though they have no idea what to do for a living besides fishing.

India and Sri Lanka: Fishing in troubled waters: The Palk Strait dispute flares up

<https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/fishing-in-troubled-waters-the-palk-strait-dispute-flares-up/>

"A maritime dispute between India and Sri Lanka remains unsolved, despite an agreement 47 years ago. Notwithstanding the 1974 Indo-Lanka Maritime Boundary Agreement, Indian fishermen tend to cross the maritime border into Sri Lanka in the Palk Strait, which in turn leads to assaults by the Sri Lankan Navy. The latest incident, which led to the death of four Indian fishermen, has once again brought the dispute to the fore. On January 18, four Indian fishermen went missing as they ventured into Palk Strait.

A few days later, the Sri Lankan Navy announced that it had recovered four bodies, suspected to be of the missing fishermen. As news reached the shores of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu,

protests erupted as more than 200 fishermen blocked roads. They demanded 1.5 million Indian rupees (about \$20,620) in compensation for the affected families and the filing of murder charges against the Sri Lankan Navy. However, the latter rejected the allegations and issued an official statement, blaming the fishermen instead.

In an interview with *The Hindu*, the Tamil Nadu representative of the Alliance for the Release of Innocent Fishermen, U. Arulanandam, alleged that the fishermen were beaten to death by Sri Lankan naval officers. “The pictures of the bodies bear many injuries and deep cuts. Blood clots and stains could be seen. There wouldn’t be blood clots if they had drowned,” he said. He further stated that even if the fishermen had crossed the maritime boundary, they should have been arrested and not killed.

Reacting to the death, India lodged a “strong” demarche with the Sri Lankan high commissioner in New Delhi and with the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry via the Indian High Commission in Colombo. While announcing compensation of one million Indian rupees (about \$13,746) and a job for each victim’s next of kin, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami urged Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inquire about the incident through the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka. The latest incident is an addition in a long list of cases of harassment of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy.

Why do Indian fishermen cross the maritime border despite the obvious risks? For centuries, Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen communities have been fishing in each other’s waters without conflict. The scenario changed when India and Sri Lanka signed four Maritime Boundary Agreements between 1974-76, which defined their respective understanding of the international maritime boundary between the two countries. The idea behind these agreements were that they’d facilitate law enforcement and resource management in the Palk Strait. Through the agreements, the Katchatheevu Island was ceded to Sri Lanka by the Indian government without consulting the Tamil Nadu state government.

Since then, Indian fishermen have only been allowed “access” to the island for resting, drying of nets and the annual St. Anthony’s festival, but not for fishing. Despite the agreements, there is no well-defined maritime boundary between the two countries, leading to Indian fishermen trespassing into Sri Lankan waters in search of a better catch. Between 1983 and 2009, Indian fishermen had easier access to the rich Sri Lankan waters as the maritime boundary in the Palk Strait was not heavily guarded.

Since 2009, the Sri Lankan navy has tightened surveillance of its northern maritime boundary to halt a potential return of Tamil insurgents. This, in turn, has had the secondary effect of increasing the number of arrests of Indian fishermen, even as Sri Lankan authorities argue that they are simply protecting the maritime boundaries of the country against poaching, and securing the livelihood of Sri Lankan fishermen. Is the dispute solvable? Following the latest incident, the

Sri Lankan Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Minister appointed a three-member committee to find a lasting solution to the issue).

According to the minister, India had accepted a draft solution submitted by Sri Lanka in January last year, but further progress was halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Indian and Sri Lankan representatives met again in December as part of the Joint Working Group on fisheries, where Sri Lanka had suggested joint patrols and operations between the two countries to guarantee effective results on illegal fishing and trespassing.

Despite having met more than once since 2016, a solution is yet to be finalized. Irrespective of the circumstances, a potential solution to the dispute relies on the response from the respective governments of India and Sri Lanka. If both countries are unable to settle the dispute, then they could seek assistance from international maritime experts through the United Nations.

India and Sri Lanka: Indo-Lanka fishermen talks proposed to ease tension across Palk straits

<http://www.jdslanka.org/index.php/news-features/politics-a-current-affairs/979-indo-lanka-fishermen-talks-proposed-to-ease-tension-across-palk-straits>

"Amidst apparent lack of will and indifference by Sri Lankan and Indian governments in resolving the decades old fishing dispute in the narrow stretch of sea between the two nations, fisher community leaders have now said they can find a solution through mutual dialogue. The area around the Palk strait is a source of livelihood for thousands of fishermen from the Southern tip of India to the Northern areas of Sri Lanka. As stocks of fish deplete due to over fishing encroachments from Indian fishermen into Sri Lankan territorial waters became a norm.

The fishermen along with their boats were being regularly seized by the Sri Lankan government and have been an irksome feature between both countries causing considerable diplomatic strain. As constant government to government talks have not yielded any tangible results, the fishermen from both sides have come forward to have direct talks between them to discuss and sort out long pending issues. Fishermen from Tamil Nadu extending over a 200KM belt between Rameswaram and Pudukottai have suggested to their Sri Lankan counterparts the fishing days between them could be shared 5:2 days among them in the area.

Rameswaram fishermen association leader B. Jesuraja told this writer they are fully aware of the plight of the Sri Lankan fishermen from the Northern Province who have suffered immensely during the war and other natural disasters and would not spoil their livelihood. Indian 5:2 proposal "We suggest the Sri Lankan fishermen could fish in the Palk straits five days a week leaving the balance two days for us.

The aquatic resources in and around the Katchativu is high compared to the area within the Indian boundary and in such a narrow stretch of sea, crossing Katchativu and entering Sri Lankan territorial waters, where we have been fishing for over a century is unavoidable and we consider it our traditional area” The small islet of Katchativu was ceded to Sri Lanka by former Indian PM Indira Gandhi under the “Indo Sri Lankan Maritime agreement” in 1974. Two years later another agreement between the two nations restricted the fishermen from both countries from fishing in each others ‘exclusive economic zones’.

The brutal civil war deprived the livelihood of the Lankan fishermen with severe restrictions on them by the Navy in venturing into the sea for fishing. Sri Lankan fishermen claim their Indian counterpart took advantage of the war and established their presence in the Palk Strait area. The excessive fishing in the disputed area using trawler nets has led to depletion of fishing stock and this has jeopardised the lives of the SL fishermen who were trying to rebuild their lives after the war In spite of their difficult economic status.

Tamil fishermen from the Mannar to Mullaitivu northeastern coastal belt allege their livelihood has been totally lost due to the poaching by the Indian fishermen. The Sri Lankan government regularly arrest Indian fishermen and confiscate their boats only to be released subsequently owing to diplomatic pressure. Following the Covid19 pandemic, navy inactivity had resulted in Indian trawlers fishing much close to Sri Lanka’s northeastern shores, triggering a protest. Mariyadas Patrick Johnson, president of the fishermen cooperative of the Mullaitivu district, who led the protest has welcomed the suggestion of the Indian fishermen and says they are open to discussing with them to sort out the decade’s long issue.

“One of the Tamil Nadu fishermen association leaders has said instead of the government talking to each other, fishermen association representatives from both sides meet, discuss and come to a conclusion that would be better. In that respect, I welcome his suggestion. We fishermen have been affected by war and Tsunami. If the fishermen and their associations from both sides discuss directly, I believe the other side would understand our difficulties and misery clearly,” Johnson told Sri Lankan journalist Shanmugam Thavaseelan.

Government to government talks Talks between India and Sri Lanka officials are likely to be held on the 30th December and the SL fishermen hope their government will get them an acceptable solution. Indian fishermen however say they have not been informed or invited for the said meeting. According to TN fishermen they venture into the sea only for a maximum of 80-90 days in a year including the regular fishing ban period imposed by the government. The arrangement they say would sustain the livelihood of both sides and also increase the fishing stock in the area.

“While we understand the conditions of the SL fishermen our lives are no better,” says Jesudas. “We have urged our government to help us in deep sea fishing by providing necessary financial support, training and marketing opportunities, so that we could avoid going to the Palk Strait

area. That would be the long term and lasting solution till such time we need to share the sea with our Sri Lankan brethren.

Also, at present we don't have any problem with the Sinhala fishermen as they mostly venture into deep sea fishing suitably assisted by their government". The 5:2 system a week would replenish stocks in and around the Katchativu area and would regenerate aquatic resources which over a few years would increase considerably says Jesuraja. While people like Johnson on the Lankan side feel confident about their government efforts, they concur mutual talks would lead to quick and long-lasting solution. "I am not saying that government won't get us a solution. However apart from accepting their proposal, I believe that discussion between the fishermen of both sides would lead to an easy solution".

As election fever begins in Tamil Nadu, a solution to the fishermen issue would be propaganda tool. And, it is up to the political parties to act prudently and facilitate direct talks between the fishermen from both sides with the governments acting as a guarantor if at all a solution is found.

India and Sri Lanka: Indo-Lankan fishing row needs urgent attention

<https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/newsdetail/index/6/21027/indo-lankan-fishing-row-needs-urgent-attention>

"The Indo-Sri Lankan dispute over poaching by Tamil Nadu bottom trawlers in the north Sri Lankan waters could well become a flash point for a serious conflict between the two countries in the not-too-distant future, if not attended to urgently. Till now, the two countries have been able to defuse crises in an ad hoc manner. But in future, such an approach may not work if the competition for aquatic resources intensifies with North Sri Lankan Tamil fishermen trying to improve their lot, now that war has ended in North Sri Lanka.

A recent incident should warn authorities in both Sri Lanka and India, that the tried and tested antidote of arresting and releasing the intruders may not work in the future. Unlike in the past, when it was the Sri Lankan Navy which confronted the Indian intruders, North Sri Lankan Tamil fishermen are now taking the law into their own hands and clashing with the Indian intruders in mid-sea. This triggered agitations on both sides of the contested sea. If such clashes and agitations become regular, relations between Sri Lanka and India might be badly affected. For decades, the war in Sri Lanka had prevented the North Lankan Tamil fishermen from utilizing the sea on their side of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

Tamil Nadu fishermen, on the contrary, had no such constraints. They had been merrily poaching and sweeping the sea bed with their bottom trawlers. After the war, the North Lankan Tamil fishermen wanted to fish in their own waters but the sea was occupied by hundreds of Indian trawlers. The pleas of the Lankan fishermen for help went unheeded on both sides of the sea. While Tamil Nadu politicians looked at their fishermen as a vote bank and blindly supported

them, Lankan Tamil politicians refrained from putting pressure on the Tamil Nadu or Indian governments because they needed their support for their political agenda in Sri Lanka.

The recent tough action by the Lankan Tamil fishermen in mid sea could theoretically stem Indian poaching. But given the over-powering need of the Lankan Tamil politicians to keep Tamil Nadu and New Delhi in good humor, the Lankan Tamil fishermen might not get the backing they need. Thus, the Indo-Lankan dispute over fishing is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Lankan Tamil parties, which were indifferent to the fishermen's plight for long, are now using the issue to score political points against their political rivals.

The Tamil National Alliance, which had never taken up the fishermen's issue before, suddenly woke up to it because of the coming Provincial Council elections, where it will be taking on the Eelam Peoples' Democratic Party led by Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda. The TNA wants the Fisheries Minister to use the Sri Lankan law banning bottom trawling against the Indian intruders. But if Devananda were to use the law, it would trigger a confrontation with India, which would, in turn, hurt the interest of the government he is serving.

Meanwhile, with the Lankan Tamil political parties distracted by local rivalries, the Tamil Nadu fishermen are likely to have a free run of the sea. In Tamil Nadu, the mid-sea clash has brought about a change in the outlook of the government in Chennai. The DMK government has appealed to fishermen not to cross the IMBL and has deployed the police. The fishermen have been told that they could be attacked by Lankan Tamil fishermen in addition to the Sri Lankan navy. The Tamil Nadu government wants to avoid mid-sea confrontations that would alienate Indian Tamils from Sri Lankan Tamils.

But whether the Tamil Nadu government's appeals will have the desired effect is doubtful because the Tamil Nadu fishermen know only one fishing ground - the sea between India and Sri Lanka. And poaching here is claimed as a matter of "traditional right". The earlier Jayalalithaa government's attempts to persuade the Tamil Nadu fishermen to switch to deep sea fishing with equipment given to them at reasonable rates, did not work. The fishermen refused to go beyond their traditional comfort zone.

A bilateral plan to develop the sea as a common resource also met the same fate. At the moment, the people and politicians of Sri Lanka's Northern Province do not appear to be interested in economic development. Their concentration is on securing a federal constitution. But unlike the farmers and other land-based interest groups, the fishermen of the province will be encountering Indian poachers snatching away their livelihood. Therefore, the fishermen may not remain indifferent for long.

The Sri Lankan and Indian authorities would do well to attend to the issue urgently, and devise means to solve the problem. And this may not be very difficult because, despite all the losses they have suffered for decades, the North Lankan Tamil fishermen are still accommodative,

saying that Tamil Nadu fishermen are welcome to fish in their waters if they eschew bottom trawling which denudes the sea of its resources.

They could fish using other less harmful nets and methods. A determined effort by both the Indian and Sri Lankan governments to jointly develop the aquatic resources in the sea and to work out a joint fishing arrangement will also ensure peace. There is a growing school of thought which believes that, in the years to come, international armed conflicts might occur over fishing rights rather than rights over fossil fuel. The fact is that fishing disputes are natural and endemic. While boundaries drawn on land are easy to guard, those drawn in the sea are not, especially when the sea is small and there are two or more countries laying claim to it. Unlike the produce of land, whose ownership can be easily established, the ownership of stocks in the sea cannot be, because these keep moving across man made boundary lines.

And fishermen have a tendency to chase fish across maritime boundaries irrespective of consequences. Bordered by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and Singapore, the South China Sea has long been a major source of tension in Southeast Asia. The rise of China intensified the competition for fishing resources in the South China Sea. China has claimed 57% of the sea by drawing the so-called "nine-dash line" and seizing stocks from intruding fishing vessels.

China uses its fishing fleets for geopolitical purposes as a part of its "fish, protect, contest and occupy" tactic to assert its sovereignty over the sea. Other countries also use their fishermen as pawns to assert territorial claims. ASEAN, which comprises Vietnam, the Philippines and eight other Southeast Asian countries, had supported multilateral talks on the disputed waters in the South China Sea. In 2002, ASEAN and China signed the "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea", a non-binding political statement restating the freedom of navigation and asserting their common willingness to solve the disputes through peaceful means.

But there was a political deadlock which stymied the working of agreement. In 2013, the Philippines took its case against China to the United Nations Tribunal. China refused to attend. In December 2014, it released a position paper rejecting the jurisdiction of the UN over the South China Sea dispute, but stressing its willingness to resolve the dispute bilaterally.

It also argued that its nine-dash line was not inconsistent with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. On July 12, 2016, the international tribunal in The Hague delivered its verdict, which rebuked China's exaggerated claims in the South China Sea. China rejected the decision. A tense stalemate prevails in the South China Sea.

India and Sri Lanka: Northern fishermen seek India's action over disputes

<https://www.ft.lk/front-page/Northern-fishermen-seek-India-s-action-over-disputes/44-724425>

"Sri Lanka's northern fishermen want authorities in India and Sri Lanka to urgently step-up action to resolve the long-persisting conflict in the Palk Strait, fearing tensions with Indian fishermen could escalate. In a letter submitted at the Indian Consulate in Jaffna last week, the Federation of Jaffna District Fishermen's Cooperative Society Unions pointed to the perils of bottom-trawling and pair-trawling fishing methods – commonly used by Tamil Nadu fishermen – resulting in a drastically smaller catch and frequent damage to their modest fishing gear. "We are very worried that despite discussing this problem for more than 10 years now, there has been no forward movement or a solution until now. Indian fishermen crossing the maritime boundary and fishing in our waters has resulted in huge losses amounting several crores to our fishermen," said the letter dated 10 October.

The fisher associations have also sought compensation from Indian authorities to cope with the financial losses. Having braved the civil war, the displacement and dispossession that came with it, the northern fishermen have been struggling to rebuild their livelihoods post-war. However, the ongoing conflict with Indian fishermen – mostly from Tamil Nadu's Ramanathapuram and Nagapattinam districts – has severely impacted the revival of their livelihoods.

The fishermen's concerns, voiced in the recent letter, also come amid reports of Tamil Nadu fishermen being attacked at sea, allegedly by their Sri Lankan counterparts. Fishermen's groups along Tamil Nadu's coastal belt held protests last month, condemning the attacks. Tamil Nadu has repeatedly accused the Sri Lankan Navy of attacking or killing its fishermen in the Palk Strait, including in January this year, when Samson Darwin (28), A. Mesiya (30), V. Nagaraj (52), and S. Senthil Kumar (32) from Ramanathapuram returned dead. Sri Lankan authorities have denied the allegations.

While New Delhi conveyed "strong protest" over the incident then, there is no word yet on the promised probe into their deaths, from either government. The investigation into the shooting of K. Britjo in March 2017 too has seen no update in the four years since. However, the recent allegations made by Tamil Nadu fishermen against fellow fishermen in Sri Lanka have sparked serious concern. "This is a very dangerous development. Despite our disagreement with our brothers in Tamil Nadu, we have always been in solidarity.

We have relied only on dialogue and never resorted to violence. We fear that certain political forces are instigating some groups to carry out these attacks," a fishermen's association representative in Jaffna told The Hindu, requesting anonymity. "Before this escalates, both governments must take swift and decisive action," he said. Meanwhile, addressing a media conference, Jaffna legislator M.A. Sumanthiran accused Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda of provoking violence among fishermen of the two countries.

"Since he is the subject minister, that too from Jaffna, he is in a good position to implement the laws we have in place to take action on illegal fishing and bottom trawling. I urge all our fishermen to respond to this problem in democratic ways, and not resort to violence at any cost,"

he said, calling for a peaceful protest next weekend.

India and Sri Lanka: Reconsider MOU with India on fishing in Sri Lankan waters – Minister

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2022/01/03/local/269192/reconsider-mou-india-fishing-sl-waters-minister>

"He said Indian fishermen continue to blatantly violate its terms by breaching the maritime boundaries time and again and causing considerable damage to Sri Lanka's marine resources. The Minister on Saturday visited the 56 Indian fishermen detained at the Jaffna Prison for trespassing on Sri Lankan waters. The minister held talks with the Indian fishermen and also provided them with goods.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Minister Devananda said that the Tamil Nadu Government should pay attention to the damage being done to the marine resources and Sri Lanka by the Indian fishermen's invasion of the Northern Sea. "Our people demand an immediate end to the trawling industry that is destroying Sri Lanka's marine resources and the livelihoods of our people. Indian fishermen should also understand this. The depletion of marine resources is also destroying the livelihoods of the Indian fishermen themselves". "I am aware that Indian fishermen are also engaged in this business for their livelihood.

However, the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two countries states that the two countries' fishermen can only engage in fishing in their territorial waters without violating the International Maritime Boundary Line in a manner that does not cause any harm to either country". Minister Devananda went on to say that to resolve the issue of Indian fishermen invading the Northern seas, which has become a major issue, political and fisheries representatives of both countries should immediately meet and reconsider the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding on Fisheries and take appropriate decisions.

Meanwhile, the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) General Secretary and Member of Parliament, Vaiko, said that the fishermen from Tamil Nadu are jailed by Sri Lankan authorities on flimsy charges and called upon the Government of India to take the issue at the diplomatic level to find a solution at the earliest.

India and Sri Lanka: The Palk Bay fisheries conflict, a tale of competing livelihoods and a depleted catch

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/the-palk-bay-fisheries-conflict-a-tale-of-competing-livelihoods-and-a-depleted-catch/article65048871.ece>

"Why are both the fishing communities from Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka at odds with each other? The story so far: The Sri Lankan Navy on Saturday arrested 12 Indian fishermen from Rameswaram district, Tamil Nadu, and seized two of their fishing boats on charges of engaging in illegal fishing activity. This is the third such arrest in a fortnight, prompting Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to, yet again, write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking the Centre's immediate intervention to secure their release.

The development comes about 10 days after fishermen in Jaffna, in Sri Lanka's Northern Province, held a large protest, demanding strict implementation of Sri Lankan laws against illegal fishing by foreign vessels. Though a long-dragging issue dominating Indo-Lanka bilateral ties, the recent weeks saw an escalation in tensions between fishermen following the death of two Jaffna fishermen, reportedly in mid-sea clashes with their Tamil Nadu counterparts. Sri Lanka has termed the fisheries conflict a diplomatic "flashpoint", threatening ties that are on the mend after a period of strain.

What is the backstory? For well over a decade now, fishermen of India and Sri Lanka have been unable to agree on how to share the fishes in the narrow Palk Strait separating the two countries. The Strait begins just north of Sri Lanka's Jaffna peninsula and spans about 100 km at its widest point. It is known to be a breeding ground for rich marine resources, especially shrimp. Although India and Sri Lanka agreed to divide the Strait with an imaginary boundary line in the 1970s — the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) — Indian fishermen, from the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu, and from Puducherry, are frequently arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy for "poaching" or engaging in "illegal" fishing activity in Sri Lankan waters.

Several rounds of bilateral negotiations between the two governments and talks between fishing community leaders from both sides have been held over the years, but a solution remains elusive. What is the conflict, and between whom? The main contention between the fishermen on either side is not so much about territorial rights, as historically both sides have amicably shared marine resources in the stretch. It is more to do with the use of "bottom trawling", the fishing method used by fishermen from Tamil Nadu.

A group of daily-wage fishermen set out on mechanised boats, owned by other affluent fishermen, and drag large fishing nets through the seabed. While they primarily target fish species and shrimps, the practice of bottom trawling scoops out eggs, young fishes, and other marine organisms that eventually die and are thrown back into the sea. The primary conflict here is between the Tamil Nadu trawler owners and the northern Sri Lankan fishermen, who are trying to rebuild their livelihoods after Sri Lanka's civil war ended in 2009.

Until then, they were denied access to the sea at different points and displaced from their homes. It is in the post-war decade that the Sri Lankan fishermen started voicing concern about depleting catches, owing to incessant trawling by the Indian fishermen. With the Indian side of the IMBL

already ravaged by decades of high profit-yielding bottom trawling, they flock to the Sri Lankan side, with relatively less damage and therefore, more marine resources.

The clash now is essentially over competing livelihoods of two Tamil-speaking fisher communities, with a glaring asymmetry in power and resources. The Tamil Nadu fishing community, especially the trawler owners, are not only wealthier but also very politically influential. The northern Sri Lankan fishermen, on the other hand, are coming out of a brutal war, braving enormous losses and destruction. They use modest boats to practice traditional fishing and get little state support to resurrect their livelihoods.

Why is it yet to be resolved? One reason is the growing human cost of the conflict —five Indian fishermen returned home dead last year after the Sri Lankan Navy allegedly attacked them mid-sea. More recently, the death of the two Jaffna fishermen has aggravated the anger on the Sri Lankan side as well. For years now, India has urged Sri Lanka to adopt a humanitarian approach when it deters Indian fishermen.

However, when fishermen deaths occur, apart from customary condemnations and denials, there is little effort from authorities on either side to ensure investigations are completed and perpetrators brought to book. Secondly, New Delhi tried diverting Tamil Nadu fishermen to deep sea fishing methods to wean them away from bottom trawling in the Palk Strait. But the initiative did not take off as planned, and the fishermen still resort to trawling, and often get caught by Sri Lankan authorities.

Thirdly, Tamil Nadu is yet to agree to the chief demand of northern Tamil fishermen — to stop bottom trawling to restore trust between the fishermen on both sides, and provide a real opportunity to re-commence talks, which they prefer over confrontation. The northern Tamil fishermen repeatedly acknowledge Tamil Nadu's solidarity and support extended to Sri Lankan Tamils during the years of war and later.

But they also remind their brothers across the Palk Strait that solidarity does not justify exploitation of resources on which their lives and livelihoods depend. For over a decade now, fishermen of India and Sri Lanka have been unable to agree on how to share the fishes in the narrow Palk Strait which separates the two countries. The main contention between the fishermen on either side is about the use of “bottom trawling”, the fishing method used by fishermen from Tamil Nadu.

In this method, fishermen set out on mechanised boats and drag large fishing nets through the seabed. While they primarily target fish species and shrimps, the practice also scoops out eggs, young fishes, and other marine organisms damaging the seabed. Apart from customary condemnations and denials whenever there are fishermen deaths, there is little effort from authorities on either side to find a solution to this problem.

India and Sri Lanka: Why Indian fishermen are often caught fishing in Sri Lanka's troubled waters

<https://www.firstpost.com/india/why-indian-fishermen-are-often-caught-fishing-in-sri-lankas-troubled-waters-10468901.html>

"Many Indian fishermen are often captured by Sri Lanka for crossing maritime boundary between two nations and particularly crossing into Kachchatheevu island; it is becoming a flashpoint in bilateral relations, which is otherwise quite friendly.

India and Sri Lanka resolved their maritime boundary demarcation by 1976, yet there remains issue of fishermen being detained by the two sides. The local politics in both countries intensifies the situation. Till the mid-2000s from 1983, 132 Indian fishermen reportedly died in Sri Lankan firings, several fishermen could not be traced and are declared missing, nearly 90 fishermen have been detained and over 300 vessels have been detained.

Claim over Kachchatheevu Island: Brief history

Kachchatheevu is an island located in the Palk Strait about 10.5 miles from the Sri Lankan coast and nearly 12 miles from India's nearest coast; it is nearly 3.75 square miles in area. Dispute over ownership of the island has remained since the colonial period. It was claimed that the island was a part of Raja of Ramnad's (Ramanathapuram of Tamil Nadu) zamindari. During 1880 and 1885, the island was given to Sri Lanka for the purposes of root collection which would serve in the process of dyeing.

Later in 1913, the island remained in the possession of Sri Lanka for sankha shells' full exploitation and use. Notably, the zamindari system lapsed and since all the zamindari land now vested in either government of India or government of Tamil Nadu, legally speaking the land was to pass to India or Tamil Nadu via lapse of zamindari. No effort was taken on the government of India's part to settle the issue of legal ownership of land.

Consequently, Sri Lanka retained the possession of Kachchatheevu island, though it must be pointed out that the government of Tamil Nadu continued to maintain its legal ownership of the island. Later in 1976, the island was ceded to Sri Lanka to maintain friendly relations.

Understanding the issue from fishermen's viewpoint

At this stage, it is essential to understand what influences the thought process of fishermen to fish beyond maritime boundaries. Notably, northern parts of Sri Lanka and southern parts of Tamil Nadu lies at the same LBG ('Latitudinal Biodiversity Gradient'). LBG provides for the existence of marine life and how marine life traverses in the area. Further, there is absence of any

strong current in the region and consequently the marine life found in the region is also similar. Hence, fishermen on both side of boundary are after the same marine life.

If marine life on either side depletes, the marine life on other side of maritime boundary becomes the source of very same marine life. This is quite the reality because Indian fishermen by use of trawlers have nearly depleted marine resources on Indian side of maritime boundary. On the other hand, Kachchatheevu island which now forms part of Sri Lanka is fish-rich. This is because Sri Lanka has imposed ban on trawling in the region and also because the population of Sri Lankan fishermen is not as high.

Further, not all crossing of maritime boundary is intentional. There have been many instances of inadvertent straying into maritime boundary as these are imaginary lines demarcated by nations and often not clearly discernible in waters. This inadvertent straying may be caused by failure of boat's engine or sudden disturbance caused by weather conditions in the region.

International law on the Kachchatheevu issue

Fishing practices of Indian fishermen where they use trawlers is harmful to marine environment and may potentially cause change to marine life in the region and possibly the ecosystem of the region as well. Therefore, India may be said to be under obligation under Article 206 of the UNCLOS 1982 to communicate reports of such change in marine environment. However, not having communicated such a report may lead to breach of such an obligation. Further, India is bound to take precautionary approach mandatory for environment preservation, as dictated by Articles 194 and 204 ('Part XII') of the UNCLOS 1982.

Sri Lanka and India both came up with a Joint Working Group on Fisheries (JWG) in 2004. The JWG was assigned to deal with the issue of fishermen crossing the maritime boundary between India and Sri Lanka. Despite such an agreement in fourth JWG (2012), excesses by Sri Lankan Navy have not stopped. There have been multiple reports of incidents whereby Sri Lankan Navy used force on fishermen who crossed the maritime boundary. Further, many arrests have deemed to be unwarranted as these fishermen could not have been mistaken for smugglers given that they had proper documents for identification issued by Tamil Nadu government.

It has been reported that many a times fishermen from Indian side provide a detailed list of fishermen to Indian authorities before entering the maritime zone and at times they have been given a token for the trawler for buying diesel essential for operation of trawlers. Therefore, actions undertaken by Sri Lankan Navy is in breach of agreements reached at Fourth JWG. Indian fishermen have considered it their traditional right to celebrate St Anthony's festival at the Catholic Church and to dry their nets in Kachchatheevu island. This is also guaranteed in the agreement, which is the core instrument for settlement of maritime boundary between India and Sri Lanka.

Therefore, a duty is cast upon Sri Lankan authorities to ascertain before detaining or shooting Indian fishermen whether the fishermen are there for exercise of their traditional rights as per the agreement, i.e. to dry nets or celebrate the festival of St Anthony's. Unless this exercise is carried out, any action by Sri Lankan authorities would be vitiated by illegality and non-compliance of the agreement which gives them the right to have the Kachchatheevu island as their territory.

Way forward: Taking fishermen's view into account

It is clear that both Indian and Sri Lankan side are at fault. Given the close cultural, religious ties of Sri Lanka with India, any litigation may potentially impact political situation in Sri Lanka and India and also the economic ties as Sri Lanka is dependent on India to a great extent.

At the same time, it is surprising to note that fishermen who are at the heart of this issue are not consulted. Their absence in the international law regime is quite surprising and hence fishermen are marginalised without their voices actually being heard. It is imperative that fishermen be heard in JWG (or any other machinery) to reach an agreement which is then highly likely to be complied by all, including fishermen."

India and Sri Lanka: Working towards addressing issues faced by fishing communities

https://www.dailymirror.lk/print/front_page/India-and-SL-working-towards-addressing-issues-faced-by-fishing-communities-Indian-HC/238-233005

"Indian High Commissioner Gopal Baglay yesterday said that India and Sri Lanka are working together towards addressing the issues faced by fishing communities of both countries.

The High Commissioner made this comment after he inaugurated a humanitarian assistance programme, for fishermen and their families in the Northern Province, The programme is being carried out under grant assistance by Government of India.

1200 families spread across Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi and Mannar will receive food materials and other essential domestic supplies as a part of the programme. The envoy also inaugurated an artificial limb fitment camp in Jaffna held by Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS)."

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives: IOTC adopts resolution to rebuild yellowfin tuna stock, but NGOs question its effectiveness

<https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/iotc-adopts-resolution-to-rebuild-yellowfin-tuna-but-effectiveness-in-question>

"The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) agreed to reduce the total allowable catch for yellowfin tuna after months of pressure from non-governmental organizations and some commercial groups. But according to environmental organizations, the effort has fallen short of ending overfishing, as five members of the commission objected to the rebuilding plan. The Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE) and the International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF) lauded the commission for the adoption of an updated resolution that lays out a rebuilding plan for the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock.

However, five IOTC contracting parties – Oman, Iran, India, Madagascar, and Indonesia – objected to the adoption of the resolution. "As a result of these objections, a total allowable catch (TAC) has not been agreed for the stock. When historical catch levels for the objecting contracting parties are factored in, their exemption from the new resolution means this interim measure is not expected to support stock rebuilding," the nonprofits said in a statement following the conclusion of the IOTC meeting.

BLUE and IPNLF called out the European Union for failing to take a leading role in calling for fishing restrictions during in the meeting, which they said could have helped reach a consensus on the rebuilding plan. "While we are encouraged by the adoption of a new plan for yellowfin tuna and by the dedication that kept IOTC members around the table for six extra hours after a long week, we cannot ignore the shortcomings of this new resolution, nor can we ignore the selfishness of distant-water fishing nations such as the E.U. who had the opportunity to take a leading role in solving this problem they helped create, but chose instead to play hardball with coastal states who depend on Indian Ocean fish stocks for their very survival," BLUE Executive Director Charles Clover said.

WWF also said the adoption of the resolution was a step in the right direction, but the five nations objecting to the plan are not bound by the rules and are not obliged to follow them. "WWF is disappointed that many countries are beginning to use the right of objection as a matter of convenience for not agreeing to rules that would allow an end to overfishing of yellowfin tuna," WWF said. WWF said it is joining BLUE and IPNLF in urging the IOTC to call for a special session in 2022 to update the rebuilding plan. The Pew Charitable Trusts agreed the failure to enforce catch limits means overfishing will continue.

"The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission's inability to agree on a sufficient reduction in yellowfin tuna catch levels isn't new, but it is particularly disappointing that the commission failed again this year, given its market is now at stake. The commission has delayed taking the necessary steps to rebuild this stock for several years," Glenn Holmes, officer for The Pew Charitable Trusts' international fisheries project, said. "Now, with five parties objecting to the new measure

and fishing essentially allowed to continue at previous levels, the change on the water is likely to be negligible – just a 1 percent difference in total catch compared to 2019.”

Holmes said the IOTC also did not focus its attention on other important issues before it, such as overfishing that has continued to occur for skipjack tuna. “This catch level, which was determined by an agreed-upon harvest control rule, has been exceeded every year since its inception in 2018, and the failure by commission members to adequately enforce the catch limit suggests overfishing of this limit will continue unabated,” he said.

BLUE and IPNLF said the IOTC failed to tackle a proposal to improve the management of drifting fish-aggregating devices (FADs) used by industrial purse-seine fleets in the region. Many coastal states, including Kenya, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mozambique, Pakistan, Somalia, South Africa, Indonesia, and Tanzania pushed for the adoption – but the E.U., Japan, and South Korea objected. IPNLF Managing Director Martin Purves praised coastal states for their efforts at the IOTC.

“Although some objections meant watertight outcomes could not be achieved within the updated stock-rebuilding plan, and some distant-water fishing nations did everything in their power to derail efforts to improve the transparency of drifting FAD operations and mitigate the negative environmental impacts of these devices, the resolve of proactive coastal-state delegations was clear for all to see in this,” Purves said.

The International Seafood Sustainability Foundation (ISSF) – a global coalition of seafood companies, fisheries experts, scientific, and environmental organizations, which advocates in favor of science-based initiatives for long-term tuna conservation – said if fully implemented, the adopted measure projects a resultant yellowfin tuna catch level of 401,000 tons, which it said meets the recommendation of the IOTC Scientific Committee.

But that is unlikely given the objections of the five member-states. In response to the inaction from the IOTC, the ISSF now determining whether to enact its yellowfin Tuna rebuilding plan should go into effect, which would require participating companies to reduce their sourcing of Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna. "

"Further information over the coming weeks will inform the ISSF board’s discussion on the sufficiency of the new measure as likely to be implemented," it said. "ISSF remains focused on taking steps forward for the long-term protection of the region’s valuable tuna fisheries and their associated ecosystems. We will be working diligently in the weeks and months ahead with all stakeholders towards this goal." ISSF did back an IOTC agreement to create a working group on electronic monitoring, which it said was an important step in the management of Indian Ocean fisheries.

India, Sri Lanka and Maldives: Southern Indian Ocean: Securing a common fisheries policy for India and the littoral states

<http://www.ft.lk/columns/Southern-Indian-Ocean-Securing-a-common-fisheries-policy-for-India-and-the-littoral-states/4-706926>

"The Indian Ocean provides a dependency for its Island and coastal nations on their economic and commercial prosperity. Deep sea fishing policies in South Indian Ocean fisheries nations offer excellent scope with more than 20 million population of the Indian subcontinent neighbourhood like Sri Lanka and Maldives along with India's coastal states. A strong ocean policy founded on common strategic partnerships will be a boon to the region's nations for their growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Therefore fisheries as an economic livelihood is particularly evident in the Southern Indian Ocean coastal nations. Fisheries governance is thus vital for the potential to boost economic growth for these neighbouring countries that share the vast expanses of sea spaces. India's National Fisheries Policy The waters of the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal meet in Kanyakumari, a small coastal city in the southern tip of the country. Its geographic location provides access to squander sea assets in the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay territory.

In this way, on a more central level, Indian Blue Economy Vision of 2025 will bridle the interest for sea-food consumption in the years to come. These people-centric ocean policies will especially benefit India's 14 coastal states – Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, the islands of Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar, and the many other villages that depend on fisheries-related activities. At present it is an ideal opportunity to reflect and amend the National Fisheries Policy as it is a source of livelihood for more than 20 million fishermen and fish ranchers.

This sector contributes Indian Rupees 1.75 trillion every year to the national GDP. Fisheries advancement in Sri Lanka In the course of recent decades Sri Lanka's fisheries policy initiatives has fortified its emphasis on Ocean resources management. As a procedure for fisheries advancement in Sri Lanka's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), a Five-Year Fishery Development Plan was dispatched in 1979, pointed towards expanding fish production and raising the income of coastal fisherman.

In Sri Lanka, over 2.7 million fishermen from 15 coastal regions rely upon fisheries for their livelihood. They add to a yearly assessed fish catch of 530,920 metric tons accounting for 1.3% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Total number of working fishing boats in year 2016 was accounted for over 60,000. There is ample scope of increasing production by wandering into more profound waters of the EEZ, which holds a capability of increasing of many folds in fisheries harnessing capacities.

Sri Lanka needs to further undertake scientific research and studies of special oceanographic features of the Indian Ocean for the benefit of this sector. Fisheries advancement in the Maldives Historically Maldivian fisheries which contribute 11% to the GDP of the island's economy (FAO) is the second biggest industry in the island country. Statistics reveal that Maldives has an annual fish catch over 48,399 metric tons. The reasons for the increase in fish harvest are due to its geographical setting in the Indian Ocean and the mechanisation of the traditional sailing boats in the mid-70s.

Hence the Maldives Industrial Fisheries Company (MIFCO) plays a vital part in the island nations' fisheries improvements. Taking the Maldivian national fisheries plans forward the Maldives Industrial Fishing Corporation (MIFCO) standardised the export oriented fisheries products. Laws and regulations on the ocean The allowable framework administering uses of the sea by individual states was classified in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982 and UN Fish Stocks Agreement in 1999.

The consolidated EEZ of the three neighbouring nations, India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, could be roughly 3.887 million sq. km. Consequently, each coastal state's regional ocean limit is 200 nautical miles from its gauge known as the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Glancing back at probably the most remarkable treaties signed by the neighbouring nations, the 1974 and 1976 arrangements delineating the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) between Sri Lanka and India was one of the huge discretionary grinders that reshaped India's sea strategy with its southern neighbours.

Lately, a prominent fisheries agreement for India was the Southern Indian Ocean Fisheries Agreement (SIOFA) marked in mid-2006 and upheld in 2012. Fisheries: India and Southern Littoral States The Indian subcontinent neighbourhood like Sri Lanka and Maldives has the most heavily utilised and impacted coastal region in the South.

The neighbouring Southern Indian Ocean littoral states along with the Indian coastal states must pursue a strong ocean policy based on common strategic interests. This could be a step in shaping the direction for a fisheries governance framework in the Southern Indian Ocean. Hence binding this diplomacy between India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives thereby helps in securing a common fisheries policy for India and the littoral states.

India: Diesel prices highest in South Asia, say Indian fishermen

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/06/18/local/251909/diesel-prices-highest-south-asia-say-indian-fishermen>

"Fishermen in the Indian State of Tamil Nadu have staged a protest against high diesel prices in India. Fishermen affiliated to the All Mechanised Boat Fishermen Association, staged a protest in Rameswaram on Wednesday, urging the Government to provide subsidies to them on diesel

prices. “The price of diesel in India is the highest among all countries. At this cost, the fishermen cannot break even. Every time we venture into the sea, we spend 250 litres to 600 litres of diesel. The fishermen cannot make up for the increased cost of fuel by selling fish at higher costs,” he said. The fishermen demanded that the Centre supply diesel without excise duty and road cess to the fishermen to protect their livelihoods.

They also appealed to the Centre to stop Sri Lanka from dropping bus scrap into the sea, along the Palk Strait, and said this would affect the marine ecology and also damage Indian fishermen’s boats and their nets. The association’s president, P. Sesuraja said that the Sri Lankan Government claimed that it was dropping scrap of buses within its own territory. However, this was close to the areas where traditionally Indian fishermen go fishing. “The scrap can also be washed into Indian territory by the strong currents.

The iron scrap can damage the costly fishing nets and the wooden boats, and cause huge losses to our fishermen,” Mr. Sesuraja said. He said traditionally only wooden logs or artificial coral reef were dropped into the sea to enable breeding of fish. However, the iron scrap was being put in the sea with a motive to cause loss to Tamil fishermen, he alleged.

India: Dried Fish Matters is composed of eight teams across India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Myanmar

<http://www.themanitoban.com/2021/03/u-of-m-prof-leads-project-analyzing-dried-fish-social-economy/41648/>

"University of Manitoba anthropology professor Derek Johnson is at the helm of a long-term project studying the social economy of dried fish. Dried Fish Matters is composed of eight teams across India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Myanmar, with ties to local universities, governments and advocacy groups as well as other collaborators around the globe, including other U of M professors. The project is funded by a seven-year Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) partnership grant, which allows academics to work with government and community partners.

Johnson saw a gap in research and policy regarding dried fish and its importance in many populations and economies. “Historically, fish drying was the only way that you could actually distribute fish over long distances, so prior to refrigeration and freezing technologies, this is the only way that people in hinterland areas would have had access to fish,” he explained. “It’s also important at the present because fish are extremely nutritious.

They are chock-full of a range of nutrients that we as humans require? they have protein, but they also have a range of vitamins, micronutrients, fatty acids, which are all essential for human health [...] Fish drying has the added advantage that it reduces the weight of the fish, and therefore they’re all the more easy to transport. It also concentrates the nutrients.” In addition to

the geographic teams gathering data in each location, the project involves an interdisciplinary analysis team branching over three thematic focus areas to put the data into context. “It’s not just the nutritional contribution that dried fish make, but it’s also the economic, cultural, social contributions the dried fish make,” Johnson said.

“We’re trying to broadly come to an understanding of how dried fish help to bring people together around a variety of different qualities of this particular product.” The first and largest thematic group brings together economists, sociologists, anthropologists and geographers to study the social economy of dried fish. “This is looking at broad social science questions around the complexity of human engagements with dried fish,” Johnson explained.

“So, economic issues, but also how economic relationships around dried fish are deeply shaped by geographical difference, cultural difference, gender as well, as a key aspect of their research.” He explained a particular interest is the division of labour between genders when it comes to dried fish, with men often catching the fish and women processing. The second group focuses more on food and nutrition security, with topics such as variation in consumption trends and the cultural perceptions surrounding nutritional values of dried fish.

“Again, there’s a strong gender component there,” Johnson said. “We’re looking to see, for example, do men and women consume similar quantities of fish on a daily or monthly basis? Do children get equal access to fish as do adults? And then extrapolating from those kinds of analyses to see whether subsets of populations are getting the full nutritional benefits from fish consumption [that] they could, and whether there are inequalities in fish consumption between different population segments.”

The third group deals with policy and governance, adapting the project’s findings into more accessible formats so community organizers, policymakers and politicians can take data and analysis into account. Johnson initially grew interested in fisheries through a government placement in rural New Brunswick, where fishing was one of the key economic activities. He returned to the area for his master’s research on historical evolution in how people made a living, getting to know the rhythms of life in fisheries.

During his PhD and postdoctoral studies, Johnson ventured a little further from home, doing research on fishing in coastal India. He realized a number of academics were simultaneously working on projects focused on fish and nutrition security all over the world. This led to the recent Small Fish Seminar on Feb. 15 and 16, at which Dried Fish Matters appeared alongside groups focusing on Indonesia, Africa and other regions.

“There’s a growing argument that small fish in particular have a really crucial role to play in nutrition security globally,” Johnson said. “Particularly for poor populations, particularly for children, particularly for pregnant and lactating women, small fish are demonstrably really, really important because of the micronutrients that they provide.” The COVID-19 pandemic presented a logistical nightmare for Johnson and the rest of the Dried Fish Matters team. Almost

all the local teams were about to begin fieldwork when restrictions hit, which meant results were delayed by a minimum of five months.

In addition, the industry and social chains suffered dramatically, with fishers unable to actually fish in addition to caught fish being wasted due to not getting to markets. With research timelines uncertain and no way to hold in-person meetings like the group was used to, Johnson decided to call an all-project Zoom meeting despite some uncertainty about how effective virtual communication might be. "It was eye-opening, how successful it was," Johnson said. "There was this, from my point of view, completely unexpected immediacy to the meeting.

We immediately got down to work and started planning the response to the whole [COVID-19] disruption of the research, and that actually kicked off a regular series of meetings that we've had at the project level, at the research team level and working group level that I feel like have really revolutionized the project. "We now have an intensity of communication in the project that we just didn't have previously, and it's given a real new energy to the project."

India: Expect Sri Lanka to remain mindful of bilateral ties, says India on port project

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/expect-sri-lanka-to-remain-mindful-of-bilateral-ties-says-india-on-port-project/article34845728.ece>

"With Sri Lanka moving ahead with the China-backed Colombo Port City project, India on Thursday, June 17, 2021 said it expects that the island nation will remain mindful of their "excellent bilateral cooperation", including for mutual security in the maritime domain. Explained | Why has the China-backed Colombo Port City project come under attack from the Opposition and citizens? Asked about the project at an online media briefing, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said India has been closely following the recent developments from its security perspective.

The country has also taken note of the concerns raised in Sri Lanka regarding several aspects of the framework for the Colombo Port City, he said. "We expect that Sri Lanka will remain mindful of our excellent bilateral cooperation, including for mutual security in our shared environment, which includes the maritime domain," Mr. Bagchi said. His remarks come weeks after the Sri Lankan Parliament approved the controversial Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill, with the government saying the Chinese-backed project would bring in investment and boost the island-nation's economy.

Fears of Chinese colony The Opposition parties, however, had alleged that the bill would lead to the creation of a Chinese colony in Sri Lanka. The USD 1.4-billion Colombo Port City project, expected to play a key role in China's ambitious "Maritime Silk Road" project in India's backyard, is said to be the single-largest private sector development in Sri Lanka. China has built

the port city on reclaimed sea, adjoining the Port of Colombo. On India-assisted projects in Sri Lanka, Mr. Bagchi said the country has a very extensive portfolio of partnership development projects in the island nation and it is in regular contact with the Sri Lankan authorities regarding their implementation.

To a separate question on whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi could visit the United States before year-end, he said he does not have any information on this and an announcement of such kind of visits is made at an appropriate time. On reports that some senior leaders from Myanmar have taken shelter in the northeastern states, Mr. Bagchi said the Home Ministry should be contacted for queries of this nature. "As regards the situation in Myanmar, we support the ASEAN initiative and are in touch with the ASEAN countries," he said.

To a question on media reports about US-based Pakistan-linked charitable organisations collecting funds in the name of helping India during the COVID-19 crisis, which could be used for sponsoring terror attacks, Mr. Bagchi said, "We have seen media reports in this regard. I do not have any further details to share for the moment and we are trying to ascertain more information." Asked if India would join the "Build Back Better World" (B3W) partnership announced at the G7 meet, he said the relevant government agencies would study the proposal and engage, as appropriate, at a later stage.

To a separate question on media reports about India being the weakest link of the QUAD grouping, Bagchi said by now, the QUAD and the world know the country's value. "The article in question is clearly uninformed. Whether the article has an inherent bias has been answered through a tweet by Lisa Curtis, who herself has been quoted in it but has dissociated herself from the overall message of the article," the MEA spokesperson said.

India: Fishermen want permits for bottom trawlers to enter Sri Lanka waters

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2021/04/15/indian-fishermen-want-permits-for-bottom-trawlers-to-enter-sl-waters/>

"Sri Lanka's Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda in March 2021 proposed to offer permits for Indian fishermen to enter into Sri Lankan water for fishing. However, Tamil Nadu fishermen have now called for permits to be issued not only for small boats but for massive fishing trawlers as well. Tamil Nadu fisheries union chief N. J. Bose told reporters that both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen have been fishing in both sides of the sea for centuries and it should continue without an issue. "If permits are to be purchased, these permits should be made available for fishing trawlers as well," he said.

On Tuesday (13), News 1st exposed how Indian fishing vessels illegally enter Sri Lankan waters not far from the Island of Delft, under the cover of darkness to pillage our marine resources. The Indian fishing vessels were using a fishing method banned in Sri Lanka, which is called Bottom

Trawling. Bottom trawling is an industrial fishing method where a large net with heavy weights is dragged across the seafloor, scooping up everything in its path, from the targeted fish to incidentally caught, centuries-old corals.

These nets are dragged by two large trawlers, equipped with powerful engines, larger than any fishing vessel used in Sri Lanka. Tamil National Alliance MP Selvam Adaikkalanathan speaking to News 1st the main reason for Indian fishermen to enter into Sri Lankan waters is that marine life in Indian waters is depleting rapidly. "News 1st spent 11 to 12 hours at sea to record evidence for Indians illegally fishing in Sri Lankan waters.

We only spoke on Indian encroachment, however now there is evidence to prove it," he said. "Indian invasions are increasing by the day," said Former Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna MP Ramalingam Chandrasekaran adding the politicians in Tamil Nadu only speak of the rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka when an election is taking place. He alleged Indian fishermen are pillaging Sri Lankan waters on the direct instructions of Indian politicians and officials. Ramalingam Chandrasekaran slammed the Indian side for their two-faced policies.

India: Saarc nations for technology use to fight climate crisis in fisheries

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/saarc-nations-pitch-for-use-of-tech-in-reducing-climate-crisis-in-fisheries-aquaculture-121080501428_1.html

"The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries on Thursday pitched for adoption of technologies to reduce the impact of climate crisis on fisheries and aquaculture, and sought regional cooperation for cross-learning. A consultative meeting of fishery scientists representing India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bhutan held by SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) has felt the urgent need for implementing strategies such as introduction of climate-friendly technologies in fisheries and aquaculture as well as measures for sustainable utilisation of the resources.

In the meeting, India stressed the need for applying artificial intelligence, bio-informatics, genetic and biotechnological tools, etc, in frontier areas of research to improve aquaculture and fisheries sector. ""The member countries have demanded for regional cooperation among the nations and a platform for cross-learning and knowledge sharing to check the fallouts in the best possible way in the time of climate change,"" Md. Baktear Hossain, Director of the SAC said in a statement. In marine fisheries, the need for capacity building for exploitation of deep sea resources was raised by India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, scarcity of quality seeds and shortage of other input materials were the major gaps faced by the member countries in inland aquaculture, he said. "

"Based on the discussions in the meeting, the SAC has come up with a set of recommendations to address such issues. Technical collaboration for knowledge sharing and capacity building

among the SAARC countries and setting up of regional networks for seed bank and germplasm transfer are some of the suggestions, he added. In the meeting, the experts voiced concern over dwindling marine catch and aquaculture production, environmental disruption in aquatic ecosystems and its rippling effect on livelihood of the stakeholders owing to climate change and associated developments.

They suggested that technologies of seaweed farming and integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA), including cage fish farming could be adopted to reduce the impacts of the crisis to a certain extent, it added. The sector could use 'green fishing vessels' with built-in design features for energy saving and fuel saving technologies to reduce carbon emission, they added. Grinson George, Senior Programme Specialist with the SAC said: There are scientific gaps inhibiting the implementation of rules and regulations for sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture. "Some possible solutions can be looked upon in satellite remote sensing, numerical modelling, stakeholder perception, prioritisation of spatial sensitivity to ecosystems and many more with right interference from the stakeholders," he added.

Referring to the existing disparity in socio-economic standards of the stakeholders, the SAARC body recommended for promoting discussions and cross-learning on strengthening 'social-safety-nets' with emphasis on ensuring socio-economic security of the stakeholders, and policies, laws and regulations harmonising between environment conservation and livelihood development. Establishment of referral laboratories for aquatic animal health management, a centre of excellence in aquaculture and fisheries in the region and e-repository for information sharing were also listed in the recommendations.

Marine pollution, increased fuel prices, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, increasing length of value chain, resource crunch and lack of adequate infrastructure are some of the other major issues raised in the meeting by representatives of member countries. SAARC Agriculture Centre is the first regional Centre established by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), located in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

India: Seeks provisions to test damaging fishing

<https://researchcolumnist.com/2020/01/24/india-seeks-provisions-to-test-damaging-fishing/>

"Greater than 110 international locations together with India have made a powerful pitch to position in position efficient particular provisions for growing international locations to test damaging fishing, mentioning considerations on fish folks's livelihood, meals safety and growing capacities, on the Global Industry Organisation. The rush used to be made within the first of the six clusters of fish subsidy talks held remaining week at WTO, aimed toward securing an international settlement on decreasing damaging fisheries subsidies through June this 12 months, stated officers acquainted with the improvement.

WTO participants are negotiating to finalise disciplines to get rid of subsidies for unlawful, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and to ban positive kinds of fisheries subsidies that give a contribution to overcapacity and overfishing, they stated. The negotiations have made growth with draft texts rising in appreciate of IUU and overfished shares. Alternatively, in overfishing and overcapacity, a number of approaches are being mentioned together with a brand new proposal from Canada.

America and Australia also are pushing for a suggestion of capping of subsidies. “WTO participants are grappling to seek out convergence to an agreed method to deal with the problem of subsidies contributing to overfishing and overcapacity, stated an professional conscious about the main points. African, Caribbean and Pacific Team of States (ACP Team), Sri Lanka and a bunch of least advanced international locations (LDCs) are supportive of particular and differential remedy (S&DT), and maximum participants are supportive of S&DT in territorial waters as much as 12 nautical miles.

“India reiterated its call for to exclude territorial waters from long run disciplines, specifically as that is the place maximum small scale and artisanal fishing takes position and the correct to offer subsidies for top seas fishing, stated a Geneva-based professional. Alternatively, a number of advanced international locations led through america are antagonistic to horizontal S&DT for fishing in unique financial zones (EEZs) and top seas.

EEZ is a boundary of sea zone extending as much as 200 nautical miles from the shore the place coastal international locations have sovereign jurisdiction to discover and keep an eye on marine sources. “This may be because of the concern that China being the largest marine catch manufacturer will receive advantages essentially the most from horizontal S&DT, stated the professional quoted first. China stated it used to be open to discussions on S&DT and prepared to shoulder responsibilities commensurate with its capability.

Indian and Sri Lankan ministers to focus on fishers issue

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/jaishankar-peiris-to-focus-on-economic-assistance-fishers-issue/article38388993.ece>

"Sri Lankan Foreign Minister G.L. Peiris will meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Monday, in his first visit to India since being appointed last August. Both sides are expected to discuss India's economic support to Sri Lanka, plans for new infrastructure projects and pending issues over fishermen's rights.

Announcing Mr. Peiris' arrival in Delhi on Sunday, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla would call on him on Monday morning, and he would meet Mr. Jaishankar later in the day, and fly out on Tuesday. Long-drawn differences over

fishermen's rights are expected to be on the agenda for talks, as Sri Lanka demands that Indian fishermen stop "bottom trawling" and overfishing of the Palk Straits.

Tensions escalated last month after mid-sea clashes between Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen that led to the death of two Jaffna fishermen. Meanwhile, on January 25, Sri Lanka released more than 50 Indian fishermen who had been detained by the Sri Lankan navy in December. The foreign ministers are expected to discuss ways to defuse tensions over the issue.

Indian fishermen protest dropping of iron scrap in sea by Sri Lanka

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/fishermen-protest-dropping-of-iron-scrap-in-sea-by-sri-lanka-rameswaram/article34832268.ece>

"Indian fishermen affiliated to All Mechanised Boat Fishermen Association staged a protest at Rameswaram in the district, appealing to the Centre to stop Sri Lanka from dropping bus scrap in the Palk Strait that would affect marine ecology and damage Indian fishermen's boats and nets. Association president P. Sesuraja said the Sri Lankan government claimed that it was dropping the scrap in its territorial waters.

However, the areas were close to where Indian fishermen were traditionally going for fishing. "The scrap can also be washed into Indian territory by strong currents. The iron scrap can damage costly fishing nets and wooden boats and cause huge a loss to our fishermen," Mr. Sesuraja said. He said traditionally only wooden logs or artificial coral reef were dropped in the sea to enable breeding of fishes.

However, now iron scrap was being dropped in the sea with a motive to cause loss to Tamil fishermen, he alleged. Another demand of the fishermen was to provision of subsidy on diesel price. "The price of diesel in India was the highest in the world. At this cost, the fishermen cannot break even.

Every time we venture into the sea, we spend 250 - 600 litres of diesel. The fishermen cannot make up for the increased fuel cost by selling fishes at higher rates," he said. The fishermen demanded that the Centre should supply diesel without excise duty and road cess to the fishermen to protect their livelihood.

Indian fishermen want Sri Lanka to lift ban on dry fish imports

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/fishermen-want-sri-lanka-to-lift-ban-on-dry-fish-imports/article33777345.ece>

"Fishermen and traders of Kasimedu in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu want the Sri Lankan government to lift the ban on karuvaadu (dry fish) imports from India. The Kasimedu fishing

harbour sends around 500 tonnes of dry fish to Thoothukudi, from where it is sent to Sri Lanka. Nanjil Ravi of Akhila Indhiya Meenavar Sangam said there were at least 10 traders, who depended on the dry fish trade with the island nation.

“The ban on dry fish imports from India was supposed to be only for 100 days and it began in November. The time limit is over now, which is why we are asking that the ban be lifted,” he said. Many types of Dry fish, including maasi karuvaadu, made from Yellowfin and Skipjack tuna, thena koni and nethili, are processed and sent from Kasimedu. “About 150 containers of dry fish at the Thoothukudi harbour are waiting to be sent to Sri Lanka.

The government is asking us to take up deep sea fishing but if we do not have the market for our catch, what is the use? Fishermen have stopped going on deep sea trips since we already have a lot of unsold dry fish,” a trader said. He also said Sri Lanka had been buying dry fish from other countries. “Usually, the dry fish sent from here is repacked and sent to other countries. Even that has stopped now,” he added.

Officials in the Fisheries Department said it was an internal policy decision of the Sri Lankan government. “It was supposed to protect their economy that has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Union Commerce Department has taken this up with the Sri Lankan government. We have requested them to lift the ban,” he said.

Joint statement in advance of the 25th Session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission

<https://www.blumarinefoundation.com/about/>

"Yellowfin tuna in the Indian Ocean is overfished and subject to continued overfishing, with scientists warning that the stock could collapse within the next five years if fishing pressure is not reduced. A stock rebuilding plan was put in place by the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) in 2016 to significantly reduce catches, based on 2014 catch levels. However, this has proved ineffective, with catches increasing by over 10% between 2014 and 2019, according to new catch figures.

A Special Session of the Commission was held in March to deal specifically with the sustainability of the yellowfin tuna fishery. However, an unwillingness to negotiate, primarily on the part of the EU and other distant water fishing nations, resulted in the meeting ending without the adoption of an updated rebuilding plan for the overfished stock. The 25th Session of the IOTC is being held virtually from 7-11 June 2021 and two proposals on an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock have been tabled – one submitted by the EU and another submitted collectively by Maldives, Kenya, South Africa and Comoros.

There is also an urgent need to improve the management of fish aggregating devices (FADs) in the Indian Ocean, primarily to reduce catches of juvenile tropical tunas, but also to help mitigate

the other ecological impacts associated with drifting FADs, including marine plastic pollution, ghost fishing and the bycatch of turtles, sharks and marine mammals. To this end, a proposal on the management of FADs in the IOTC area of competence has been submitted by Kenya, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mozambique, Pakistan, Somalia, South Africa, Indonesia, and Tanzania.

Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE) and the International Pole and Line Foundation (IPNLF) hereby confirm their support for the following two conservation and management measure (CMM) proposals: -- IOTC-2021-S25-PropF “On an interim plan for rebuilding the Indian Ocean yellowfin tuna stock in the IOTC area of competence”, submitted by Maldives et al.³; and -- IOTC-2021-S25-PropE “On management of fish aggregating devices in the IOTC area of competence”, submitted by Kenya et al.

It should be noted that the fishing mortality of yellowfin tuna in 2017 was 20% above the target reference point, and that the spawning biomass was 17% lower than the target. The proposal tabled by Maldives et al. acknowledges this and correctly notes that a reduction in catch of 16.7% compared to 2017 levels is required to ensure the timely recovery of the stock. This would necessitate a catch limit of roughly 341,000t. BLUE and IPNLF agree with this reduction and support this catch limit.

However, having tried and failed to ensure that a yellowfin catch limit of 346,438t was adopted at the Special Session of the Commission earlier this year, Maldives have submitted a new proposal with a new, higher total allowable catch (TAC) of 383,000t. In addition, the Maldives proposal provides a significant catch “buffer” of over 20,000t, by assigning 2,000t catch limits to IOTC members who have fished very little or not at all in the past.

Given the uncertainty and ambiguity contained within the IOTC Scientific Committee’s most recent report, and the failure of the Scientific Committee to provide adequate advice to IOTC members at the Special Session of the Commission in March, there is a clear risk of no new stock rebuilding plan being adopted at the upcoming Commission meeting. The proposal put forward by Maldives and its co-sponsors is equitable, removes all exemptions, is gear type neutral and takes into account the needs of developing coastal states and small island developing states. Importantly, it would bring about the IOTC’s first formal TAC for yellowfin tuna, and an almost 15% reduction from 2019 catch levels.

Therefore, while acknowledging that a lower catch limit more closely in line with the 16.7% reduction from 2017 levels should be a priority, BLUE and IPNLF support the proposal tabled by Maldives. As the most ambitious proposal tabled, we encourage all IOTC members to use this as a starting point for negotiations at the upcoming Commission meeting. In contrast, the proposal tabled by the EU is based heavily on the joint proposal IOTC-2021-SS4-PropE tabled at the IOTC Special Session in March and, given that this proposal was rejected at the Special Session, BLUE and IPNLF encourage the EU to withdraw its current proposal and support the more ambitious proposal put forward by Maldives.

Similarly, although the EU did not provide a catch limit within its CMM proposal, our simulations estimate it to be roughly 395,000t – significantly higher than that of the Maldives proposal. The proposal tabled by Kenya and its co-sponsors aims to reduce the number of drifting FADs per vessel from 300 to 150, calls for greater transparency in how these FADs are deployed, tracked and retrieved, and further calls for a three-month ban on fishing around drifting FADS and a phasing out of supply vessels.

BLUE and IPNLF recognise the importance of improved FAD management in the region and therefore support the proposal tabled by Kenya. Lastly, BLUE and IPNLF would like to emphasise that the 25th Session of the IOTC represents IOTC members' last chance to adopt an interim yellowfin tuna stock rebuilding plan for 2022 that is both equitable and in line with IOTC Resolution 12/01 on the implementation of the precautionary approach.

License to poach: Fishing for trouble in Sri Lanka's northern waters

<https://roar.media/english/life/environment-wildlife/license-to-poach-indian-fishermen-to-fish-in-sri-lankan-waters>

"Efforts to end poaching by Indian fishermen in northern Sri Lankan coastal waters have continually failed, despite two decades of talks between the two neighbours, the latest move being reviving a proposal to license Indian fishermen. The trouble today is not caused by traditional fishers, so much as by mechanised trawlers owned by Tamil Nadu businessmen, that use big nets to scoop up everything in their path; bottom-trawling is a method so destructive that scrape marks on the seabed can be seen in underwater videos of the practice.

A collaborative, ecosystem-focused approach that has been advocated might yield better results, especially in managing trans-boundary fish stocks and ensuring sustainable fishing and livelihoods for fisherfolk, many remaining impoverished for generations. Noor Mohamed Alam, President of the Union of the Mannar District Fishermen's Cooperative Societies, has said fishers in the area oppose the proposal to issue licences to Indian fishermen. ""The government should act more effectively to stop poaching by Indian fishermen,"" he told Roar Media. Alam wants the government to enforce the law properly and for the Navy to arrest poachers. ""If 500 Indian boats come, only one or two are arrested,"" Alam said. "

"If the Navy arrests all the poachers, the problem can be solved." Poaching by Indian trawlers has been getting worse,"" he added. ""Fish stocks are declining. Now sometimes, we get hardly any fish."" Fish stocks really have declined sharply in Sri Lankan coastal waters, according to the latest marine survey under the 'Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries' management project, called the EAF-Nansen Programme, conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Institute of Marine Research, Norway. "

"Overfishing could be one of the reasons. Marine environment degradation, loss of habitats, climate change could be other reasons," explained Dr Prabath Jayasinghe, Principal Scientist of the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA). Dr. Jayasinghe was Local Cruise Leader on board the Dr Fridtjof Nansen, one of the most advanced research vessels, during the 2018 survey that covered the entire coastal zone except the shallow Palk Bay. Sri Lanka's fish stocks had not been assessed by independent surveys since four surveys by a Norwegian 'Nansen' research vessel in 1979-1980.

Although a single research cruise is not 100% conclusive, the new survey found that north-eastern coastal waters had the lowest biomass of zooplankton, small organisms consumed by larger marine animals, along with the lowest average number of fish larvae and the lowest species diversity. However, the survey found the Pedro Bank, a shallow water plateau of about 1,000 square miles off Point Pedro, the island's northern tip, was still as rich a fishing ground as it had been for decades.

Pedro Bank, and Wadge Bank, the continental shelf off Cape Comorin at the southern tip of India, had been profitable commercial fishing grounds since the 1920s for both Indian and Sri Lankan boats. But Sri Lanka lost access to Wadge Bank and part of Pedro Bank with the establishment of the Indo-Sri Lanka maritime boundary in 1976. "Historically, both Sri Lankan and Indian artisanal fishers have harmoniously fished in the Bay of Bengal, Gulf of Mannar, and the Palk Bay without any disputes," said Dr Muttukrishna Sarvananthan, Director of the Jaffna-based think tank, Point Pedro Institute for Development Studies, who has studied the poaching issue. "

"Artisanal fishing is defined as low-capital, low-technology, and small-scale subsistence fishing," he said. The current fishing conflict between Sri Lanka and India is primarily due to Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing by hundreds of illegal fishing boats called 'bottom trawlers', Dr Sarvananthan explained. "The use of bottom trawlers is internationally prohibited. This IUU fishing is commercial fishing as opposed to traditional subsistence fishing." Giving licences to Indian fishing boats would worsen the pillage of Sri Lanka's fish stock and cause immense undersea environmental catastrophe, Dr Sarvananthan believes. "It would in reality be legalising an illegal practice globally."

" Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda, in March 2021 suggested holding talks with the Tamil Nadu government to issue licences to a limited number of Indian fishing boats to fish in Sri Lankan waters — although bottom trawling would be banned. But Dr Sarvananthan believes that Indian fishing vessels would not be able to pay the annual licence fee in foreign currency. "Besides, to the best of my knowledge, the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay do not have high-value fish such as tuna to make it commercially viable for Indian fishers to pay the annual licence fee," he said.

And, he added, neither the Sri Lanka Coastguard nor the Sri Lanka Navy has the capacity to check each and every boat to ensure whether they have a licence or not. "In theory, the Indian Coastguard could also check the Indian vessels on their side of the border. But I do not believe it will ever undertake that responsibility," he said. Sri Lanka agreed to consider giving licences to Indian fishing boats as far back as 2003, according to V. Suryanarayan, formerly the founding director and senior professor of the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Madras, who has also studied the issue.

The licensing proposal was again taken up in 2016. The two countries have been engaged in a "fire-fighting exercise", Suryanarayan believes, with Indian poachers and their boats being detained and released by Sri Lanka with monotonous regularity, only to return to the island's waters. "Fishermen throughout the world are no respecters of maritime boundaries; they move wherever the fish moves. It is a universal phenomenon," Suryanarayan writes. "Sri Lankan fishermen poach into Indian and Maldivian waters; Indian fishermen enter Pakistani and Bangladeshi waters, and Japanese and Taiwanese trawlers roam around the world."

"Indian trawlers began to poach in Sri Lanka after sweeping the seabed clean on their side of the maritime boundary. The island's ethnic war in the 1980s and 1990s led to restrictions on Sri Lankan fishermen, which made it easier for Indian poachers. Also, many Sri Lankan fishermen who fled to Tamil Nadu as refugees found employment on Indian trawlers and guided them to known fishing grounds off the island's coast.

Some of them may still be doing so. In January this year, one of the four fishermen who died when an Indian boat sank after colliding with a Sri Lankan Navy vessel was found to be a person of Sri Lankan origin, who lived in India. Suryanarayan feels only a change of mindset on both sides can resolve the dispute and advocates that the two countries convert the contested territory into a 'common heritage'. He suggests trawlers be withdrawn from the Palk Bay and a 'Palk Bay Authority' be set up, consisting of specialists from both governments, representatives of fishermen's associations and navies.

The outfit would "determine ideal sustainable catch, how to enrich the sea jointly, the type of fishing equipment that can be used and the number of fishing days for each country," Suryanarayan has said. However, Dr Sarvananthan, of the Point Pedro Institute, is sceptical of the idea of collaborative, regional management of fish stocks in the region, saying it won't be practical. "Sri Lanka does not have the scientific competence to assess the fish stock availability in its maritime territory, particularly in the Bay of Bengal, Gulf of Mannar, and Palk Bay.

That is why the Sri Lankan government has entrusted Norway to undertake a stock-taking under a bilateral aid programme, which is currently ongoing," he said. Jayasinghe of NARA points to the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission, the main fisheries managing body in the Indian Ocean, as an example of regional cooperation in managing shared fish stocks. NARA has just struck a new

deal with Norway's Institute of Marine Research, the second phase of the project to develop fisheries management tools.

It aims for improved and sustainable management of marine resources, which will enable Sri Lanka to better monitor its fish stocks. Jayasinghe says NARA will employ its own research vessel to conduct fisheries surveys in shallow northern waters not covered by the Dr. Fridtjof Nansen vessel. Norway, which is promoting the ecosystem approach to fisheries (EAF) in Africa as well, says it entails a comprehensive and risk-based management planning process, addressing both human and ecological dimensions of sustainability.

There may be some apprehension about venturing this far, but the collaborative approach is the one that has not been considered yet, if Sri Lankan and Indian authorities want to end the endless poaching, clashes and jailing of fisherfolk for crossing borders.

Life 'very hard' for Sri Lanka fishermen in financial squall

<https://news.yahoo.com/life-very-hard-sri-lanka-011149986.html>

"After three weeks at sea, Anton Fernando tallies his sales of tuna and other fish on a dock in Negombo, a fishing town in Sri Lanka, where the country's financial crisis darkens already murky waters.

The math does not look good for Fernando and his crew of four among the dozen gently bobbing trawlers. Each takes home 40,000 Sri Lankan rupees (\$130) from their gruelling expedition.

"This will not be enough to cover their household expenses," Fernando, 44, told Reuters, holding up a notebook scribbled with numbers. "Even before we go home, we know this isn't enough to cover electricity and water bills, tuition fees and food."

The island nation of 22 million people off the southern tip of India is battling its worst financial crisis since independence in 1948, as COVID-19, mismanaged government finances and ill-timed tax cuts sap dwindling foreign reserves.

Last week the central bank said it was suspending repayment on some of its foreign debt pending a restructure.

Fishing makes up just 1.3% of the Southeast Asian nation's economy, but it employs one-tenth of its people and helps feed far more. The island exports tuna, swordfish, crabs, lobsters and prawns to a dozen countries including the United States, Britain, China and Japan, accounting for 8% of its agricultural exports.

Sri Lanka's fisheries and finance ministries did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment on measures taken to help the fishing industry.

Some fishermen say they have cut back on food, others have stopped repaying loans. All of those who spoke to Reuters say they constantly scrounge for fuel for their boats and their homes."

Livelihoods of fishermen in Sri Lanka sink deep in troubled waters

<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/210613/news/livelihoods-of-fishermen-sink-deep-in-troubled-waters-446442.html>

"While the ship disaster has left small and medium scale fishermen in the western and northwestern coasts of Sri Lanka struggling to keep their livelihoods afloat, the demand for deep sea fish has triggered a price increase in some varieties. Prices of deep sea fish such as tuna, snapper, seer fish (thora), paraw, thalapath (sailfish) continue to soar due to short supply and increased demand while smaller fish such as herrings, sardines, small mullet, prawns, crabs and other crustaceans are seeing a price drop.

In the retail market, paraw is sold at an average of Rs. 1350 per kilo whereas in June, last year a kilo was about Rs. 1250. Mullet is presently sold at Rs. 1375 a kilo an increase from last year's Rs. 1230. A kilo of kelawalla is Rs. 1140 whereas it was Rs. 1107 last year. A kilo of thalapath is presently about Rs. 1392, close to a hundred rupee increase from last year. A kilo of mora is now Rs. 1213 whereas last year it was Rs. 1018. Prawn prices came down from last year's Rs.1290 to Rs. 1250 a kilo and in some places sold at an even lesser rate.

Balaya, small mullet, saalaya, linna fish prices are seeing a drop in prices. A kilo of Balaya is presently Rs. 620 a kilo, whereas it was Rs. 760 in the retail market. "The seas are rough, during (warakan) season and 'maa-del' fishermen are reluctant to go deep sea fishing. The ship incident has resulted in people being wary about consuming fish. Therefore the livelihoods of small-scale fishermen have been severely affected," said All-Ceylon Fisherfolk Trade Union secretary Dinesh Fernando. "Fishermen are jobless, they cannot go to sea. In some cases their fishing gear is damaged by the plastic pellets from the sinking ship.

Due to the lockdown, shops that sell fishing gear are closed. Travel restrictions have left them unable to even engage in other daily paid jobs on land," he said. He said the Government should take immediate measures to compensate fishermen affected by the ship disaster and also purchase fish from northern and eastern fishermen and ensure fish is available all over the country at reasonable prices. "This is the fishing season in the seas of Kalpitiya, Mannar and northern and eastern seas and fish there are mostly safe to consume as well," Mr. Fernando said.

At the wholesale fish market in Peliyagoda, fish traders complained of a drastic drop in the demand for fish. “We have fish supplies, but few buyers. The Fisheries Corporation should step up to promote and distribute fish. They need to initiate an effective programme to purchase our fish,” a vendor said. Meanwhile, the consumption of fish still remains a debatable topic. Dr Lanka Wickremasinghe, Head of the Department of Aquaculture and Seafood Technology at the Ocean University of Sri Lanka, said consuming fish, especially fish caught in the seas off the coast affected by the pollution from the ship, should be avoided.

“One can argue that cleaning the gills and intestines will make the fish safe. But some chemicals can be absorbed into the flesh. Unless the chemicals released from the ship are thoroughly investigated, it is safe to stay away from consuming fish especially from the area exposed to plastic pellets and other chemicals. If people really want to consume fish, deep fried is recommended,” she said. Thushan Kathurusinghe, Project Leader of the Turtle Conservation Project, said that consuming deep sea fish caught in multi-day trawlers in international waters is safe for consumption while fish caught close to the coast should be avoided for some time.

Minister Devananda pledges to reopen Oluvil Fisheries Harbour in Sri Lanka

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2020/03/18/finance/214671/minister-devananda-pledges-reopen-oluvil-fisheries-harbour>

"Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Minister Douglas Devananda paid a fact finding visit to Oluvil Commercial Port and Fisheries Harbour in the Ampara district recently. Addressing the media at the Harbour, the Minister said that he made this visit on the instructions of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa to look in to the grievances of the fishermen. He said that he would make arrangements to find solutions to the affected families' livelihoods due to the closure of the harbor.

The Minister pledged that the Harbour would be soon commissioned soon. “This Government would promise only what they could do. The Harbour was constructed by the Danish Construction Company MT Højgaard and was opened by the then President Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2008 as a part of the ‘Nagenahira Navodaya’ Development Program.

Due accumulating of to a sand dune at the main entrance to the Oluvil fisheries Harbor was closed as steps were not taken to clear them by the previous government. The fishing industry was badly affected as fishing boats were unable to enter or go out for fishing. Chairman of the National Organization of Secretaries to Ministries, Keerthi Sri Weerasingha too had made several appeals to reopen the harbour. The plight of the ‘Harbour closure’ was first highlighted in ‘Sunday Observer’ and ‘Daily News’ in February 2020.

MV X-Press Pearl disaster in Sri Lanka: Rs.420 mn paid as compensation to fishermen

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2021/11/09/local/264128/mv-x-press-pearl-disaster-rs420-mn-paid-compensation-fishermen>

"Nearly Rs.420 million has been paid directly to more than 14,400 fishermen as compensation for damage caused by the MV X-Press Pearl disaster, Sri Lanka's State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fisheries and Prawn Farming, Fishery Harbour Development, Multi day Fishing Activities and Fish Exports Kanchana Wijesekera, said in Parliament yesterday (08 November 2021). "The damage to the MV X-Press Pearl ship is currently only partially compensated.

The said amount was for five days alone. The President has instructed that a major part of the compensation to be given to the fishermen. Out of the amount of Rs. 720 million received, Rs. 420 million has been paid as basic compensation to them.

With that money, compensation has been credited directly to the accounts of more than 14,400 fishermen in the Gampaha-Kalutara Districts who were in the sea areas where fishing was prohibited. The rest of the compensation will be deposited as we receive the funds," State Minister Wijesekera explained.

No decision has been taken to allow Indian fishermen to fish in Sri Lankan waters: Govt. Source

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21A/Mar30_1617120479CH.php

"Sri Lanka's Co-Cabinet Spokesman and Minister of Energy Udaya Gammanpila said no policy decision has been taken to allow Indian fishermen to fish in Sri Lankan waters and the reports published in this regard are not true. Minister Udaya Gammanpila stated this in response to a query made by a journalist at the media briefing at the Government Information Department today (30) regarding a statement made by the Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda to a newspaper that a discussion is being held in this regard.

The Minister further stated that the Minister of Fisheries has not discussed any such decision and that such decisions are made by the Cabinet of Ministers, although the Cabinet has not received any such Cabinet proposal.

When inquired by the media regarding the release of Indian fishermen caught in Sri Lankan waters and the detention of Sri Lankan fishermen so far by the Government of India, the Minister explained that the government normally intervene without any hesitation and get the Sri Lankan fishermen released when they go fishing in other countries and get caught violating the unique territorial waters.

Mr. Gammanpila said that the same procedure is followed with regard to Indian fishermen and he hoped that India would take such a positive step towards the Sri Lankan fishermen in Indian

custody. Meanwhile, in a statement, Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda said he had never stated that he would allow Indian fishermen to fish in Sri Lankan waters. Fisheries Minister said necessary steps would be taken in the future to resolve the issue of Indian fishermen entering Sri Lankan waters and fishing by the bottom trawling system.

Northern Sri Lankan fishermen seek India's action over disputes

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/northern-sri-lankan-fishermen-seek-indias-action-over-disputes/article36993158.ece>

"Indian fishermen are crossing the maritime boundary, the Federation of Jaffna District Fishermen's Cooperative Society Unions said in a letter submitted at the Indian Consulate Sri Lanka's northern fishermen want authorities in India and Sri Lanka to urgently step up action to resolve the long-persisting conflict in the Palk Strait, fearing tensions with Indian fishermen could escalate.

In a letter submitted at the Indian Consulate in Jaffna last week, the Federation of Jaffna District Fishermen's Cooperative Society Unions pointed to the perils of bottom-trawling and pair-trawling fishing methods — commonly used by Tamil Nadu fishermen — resulting in a drastically smaller catch and frequent damage to their modest fishing gear.

Number of development projects planned for fishermen in Sri Lanka

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/09/20/local/259798/number-development-projects-planned-fishermen>

"Sri Lanka's Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda said that the Fisheries Ministry will launch a number of development projects worth Rs.26 million in the Jaffna Peninsula for the benefit of fishermen. The Minister said on Sunday (19) that these projects are being implemented under the Field Protection and Development Programmes of the Ministry of Fisheries.

Accordingly, Rs.5.7 million will be spent to develop the Fisheries Harbour and Maintenance Centre in the Thanankilappu and Kovilkandi areas in Jaffna. The Minister also said that several other projects are also planned under these development projects, including the installation of safety telecommunication equipment at four locations in Jaffna and the improvement of communication facilities between the Navanthurai Web Centre in Jaffna and Colombo.

Owners of MV X-Press Pearl ready to pay compensation to the fishermen affected by the ship's fire off Colombo, Sri Lanka

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21B/Aug10_1628568460CH.php

"The local agency of the Singaporean company that owns the MV X-Press Pearl, which caught fire on 21 May and sank in Sri Lankan waters, has informed the Supreme Court that it is ready to pay compensation to the fishermen affected by the fire. President's Counsel Romesh de Silva, appearing for the local representative of the Singaporean company that owns the ship, said in the Supreme Court that the company was awaiting a court order to pay the full amount as there were several cases related to the burning of the ship.

This was stated by the President's Counsel when a petition filed against the government's decision taken to suspend fishing from Panadura to Negombo due to the MV X-Press Pearl fire, was taken up for consideration last week. The petition requests the court to issue an order to the government to pay Rs. 500,000 each to every fisherman affected by the MV X-Press Pearl fire. The petition was taken up before a panel of judges headed by Supreme Court Judge Vijith Malalgoda.

The President's Counsel requested that all the petitions be considered on the same day as several petitions have been filed regarding the incident. The court accepting the petitioners' request to allow the revision of the petition ordered the petitioners to file the amended petition within four weeks. Rev. Father Sarath Iddamalgoda, a human rights activist and two professional fishermen Gamini Fernando and Warnakulasuriya Christopher Sarath Fernando filed the fundamental right petition on 23 June.

The petitioners state that they had learned through the media that the MV X-Press Pearl had been refused entry into ports in Qatar and India due to a chemical leak in the ship. The petitioners allege that in spite of such a dangerous situation, the Sri Lankan authorities had inadvertently neglected their duty by allowing the ship to enter the Port of Colombo.

The petition further states that many fishermen have lost their livelihoods due to the government's ban on fishing off the coast from Negombo to Panadura after the accident. The Singapore-registered containership caught fire on May 20th while at anchorage 9.5 nm off Colombo Harbor due to a chemical leak in a container and burned for 13 days before the fire was put out on 2nd June. The ship along with its hazardous cargo sank afterwards.

X-Press Feeders, operators of the X-Press Pearl, through the vessel owner's P&I insurers, have made an initial payment of US\$3.6 million to the Sri Lankan government to help compensate those affected by the consequences of the fire and sinking of the vessel. Discussions are ongoing on the payment of further claims and all legitimate claims will be considered, the owners have said.

Plenty of fish but no catch in Sri Lanka

<https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/plenty-of-fish-but-no-catch-in-sri-lanka-172632>

"The sky and seas off Sri Lanka's coast are crystal blue but a worsening economic crisis has kept fishermen moored at Negombo harbor, out of gas and unable to reel in the day's catch.

The waters nearby are a tropical bounty of fist-sized prawns and mackerel that normally find their way into the island nation's staple seafood curries. But the crisis has left coastal communities short of fuel to send their vessels out to the ocean, and the repercussions are rippling down to dinner tables around the country.

"If we queue up by five in the morning, then we will get fuel by three in the afternoon, on good days," Arulanandan, a seasoned member of Negombo's close-knit fishing community, tells AFP. "But for some, even that is not possible, because, by the time they get to the end of the queue, the kerosene is gone."

Around the local estuary, idle crew members sun themselves on deck or lean against the rails of trawlers bobbing in the water, puffing on cigarettes as they listlessly wait for news of a fresh diesel shipment.

Their ships are equipped to go deep into international waters for weeks at a time but the shortages have prevented most from setting sail..."

Reeling Sri Lankan fishermen seek government relief

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/reeling-sri-lankan-fishermen-seek-government-relief/90370#>

"Justin Vincent Anthony's village has been locked down for more than a month. During this time, he went to sea for a few days to support his family but the fish he caught could not be sold at market. Both local fish markets were closed and he tried to sell his catch on the streets, but the police chased him away. On many days, Anthony and other fishermen could not even afford the diesel for their boats. Sri Lankan fishermen face another problem too.

Many people erroneously believe the coronavirus can be transmitted by eating fish. Vendors have to face numerous obstacles selling their catch as the public has shunned fish. "These days, living with a family of five is very difficult," said Anthony, a 62-year-old Catholic from Basiyawatta, Negombo. Meril Fernando, who ties a small box on the back of his bicycle and goes from house to house to sell fish, said families have stopped eating fish since Covid-19 struck.

He has to go to areas where the lockdown has been lifted to sell fish. The fishing town of Negombo has long been called "Little Rome" because the population is about 75 percent Catholic. The fishing industry is facing severe problems due to media misinformation and unreasonable fear among the public. Sri Lanka has reported over 18,400 cases of coronavirus

and 69 deaths. Before the country experienced its second wave in the first week of October, there were only 3,396 cases and 13 deaths. Infections have jumped fivefold since then.

Former minister of fisheries Dilip Weddarachchi ate raw fish at a press meeting to assure the public it is safe to eat fish. He said the biggest favor the public can do for the fishing community is to purchase fish, adding that it is the duty of the government to advise the public. The Government Medical Officers' Association has stated that properly cooked fish do not carry the virus. The government has banned all public gatherings until further notice and locked down many villages to battle the fast-spreading second wave of the pandemic.

Hundreds of fishing organizations and rights activists have urged the government to provide relief to fishing communities reeling from the impact of the contagion. "A scientific approach should confirm whether the virus is transmitted by fish. Based on that fact, the Ministry of Fisheries and medical officers should issue statements through the media," fishing organizations said in a joint statement on Nov. 15. They urged the government to purchase stocks of fish that cannot be sold at a reasonable price and store them.

Several priests in Negombo have supported poor fishing families. Father Sujeewa Athukorala, parish priest of St. Sebastian's Church, has distributed dry ration packets to fishing families with the support of his parish council and the Fisheries Association. A Catholic priest from a fishing family in Negombo said the government has paid little attention to fishermen even though there are several Christian parliamentarians. "

"Fishermen are people who do a great service to the economy without burdening any government," said the priest who preferred to remain anonymous. Fernando urged the government to pay special attention to these voiceless fishermen. "We are afraid that our children will lose their future after training for this job."

Rs. 216.5 mn paid as compensation to fishermen in Sri Lanka who lost income due to Express Pearl fire

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21B/Sep07_1630988773CH.php

"Sri Lanka's Ministry of Fisheries has provided Rs. 216.5 million to the relevant District Secretariats to pay as compensation to 12,111 fishing vessel owners and fishermen in the Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara districts who lost their livelihoods due to the burning of the X-Press Pearl containership.

Accordingly, Rs. 150 million has been paid for the fishermen in the Gampaha District, Rs. 52.67 million for the fishermen in the Colombo District and Rs. 13.83 million for the fishermen in the Kalutara District and the compensation has been credited to their bank accounts.

Seaweed farming offers a boost for Sri Lanka's 'blue economy' ambitions

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/09/seaweed-farming-offers-a-boost-for-sri-lankas-blue-economy-ambitions/>

"In its territorial waters and exclusive economic zone, Sri Lanka is home to an abundance of coastal and marine resources. And while national policies and development visions already aim toward a blue economy, much of this natural wealth is currently not being used in a sustainable way or to its full potential, experts say.

"Coastal fishing communities are vulnerable," says Ruchira Cumaranatunga, a senior professor in the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture at the University of Ruhuna. "There is a need to create or enhance alternative livelihoods in coastal areas of Sri Lanka. While helping coastal fishermen to sustain their fishery activities, they should be provided with additional sources of income."

Small-scale fishermen in Sri Lanka increasingly threatened by the Covid pandemic

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Small-fishermen-increasingly-threatened-by-the-pandemic-51665.html>

"Sri Lanka's small fishermen are losing their fishing grounds and are at risk of losing their fundamental right to life and sustenance, warned Herman Kumara, coordinator of the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO), last Saturday, 21 November, World Fisheries Day. To mark the event, NAFSO held a national meeting online. Working with of 17 other organisations, meetings were also held in person at the district level with a maximum of 30 people present.

Discussions centred on issues such as the national policy on inland reservoir fisheries, the social and economic situation of fisherwomen and the impact of the "blue economy" on the lives of small fishermen. Fishing is a key sector in Sri Lanka. Some 175,000 people depend on small-scale coastal fishing. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a major blow for them. To help the sector, Kumara has urged fellow Sri Lankans to eat fish and not believe rumours that it is contagious.

Speaking to AsiaNews, he said that the fishing community is not responsible for the second wave of infections; instead, the government is to blame for not enforcing quarantine measures to please their henchmen. The activist also slammed plans by international institutions to exploit fish resources under the slogan of the blue economy, the sustainable use of marine resources to support economic growth "They will devastate the environment and the lives of fishermen even more, removing them from their native lands and dispossessing them of their assets.

To protect small-scale fishermen, Kumara wants the government to fully implement FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, which were drafted with the contribution of organisations like NAFSO. Based on this document, Sri Lanka adopted a law in 2018 to protect local fishermen from the activities of Indian competitors.

“We are now working with the authorities and trade unions to ratify the ILO (International Labour Organisation) Work in Fishing Convention, said Kumara. For him, this tool can provide security to Sri Lankan fishermen.

Some respite in the Indo-Lankan fisheries conflict

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/some-respite-in-the-indo-lankan-fisheries-conflict/article30951909.ece>

"Depending on the spot along the coast of Jaffna peninsula, resident fishermen share different versions of the familiar story of “poaching Indian trawlers. “The situation is much better now, said K. Rajachandran, a fisher leader in Karainagar, about 20 km northwest of Jaffna town. “I would say the Indian trawlers coming to our waters has reduced by more than 50% after the new laws were introduced, he said. He was referring to the time after Sri Lanka legally banned trawling in 2017 and imposed stiffer fines on foreign vessels found fishing in its territorial waters in 2018. The move came after Sri Lanka's northern fishermen struggled for years, constantly highlighting their falling catch and disappearing livelihoods.

The Indian trawlers, usually from Tamil Nadu, not only crossed the International Maritime Boundary Line to fish in Sri Lanka's resource-rich seas, but also used a destructive fishing method that virtually scooped out the sea-bed, adversely impacting fish production and marine biodiversity. The Palk Bay fisheries conflict, which intensified after the war ended in 2009, posed a serious challenge to the livelihoods of Tamil fishermen in Sri Lanka, who were trying to rebuild their lives.

In fact, trawlers from Tamil Nadu had caused considerable damage to the catch in its own seas, as it did to the livelihoods of fishermen using smaller boats along coastal Tamil Nadu, particularly in Rameswaram and Nagapattinam. But on the Sri Lankan side, they amplified fisher folk's post-war distress. Many rounds of talks between the Indian and Sri Lankan governments, and among fisher leaders didn't bring a solution any closer. Sri Lanka went for tougher laws. Ever since, both officials and Sri Lankan fishermen have observed a drop in the number of instances of Indian trawlers poaching.

Official statistics show that while as many as 453 Indian fishermen were arrested in 2017 they have all been released and repatriated only 156 were arrested on charges of poaching in 2018. Last year, 210 were arrested and this year, 34 have been held until mid-February. “We have been spotting some species of fish again after many years and the catch is also going up steadily, Mr.

Rajachandran said. Trail of destruction When things were looking up for the community, Sri Lanka's own trawler fleet smaller than the Indian ones but destructive nonetheless began expanding.

The Indian trawlers' trail of destruction was not only evident in sea, but also in the smaller vessels they had bred in Sri Lanka. A few hundred fishermen in Jaffna saw quick money in these powerful vessels and invested in them. According to many northern fishermen, the trawlers originated from Gurunagar, located on the southern coast of the peninsula. The village is a 10-minute drive from Jaffna town, but starkly different. The five-storied residential complex is crowded, with each of its tiny apartments, packed to the brim with people and their belongings.

Fishing is the main livelihood for men, while women are mostly engaged in daily-waged labour. "It's not us, it's the Indian trawlers, said a young fisherman, who did not reveal his name fearing "repercussions. "Even now, they come thrice a week to our coast. I don't know about other parts, he said, adding the people of the village felt "helpless and hopeless. He claimed that fishermen like him didn't operate smaller trawlers and instead squarely blamed the Indian trawlers for his plight.

While Sri Lanka's northern fishermen continue braving conflicts, local and international, the two governments are trying to sort out pending cases. As many as 130 of the Indian trawlers seized by the Sri Lankan Navy over the past few years will have to be discarded, as they have corroded and are no more fit to be used. During his visit to New Delhi in November, soon after his election victory, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa announced the release of 57 boats in Sri Lankan custody.

In a potentially long-term initiative, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Douglas Devananda, who were in New Delhi in early February, have proposed that the two countries set up a joint marine resources management authority, with experts, officials and fisher leaders from either side of the Palk Strait. However, the Indo-Lanka fisheries conflict at least a decade old now cannot be simply "managed, as past efforts have proved. They need to be solved. And that might need greater political will from both sides.

South and South-East Asian Conference on Small-Scale Fisheries and Aquaculture to be held in Sri Lanka

www.slffsf.org

"In celebrating the Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture- 2022, as declared by the United Nations, the Sri Lanka Forum for Small Scale Fisheries (SLFSSF) is organizing a conference

under the theme “Fishing for Life”, which will be an international conference covering the South and South-East Asian region.

This will be organized in partnership with the Sri Lanka Association for Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (SLAFAR) and the Ocean University of Sri Lanka (OCUSL). The event will be held during 19-20 September 2022, in virtual format due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

The conference aims to bring to light, the important contribution made by artisanal and small scale fisheries to food supply, nutrition, employment, poverty alleviation and wellbeing of the people in the region, while at the same time, unearthing issues of governance failures, including social injustices emerging from the process of blue economic development.

It is expected that the conference will yield an outcome having implications for effective management measures to be adopted, to secure sustainable artisanal & small-scale fisheries and aquaculture sub-sectors in the region.

Sri Lanka and Bangladesh: Benefit from growing trade ties

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2021/11/09/features/264064/sri-lanka-and-bangladesh-can-benefit-growing-trade-ties>

"Sri Lanka has invested in Bangladesh’s power sector. Some more opportunities are there for Sri Lankan investors in Bangladesh’s special economic zones, industrial parks and high-tech parks. The two countries can exchange their experiences in agriculture including paddy cultivation, and freshwater fish farming, tourism, cricket diplomacy as also Covid-19 vaccine diplomacy. Bangladesh has an interest in acquiring technical knowledge from Sri Lanka on coastal, aquaculture, marine culture and deep-sea fishing.

More institutional cooperation in the field of education for technical training and skill development can strengthen the ties. Bangladeshi nurses and other health workers can be trained in Sri Lanka, which can benefit from importing world-class medicines from Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been doing well in the electronics field, and its products are available in Nepal now. Sri Lanka can import electronics products from Bangladesh to fulfill the demands of its people.

Even Rajapaksa has praised the digital transformation of Bangladesh under the leadership of PM Sheikh Hasina and emphasized increasing trade and expanding the scope of business between the two countries. He lauded Hasina’s leadership in tackling the pandemic. He evinced interest in exchanging experiences on blue economy and disaster management. Extending port facilities Sri Lanka has already allowed Bangladesh to use the seaport of Hambantota in its Southern Province.

This throws open a huge opportunity for Bangladesh. Bangladesh-Sri Lanka trade volume in money terms is USD 61 million. The government is thinking of increasing it further. Apart from this, Dhaka is also thinking of providing various facilities to bring investment to Sri Lanka. Chittagong port has historic connectivity with Colombo port. By using Hambantota Port, Bangladesh can reach Central Asia, West Asia, Eurasia, Russia, China through the utilization of Pakistan's Gwadar port and Iran's Chabahar Port.

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa visited Bangladesh to mark the birth centenary of its founder Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and also the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence and had detailed talks with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The meeting agreed to take trade relations between the two countries to new heights. The meeting also signed six memoranda of understanding on bilateral cooperation. Various regional and international issues were discussed during the one-hour summit.

During the meeting, Sheikh Hasina stressed the need for a free trade agreement between the two countries, saying the amount of trade is less than expected. For this, both sides should quickly go for a free trade agreement. According to the Bangladesh Bank, the country's trade volume with Sri Lanka is very low. In the 2019-20 financial year, only goods worth Bangladesh Tk 473 crore were imported from Sri Lanka to Bangladesh. In the same financial year, only Bangladesh Tk 325 crore worth of goods were exported from Bangladesh.

Bangladesh signed its maiden preferential trade agreement with Bhutan in December 2020, with the people of the two nations reaping the dividends. If a free trade agreement is signed, then only the sky would be the limit for Bangladesh-Sri Lanka business relations. Maritime security The Colombo Security Conclave held earlier this month has ushered in opportunities for both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka concerning maritime security. Sri Lanka has recently been suffering from a foreign exchange reserve crisis.

As per the latest reports, it has only USD 500 million in foreign exchange reserves. With this reserve, Colombo can't meet its import expenses for three months. To keep the reserves risk-free, at least three months of import expenditure has to be kept aside. Bangladesh has decided to lend USD 250 million to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka from its foreign exchange reserves. To this end, Bangladesh Bank is going to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. According to Sri Lankan media outlets, Bangladesh has already disbursed USD 50 million to Sri Lankan authorities. This will pave the way for new multi-dimensional economic relations.

The Bangladesh government has taken the initiative to export 21 products to Sri Lanka with duty-free facilities. At the same time, the two countries have started expanding bilateral trade, increasing investment, and developing their shipping and tourism industries. Readymade garments, medicines, jute and jute products, ceramics, juices, food products, vegetables, peppers, construction materials, melamine, paper and paper boards, flowers, plastic products, leather and

leather products, shoes, soybean oil, potatoes, fertilizers and cosmetics from Bangladesh have a huge demand in the Sri Lankan market.

The Bangladesh government's efforts to get a duty-free market facility for the export of these products show Sri Lanka is becoming increasingly important in increasing regional trade. As a result of various initiatives, Bangladesh's trade relations with Sri Lanka will get further strengthened. The friendly relations between the two nations are also playing an important role in increasing trade and investment. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is very keen to strengthen ties with all South Asian countries.

She has been laying stress on economic diplomacy and ordered all government officials to ensure maritime trade and blue economy are given precedence in the government's agenda. There is huge potential in tapping marine resources in the Bay of Bengal region; Sri Lanka can assist Bangladesh in this area. Bangladesh has taken the initiative, whose significance is huge, not just for the two countries but for South Asia. Both states should now build upon their growing business relations for mutual benefit.

Sri Lanka and Maldives: No restrictions on Maldivian fish exports to Sri Lanka

<https://raajje.mv/88780>

"Sri Lanka has assured that there are no restrictions on Maldives fish imports. Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid announced this after discussions with senior Sri Lankan officials, including foreign and fisheries ministers, on Friday. Shahid said that they had assured him that "there are no restrictions for Maldives fish imports to Sri Lanka.

The neighboring nation's president recently, while addressing Sri Lanka's newly elected parliament at its first sitting, called to halt the importation of fish noting that the country itself "is surrounded by the ocean.

Majority of Maldives' export revenue is sourced from exports of fish. Sri Lanka is among the main fish export markets from Maldives, along with Thailand, Russia, Malaysia and member countries of the European Union. Fishing is the second largest industry in the Maldives.

Sri Lanka and the World Bank explore path to sustainable and inclusive growth for the fisheries sector

<https://indiaeducationdiary.in/sri-lanka-and-the-world-bank-explore-path-to-sustainable-and-inclusive-growth-for-the-fisheries-sector/>

"The Government of Sri Lanka and the World Bank convened a high-level policy dialogue to discuss the findings and recommendations of a report titled Priorities for Sustainably Managing

Sri Lanka's Marine Fisheries, Coastal Aquaculture, and the Ecosystems that Support Them.

Fisheries contribute significantly to livelihoods and food security in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankans get about 50 percent of their animal protein from fish, which is about three times the global average. Coastal and marine fisheries provide full- or part-time direct or indirect employment to some almost 1 million people and support the livelihoods of another 3.6 million Sri Lankans. At the same time, the sector's contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) and export revenues are modest. In 2019, these were only 1.9 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively.

"The fisheries sector has the potential to make Sri Lanka competitive in the global markets and to increase jobs, food security, and export earnings in a sustainable manner for the benefit of local communities," said Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank Country Director of Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Nepal. "New knowledge, innovative thinking, and close coordination between the public and private sectors are crucial to realizing this potential."

Sri Lanka's marine fisheries sector was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Fish catches declined as much as 20 percent and exports fell by 26 percent in 2020. National catches are not sufficient for domestic demand and need to be complemented by imports. In 2020, Sri Lanka imported \$218 million worth of fish. The sector was already challenged due to overfishing, declining fish stocks, degradation of coastal ecosystems due to habitat destruction and pollution, and the impacts of climate change. Sustainable management of fisheries is key to ensuring Sri Lanka's food security and meeting the high domestic demand for fish.

Sri Lanka appoints committee to look for permanent solution on fishermen issue

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-appoints-committee-to-look-for-permanent-solution-on-fishermen-issue/article33671717.ece>

"Sri Lankan government has appointed a three-member committee which will make recommendations on measures to stop poaching by Indian fishermen inside the country's waters, the Ministry of Fisheries said on Tuesday, a week after four people were killed when an Indian trawler capsized after colliding with a Sri Lankan Navy vessel. Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda has appointed the committee of senior officials from his ministry who would be talking to all stakeholders to try and find a permanent solution to this recurring issue, officials said.

Last week, India lodged a strong protest with Sri Lanka over the death of four fishermen in a collision between their vessel and a naval craft of the island nation, saying steps should be taken to ensure that such incidents do not recur. The Indian fishing trawler sank in the Sri Lankan waters about 8 nautical miles within the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) northwest of Delft Island. The fishermen were from Tamil Nadu and they had set out for fishing

on January 18. India expressed “deep anguish” over the incident and emphasised the need to deal with issues pertaining to fishermen in a humanitarian manner.

“Existing understandings between the two governments in that regard must be strictly observed. Utmost efforts should be made to ensure that there is no recurrence,” the Ministry of External Affairs said in New Delhi on January 21. Commenting on the incident, Sri Lanka’s Foreign Ministry Secretary Jayanath Colombage said that the issue was a people’s issue which needs to be looked at closely. “The incident happened within our waters, when the boat had collided with the Sri Lankan Naval patrol craft”, Colombage, a former Sri Lankan Navy chief, told a local TV channel.

The Sri Lankan Navy said that on January 18 they seized Indian fishing trawlers allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan waters, trespassing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). The Navy said one of the Indian fishing trawlers, with aggressive manoeuvres attempted to evade the scene and collided with the Naval craft in operation and ultimately sank at sea having lost its stability.

Fishermen from both countries are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other’s waters. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during his visit to Sri Lanka early this month held a meeting with Lankan Fisheries Minister and reviewed bilateral cooperation in fisheries. During his five-day visit to India in February last year, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi agreed to resolve the long-festered fishermen issue with a “humane approach”.

Sri Lanka authority highlights illegal fishing activities in restricted areas

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/09/13/local/259198/mepa-highlights-illegal-fishing-activities-restricted-areas>

"Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) today highlighted the on-going illegal fishing activities being carried out by fishermen at Hendala, Wattala, Dikowita and Kepungoda areas when the Fisheries Department and many other marine environment protection authorities has prohibited such activities following the MV X-Press Pearl container ship disaster.

The Singapore registered X-press pearl container ship caught fire off the Colombo Harbour on May 20 this year and many containers inside the ship were immediately removed to prevent the fire from spreading. Read more: <http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/09/13/local/259198/mepa-highlights-illegal-fishing-activities-restricted-areas>

Sri Lanka banks on the ocean to chart a green path toward a blue economy

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/sri-lanka-banks-on-the-ocean-to-chart-a-green-path-toward-a-blue-economy/>

"Authorities in Sri Lanka have called for a renewed focus on conserving the island's rich coastal ecosystems, identifying the "blue economy" as key to the nation's sustainable development. The Indian Ocean island has a coastline of 1,340 kilometers (833 miles), territorial waters spanning 21,500 square kilometers (8,300 square miles), and an exclusive economic zone of 517,000 km² (200,000 mi²), almost eight times its land area. Its coastal zone is home to most of the urban population and infrastructure as well as to bountiful ecosystems that include mangrove forests, tidal marshes, seagrass beds, and coral reefs.

However, large swaths of these ecosystems have been lost or degraded over recent decades, leaving many parts of the coastal belt exposed. "Even though we are blessed with our geographical location and with our pristine and highly biodiverse coastal and marine environment, our coastal and marine environments are under immense pressure," Darshani Lahandapura, chair of Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), told an annual research symposium on the marine environment in May.

"While much attention is focused on the problems facing the ocean, the ocean is also the source of potential solutions and innovations. "Ocean-based climate actions such as ocean-based renewable energy, ocean-based transportation, coastal and marine ecosystems, fisheries and aquaculture, and carbon storage in the seabed have the potential to close the emission gap and mitigate climate change impacts," Lahandapura added.

"Sustainably developing oceans and economic growth for development while maintaining ocean health can define a new era of opportunities for ocean-facing countries." The concept of the "blue economy" promotes inclusive economic growth and livelihood development that also ensures the environmental sustainability of oceans and coastal areas. UNESCO defines it as "the decoupling of socioeconomic development through oceans-related sectors and activities from environmental and ecosystems degradation."

A blue economy can include renewable energy, fisheries, maritime transport, tourism, waste management, and other sectors connected to the coastal and marine environment, according to Ruchira Cumaranatunga, a senior professor at the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the University of Ruhuna. "There are many sustainable socioeconomic development programs that could be carried out in Sri Lanka without harming or with the least impact to the natural vegetation," Cumaranatunga told Mongabay.

"They are possible and economically feasible, but when preparing such development programs, suitable experts on coastal environment and vegetation should be consulted." Sri Lanka isn't short of ocean-related knowledge and expertise. But this expertise needs to be actively utilized and integrated into planning and implementation processes, Cumaranatunga said. Enhancing livelihoods that use coastal and marine resources in a sustainable and holistic way is often made

difficult by gaps in awareness, knowledge, institutional coordination, and cross-sectoral collaboration, he added.

Boosting sustainability and economic growth in the coastal belt without harming the environment can improve existing livelihoods, for example by optimizing supply chains, introducing value addition, or reducing post-harvest losses in fisheries. “With respect to fishery waste in Sri Lanka, it is discarded haphazardly without considering that it is a valuable resource, causing serious environmental impacts,” Cumararatunga said.

Every year, 50-60% of Sri Lanka’s fish harvest is discarded as trash fish or fishery waste and dumped into lagoons, estuaries, or the sea. However, if collected, fish waste could be converted to valuable products, for example animal feed, fertilizer, fish oil, fish-skin leather, collagen and gelatine, chitin and chitosan from crab shells and shrimp waste, or natural calcium from shellfish.

Experts have long identified many opportunities to create additional livelihoods in Sri Lanka’s coastal and marine sector without destroying local ecosystems, for example through seaweed farming, which is currently only done on a small scale without value addition; coral reef transplanting to create artificial reefs; captive breeding to replenish fish populations; mariculture; or even building an underwater observatory for tourism and educational purposes. The tourism sector itself provides many opportunities for sustainable development within the blue economy and would greatly benefit from healthy ecosystems, proponents say.

“In Sri Lanka, when buildings are put up, the coastal vegetation is removed to get a better view of the ocean without thinking of its functions,” Cumararatunga said. “If the coastal vegetation is kept as nature tracks for people to walk through and still get to the beach while enjoying the beauty of coastal natural ecosystems, it would also help to protect the coastline and act as a barrier against coastal erosion. This kind of development will give long-term benefits while helping sustainable socio-economic development.”

When restoration programs have been launched for already disturbed coastal ecosystems, the natural flora and fauna of these areas should be taken into consideration to prevent introduction of alien or invasive species, experts say. For example, when replanting mangroves, the natural diversity and density should be taken into consideration, for which aerial photographs and even Google images prior to destruction could be used. Vulnerable coastal communities that often depend on a few key livelihoods, such as fisheries or tourism, would also benefit under a blue economy, proponents say.

Climate-related impacts and other shocks can severely affect these livelihoods and push people into poverty, and if coastal ecosystems are degraded and lost, this will reduce fish populations and tourism potential as well. But thriving ecosystems would help mitigate these impacts while also providing a wide range of other goods and services, for example protection against floods, reduction of coastal erosion, and greater carbon sequestration — with mangroves and other blue

carbon ecosystems being among the most efficient ecosystems in the world for climate change mitigation.

Already, the shift toward a blue economy is enshrined in Sri Lanka's national policy framework, "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour," which commits to "sustainable ocean resource management for a blue-green economy." Other key policies and commitments include Sri Lanka's nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement; the national adaptation plan for climate change impacts; and the national policy on conservation and sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems in Sri Lanka. Within the global context, Sri Lanka's efforts to move toward a blue economy align directly with the Sustainable Development Goals; the U.N. Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030; and the U.N. Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030.

Sri Lanka is also the chair of the Mangrove Ecosystems and Livelihood Action Group under the Commonwealth Blue Charter and a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, which has a priority focus area on the blue economy as well as a "blue carbon hub." Its position as an island surrounded by the natural wealth of the Indian Ocean gives Sri Lanka enormous potential to invest in its blue economy, experts say.

But they note this will require the sustainable and integrated management of coastal and marine spaces, inclusion of ecosystems into planning processes, consultation of technical experts, and a legal regime that facilitates these processes. Awareness creation and training are crucial, as is further research focused on practical application and the improvement of livelihoods, covering topics such as marine ecology, blue carbon, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, ecotourism, circular economy, renewable energy, control and treatment of land-based waste and pollution, and perceptions and risk notions among coastal populations.

Between the impacts of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need for sustainable development, coastal and marine ecosystem conservation can unlock many synergies for Sri Lanka's blue economy, proponents say. Conservation and development do not have to be at odds, they argue: they can be mutually beneficial, support livelihoods, and address the causes and impacts of climate change.

Sri Lanka begins compensation process of fishermen affected by cargo ship's fire

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2021/jul/12/sri-lanka-begins-compensation-process-of-fishermen-affected-by-cargo-ships-fire-2329042.html>

"The Sri Lankan government on Monday said it has started the process of paying compensation to local fishermen affected by the fire aboard a Singapore-flagged container ship that was carrying tonnes of hazardous chemicals and sank off the country's coast. MV X-Press Pearl was

carrying 1,486 containers of chemicals and cargo when it went up in flames on May 21 near the Colombo Port.

The Sri Lankan Navy, Airforce and the Indian Coast Guard jointly doused the fire in an operation that took days. However, the ship sank off Colombo's coast on June 17. The state minister of fisheries, Kanchana Wijesekera, said the payment for the compensation has been made possible by an interim claim laid on the insurance company of the ship's owners. "The local fishermen's activities were badly affected since May 20, in addition to the environmental damage.

Our interim claim was in respect of expenditure incurred by state agencies in rescue work and assessing the damage, Wijesekera told reporters here. He said out of the LKR 720 million (USD 40 million) to be received under the interim claim, LKR 420 million (USD 21,12,231) would be utilised to compensate the fishermen. Following the cargo ship blaze, the fisheries ministry halted fishing activities around the Colombo port and the western shore line as tonnes of waste -- plastic and chemical material -- started floating in the sea water.

An estimated number of 20,000 people from fishermen families have been affected by the fishing ban. Apart from the 325 metric tonnes of fuel in its tanks, the ship was loaded with 25 tonnes of hazardous nitric acid. A large number of sea animals, including whales and turtles, died due to the disaster which environmentalists have dubbed as one the worst ecological disasters in the country's history.

Meanwhile, Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) Chairman Darshani Lahandapura said a minimum three-month period would be required to completely assess the damage caused by the ship's fire. The Indian Navy last month deployed its hydrographic survey ship INS Sarvekshak to carry out survey operations to help Lanka restore the safety of navigation of marine traffic through the Colombo port.

A UN team of oil spill and chemical experts deployed mid-June are still working on the impact assessment of threats to livelihood and lives of the population in coastal areas, Lahandapura said. Their report would be used by the authorities to make its final claim for compensation.

Sri Lanka collaborates with Blue Planet Fund

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2022/04/24/news/sri-lanka-collaborates-blue-planet-fund>

"The first Blue Planet Fund (BPF) - Ocean Country Partnership Program (OCPP) Biodiversity Stakeholder Session was held at the Ministry of Environment recently introducing the Defra-led (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) BPF visit to Sri Lanka while the second meeting of the BPF-OCPP took place on the same day with the Fisheries and Seafood Sector related agencies.

The £500 million Blue Planet Fund, financed by the UK Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget, supports developing countries to protect the marine environment and reduce poverty and was developed by the UK Government to protect the ocean from plastic pollution, warming sea temperatures and overfishing. This includes the UK's call to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030 and UK's commitments to stop plastic pollution entering the ocean through the joint UK and Vanuatu-led Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance.

One of the Fund's programs is the newly designed bilateral technical assistance program which is based on scoping and needs assessments, ocean partnerships and emergency marine pollution responses. The OCPP aims to deliver marine science technical assistance and the three core themes of marine pollution, biodiversity loss and supporting sustainable seafood and supports countries in strengthening marine science expertise, developing science-based policy and management tools, and educating coastal communities. The OCPP has the ultimate aim of delivering tangible and positive impact on the livelihoods of coastal communities that depend on healthy marine ecosystems. The OCPP's partners are Belize, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives and the Pacific.

The close and active collaboration between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the British High Commission in Colombo on several other climate and environment related initiatives resulted in Sri Lanka receiving support under the BPF-OCPP.

As part of the OCPP collaboration with Sri Lanka, a delegation comprising of officials from the UK Government's Defra, Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas), Joint Nation Conservation Committee (JNC) and Marine Management Organization (MMO) visited Sri Lanka from March 14-18 and held several meetings, field visits and discussions with local stakeholders. This visit was preceded by a technical visit of Cefas from February 28 to March 11.

Deputy British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Lisa Whanstall said she looks forward to future partnerships. She commended the Government for wide-ranging cooperation and commitments at UNFCCC COP-26. She said, "The UK is eager to continue supporting Sri Lanka to achieve these targets."

The UK Government had spent close to £1 million under the Commonwealth Litter Programme (CLiP) to provide assistance in combating marine pollution last year. Assistance via CLiP provided laboratory facilities to analyse micro plastics to MEPA, NARA, ITI and the CEA, development of educational packs for primary and secondary schools and developing media packs for mainstream and social media in local languages, research collaboration, assessment of ghost fishing gear and accumulated waste in ports, providing garbage trapping nets for rivers.

The UK delegation expressed their willingness to continue supporting Sri Lanka to help drive transformative action and shift the relationship between people, science and the planet. The Secretary to the Ministry of Environment, Dr. Anil Jasinghe said economic activities associated with the coastal and marine resources and environment generate 10 percent of Sri Lanka's foreign exchange earnings and account for 6.7% of employment.

Then State Minister for Ornamental Fish, Freshwater Fish and Shrimp Farming, Fisheries Harbour Development, Multi-Day Fishing and Fish Exports, Kanchana Wijesekara said that over 80% of Sri Lanka's fish stocks have depleted with a significant effect on tourism. He said post-harvest losses (40%); insufficient availability of technical advice, need for a stronger legal framework and monitoring/management of marine resources are the main areas of concern. The Minister called for assistance to develop aquaculture and sustainable fishing and added that the State Ministry will give its fullest support to the relevant agencies for the collaboration under BPF-OCPP.

The Blue Planet fund will aim to provide support that would ensure seafood in Sri Lanka is produced and distributed in ways which support healthy ecosystems, does not over-exploit marine stocks, provides sustainable inclusive and equitable livelihoods and enhance resilience to climate and socioeconomic shocks. The OCPP programs will also incorporate cross-cutting themes such as gender and vulnerable groups, climate change and economic shocks."

Sri Lanka defends move to build artificial reef

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-defends-move-to-build-artificial-reef/article34867767.ece>

"Days after fishermen in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu protested Sri Lanka's efforts to build an artificial reef off Delft island, west of Jaffna peninsula, authorities defended the move "aimed at enhancing fish breeding". Last week, Sri Lanka's Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, with the assistance of Navy, launched a project, dropping around 20 discarded buses into the sea off Delft, as was earlier done in other parts of the island nation, including the eastern Trincomalee district, officials said.

"Many countries, including India, have in the past created artificial reefs to facilitate fish spawning. Old train carriages were used in the US, for instance," Cabinet Minister for Fisheries Douglas Devananda, who represents Jaffna district in parliament, told The Hindu. The move was backed by research undertaken by Sri Lanka's National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), he said.

“By objecting to an initiative in Sri Lanka’s territorial waters, Tamil Nadu fisher leaders have only exposed themselves as parties interested in fishing illegally in the Palk Strait,” he said, referring to the long-persisting Palk Bay fisheries conflict. Scores of Tamil fishermen living in the war-affected northern and eastern districts of Sri Lanka have, for over a decade now, been protesting Tamil Nadu fishermen’s use of destructive bottom trawlers along their coast, severely impacting the marine ecosystem and their post-war livelihoods.

Despite ongoing bilateral discussions and several rounds of talks between fishermen of both countries, Tamil Nadu fishermen are yet to meet northern Sri Lankan fishermen’s consistent demand that they stop bottom-trawling in their seas. On the other hand, Tamil Nadu fishermen have accused the Sri Lankan Navy of attacking and killing fishermen — allegations that the Sri Lankan side denies.

Meanwhile, members of the All Mechanised Boat Fishermen Association, held a protest in Rameswaram last week, urging Sri Lanka to stop dropping “iron scrap” into the sea, since would “affect” marine ecology in the Palk Strait, and also “damage” their own boats and nets. In a tweet indicating Sri Lanka sees its recent initiative also as a deterrent to bottom-trawling, State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera said while the artificial reef would boost fish spawning, “it will also act as a shield against bottom line trawling conducted illegally by the Indian fishermen”.

It is not only the government that defended the move, but also Jaffna-based fisher cooperatives. “This initiative is aimed at helping our livelihoods by increasing fish production, and that is why we have welcomed it. We condemn certain sections of fisher leaders in Tamil Nadu opposing the move,” said Annalingam Annarasa, leader of the federation of fisher cooperative societies in Jaffna.

Sri Lanka fishermen warned off X-Press Pearl fire zone amid oil spill fears: Minister

<https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-fishermen-warned-off-x-pres-pearl-fire-zone-amid-oil-spill-fears-minister-82390/>

"Sri Lanka’s fisheries ministry has advised fishermen to move away from a blazing container ship near the coast with fears of an oil spill damaging marine life and reaching several fishery harbours on the island’s Western coast. A fire aboard the container vessel X-Press Pearl which was initially doused, re-ignited on May 25 and has worsened overnight amid strong winds.

“We have asked them to take it to the other way towards the sea but the issue again is there will be more of an oil spillage which we will have to somehow contain, and there will be some damages to marine life from Negombo to Colombo,” State Minister for Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera told EconomyNext. The Chairperson of Sri Lanka Marine Environmental Protection

Agency Dharshani Lahandapura said preparations are being made for a Tier II oil spill, involving up to 100 metric tonnes. The ship was originally carrying about 300 tonnes of fuel.

“We are planning it to the next level, and we declare it as potential Tier II oil spillage,” she said. Sri Lanka has readied dispersal chemicals and booms to contain the spills, she said. Sri Lanka’s fisheries ministry together with the ports authority’s, the Marine Environment Protection Authority, Navy and Army are in discussions over the next steps. “Now we are in discussion to see how we are going to manage the next step which is the oil spillage and containing the fire. They are expecting a spill and it will happen so contemplating how to minimize it,” Minister Wijesekera said.

“There are two options; one to drag the ship towards the coast which they say will reduce the spillage and contain the fire better, “But if it does have explosions and chemicals that will be a problem for the people living in the coastal areas, so we have advised not to drag it to the coast if it affects the people.”” Aerial footage posted on Minister Wijesekera’s Twitter feed shows the fire blazing. Sri Lanka Navy said the ship was listing to starboard and the fire was spreading to the quarterdeck which housed the bridge.

He says it’s a risk either way, but they cannot take a risk on human lives. “We can’t take a risk on human life that’s why we advised taking the vessel as further as possible but they are still in discussion and an expert group from the Netherlands is also working with us.” Two days ago the fisheries department was notified not to allow anyone to fish close to the coastal areas from Kalutara to Negombo, basically from Panadura to Dikkowita Fishery Harbor because the fire aboard the vessel may release chemicals that may be hazardous to health.

Fishing communities around the areas go fishing every day. Since some containers have chemicals and the fire could emit harmful gases fishermen have been warned not to go near them but report them to the authorities. “We have been told that since the explosions took place there are about eight containers which have fallen into the sea, so as not to be in contact with the containers or the debris from the vessels.””

Sri Lanka Foreign Minister promises solutions for Indo-Sri Lanka fishing dispute

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/01/30/foreign-minister-promise-solutions-for-indo-sri-lanka-fishing-dispute/>

"The issue of engaging in illegal fishing by Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters has not concluded as of yet. The fishermen’s associations say that more than 100 Indian fishing vessels arrived in the Vadamarachchi East and Sulipuram seas off Jaffna last night (29). The fishing gear of Sri Lankan fishermen have also been damaged due to these illegal Indian fishing vessels. Point Pedro, Super Madam and Mailitti Fisheries Associations say fishermen’s nets have also been destroyed due to the Indian fishing vessels.

As a result, most fishermen have returned to shore this morning without engaging in fishing. Moreover, the nets of fishermen who set sail from Sulipuram in Jaffna were also damaged due to Indian fishing vessels. The fishermen stated that they had lodged a complaint with the Wattukotte Police regarding the incident. Meanwhile, the External Affairs Minister, Ptof. G.L. Peiris expressed concern over the invasion of Sri Lankan waters by Indian fishermen, and stated that clearly, the issue is still under discussion, and the best solution is for both parties to come to an agreement with regard to the issue.

Sri Lanka grapples with the problem of its fishers plundering waters abroad

<https://news.mongabay.com/2022/04/sri-lanka-grapples-with-the-problem-of-its-fishers-plundering-waters-abroad/>

"Sri Lankan fishermen, often from Beruwala, engage in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the waters of other countries and territories in the Indian Ocean. IUU fishing, as it's known, is thought to account for about 20% of the world's total fish catch, undermining efforts for sustainable fishing.

While the massive, distant-water industrial fleets like those of China and South Korea have come to epitomize IUU fishing, in Sri Lanka the practice largely the domain of traditional fishers. These fishers have from historical times engaged in what's known as "island job," or dupath rassawa in the Sinhala language — fishing in the shallow coastal waters off small islands. And the abundance of such islands throughout the western Indian Ocean — from the British-administered Diego Garcia to Seychelles, Mauritius and the Maldives, to the Myanmar and Bangladesh islets in the Bay of Bengal — gives the fishermen plenty of choice.

According to Sri Lanka's Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR), 121 multi-day fishing boats flying the country's flag were seized in foreign waters from 2019 to 2021. Of these, 31 were seized in the Maldives, 19 in Diego Garcia, 10 in Seychelles, four in Bangladesh, and three in Myanmar. Fifty-four vessels were apprehended in Indian waters.

In 2014, the European Union cited IUU fishing practices as the main reason for imposing a ban on imports of fish from Sri Lanka. This had a crippling effect on the island's seafood industry and associated livelihoods. The EU lifted the ban in 2016 after the Sri Lankan government initiated steps to curb IUU fishing, including imposing a vessel monitoring system (VMS) on multi-day boats that sail beyond Sri Lankan waters.

Sri Lanka has about 4,200 registered multi-day fishing boats, of which around 1,500 operate in international waters and all fitted with VMS equipment for easy vessel tracking. These high-seas

vessels are all licensed to fish in international waters, but not in the waters of other jurisdictions — typically defined as within 200 nautical miles (370 km) of those countries' coast.

The Sri Lankan government has also prepared and implemented a national plan of action, in line with the FAO's international plan of action, to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing."

Sri Lanka hikes tax on fish imports

<https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-hikes-tax-on-fish-imports-55239/>

"Sri Lanka has hiked a tax on imported fish to 150 rupees a kilogram from 100 rupees or 10 percent of the value, the finance ministry said. The tax has been hiked to 'help domestic fishermen,' the finance ministry said.

Sri Lanka has high import duties on many industries including agriculture, which has led to of inefficient production processes which are not export competitive. Sri Lanka is facing revenue shortfall in 2020, after value added tax was suddenly cut. Since many people do not have refrigerators, imported tinned fish is a popular food among the less affluent and construction workers.

Sri Lanka Navy extends relief to community affected by cyclonic storm 'Burevi'

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20B/Dec05_1607189364CH.php

"The Sri Lanka Navy is rendering assistance in providing relief to the people in the North and North Central Provinces affected by Cyclone Burevi which entered the country from the North East on the 02nd December. On December 3, the Northern Naval Command Disaster Management Team evacuated 50 families affected by the floods on Punguduthivu Island due to heavy rains caused by Cyclone Burevi.

Responding promptly to this urgent situation, disaster relief teams of Northern Naval Command relocated the 50 distressed families from the island in four safe locations on 03rd December. Further, affected communities were also provided cooked-meals, dry ration, sanitary and medical facilities by the Navy, adhering to COVID -19 preventive guidelines.

Moreover, the North Central Naval Command Friday rendered assistance to distribute aid made available by Kilinochchi Divisional Secretariat and Kilinochchi Disaster Management Centre to 86 fishermen and their family members stranded on the Iranativu Island as a result of the cyclone.

Meanwhile, 04 Navy relief teams in Anuradhapura and 04 more relief teams at Sri Lanka Naval Ship (SLNS) Pussadewa in Vankalai, Mannar and SLNS Pandukabaya in Punewa have been kept

on standby to respond to possible future developments. Apart from that, the Navy, in collaboration with the Disaster Management Centre, is constantly on the lookout for relief efforts in the event of any eventuality.

Sri Lanka X-Press Pearl disaster: Fundamental Rights petition filed seeking compensation for fishermen

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/06/24/local/252357/x-press-pearl-disaster-fr-filed-seeking-compensation-fishermen>

"Rev. Fr. Sarath Iddamalgodha and two fishermen yesterday filed a Fundamental Rights petition in the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka seeking an order directing the authorities to award Rs. 500,000 per each fisherman severely affected by the X-Press Pearl disaster. The petitioners had cited Minister of Environment Mahinda Amaraweera, Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda, Minister of Ports and Shipping Rohitha Abeygunawardena, chairman of Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Marine Environment Protection Authority, X-Press Feeders Company represented by Its Local Agent Sea Consortium Lanka (Pvt) Ltd and several others as respondents.

This petition had been filed through Attorney-at-Law Manjula Balasooriya. The petitioners state that the X-Press Pearl Vessel was on its way from Indian port of Hazira to Singapore transporting 1,486 containers. The vessel's cargo comprised of 25 tonnes of hazardous Nitric Acid, Caustic Soda, Sodium Methylate, Plastic, Lead Ingots, Lubricant Oil, Quick Lime and Highly Reactive and Inflammable Chemicals such as Sodium Methoxide, High Density Polyethylene, Low Density Polyethylene, Vinyl Acetate, Methanol, Bright Yellow Sulphur, Urea, Cosmetics etc.

This entire consignment consists of 46 different types of chemicals which are categorized as extremely dangerous goods under the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code. This ship also contained 300 tonnes of Bunker Oil as well. The petitioners stated that the fishermen living in Negombo who are largely engaged in fisheries activities are thus severely affected by the contamination of sea areas and loss of fishing grounds due to the acts as well as omissions of the respondents.

The Petitioners state that there are 15 fisheries districts around the marine area of Sri Lanka. In the Western Province, fisheries activities are mainly focused on the areas of Negombo, Wellavidiya, Kudapaduwa, Panadura and Kalutara. Nearly 6,000 fishermen and families live along the Ussetakeiyawa to Negombo coastal stretch and about 2,000 boats go fishing in the ocean on a daily basis. Around 7,753 fishing families have directly lost their total income as a consequence of the shipwreck while another 2,130 families who were employed in other fisheries related activities such as drying fish and fish netting have also lost their income.

The Petitioners further state that their livelihood is threatened due to this environmental restriction imposed by the Government as they upkeep their lives owing to their daily wages as fishermen who go to sea daily. Thus as a result of this they were unable to carry out their everyday fishing activities for nearly a fortnight. The petitioners fear that they will likely suffer this for years to come. The petitioners are seeking a declaration that the respondents have violated the Fundamental Rights guaranteed under Article 12(1) and 14(1) (g) of the Constitution.

Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh and Myanmar: Towards an integrated ‘blue economy’ framework in the Bay of Bengal

<https://www.orfonline.org/research/towards-an-integrated-blue-economy-framework-in-the-bay-of-bengal/>

"The Blue Economy (BE) is a resonant theme among Bay of Bengal states. Despite recent efforts by governments in the region to promote blue growth, however, there is yet no comprehensive, region-wide agenda for marine governance. This brief looks at ways in which Bay states can harmonise their BE approaches to develop an integrated strategy. By collectively investing in technology, innovation, and governance systems, the governments of these littoral states can find the balance between the need for environmental sustainability and the pursuit of development imperatives.

In recent years, ‘Blue Economy’ (BE) has emerged as a new paradigm for coastal management and development of marine resources. The concept, based on the idea of a healthy ocean supporting productive and sustainable ecosystems, is bringing about an integration of ocean activities with the principles of social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and innovative, dynamic business models.

BE's central proposition is that the ecological health and productivity of marine and coastal ecosystems can be increased by shifting to a more sustainable economic model that taps their national potential – from generating renewable energy and promoting ecotourism, to sustainable fisheries and transport. The idea involves a transition from a conventional economy to a ‘Blue’ or sustainable economy in the marine space involving significant investment. While promising, however, BE has risks and challenges.

In the Indian Ocean Region, enthusiasm for BE has been palpable. At the third ministerial conference of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in Dhaka in 2019, participants unanimously called for sustainable use of the blue economy resources. The Dhaka Declaration included ideas, principles and norms of BE, to ensure a balanced approach between conservation and development emphasising food and nutrition security, mitigation and adaptation of climate change, and generation of sustainable and inclusive livelihoods.

Similarly, BE cooperation has been a focal point of interest for the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the high-level multilateral grouping of states in the region. At the 4th ministerial summit in Kathmandu in September 2018, BIMSTEC leaders agreed to establish an Inter-governmental Expert Group to develop an action plan on BE, keeping in mind the particular needs and circumstances of individual member states. Regional capitals have stressed the need for sustainable practices in harvesting the resources of the sea, flagging the potential risks of rampant exploitation of marine wealth.

Sri Lanka: Gazette issued removing MRP on dhal and canned fish

<https://menafn.com/1100108383/Sri-Lanka-Gazette-issued-removing-MRP-on-dhal-and-canned-fish>

"A Gazette notification has been issued removing the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) on mysore dhal and canned fish. The Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) had issued a Gazette notification on 17 March setting an MRP of Rs 65 for 1 kg of mysore dhal and Rs. 100 for a 400 g canned fish. The CAA has decided to remove the existing MRP on mysore dhal and canned fish via the new Gazette notification which comes into effect from 30 April.

Sri Lanka: 150 Acres of land subjected to coastal erosion in Ampara

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2020/01/25/150-acres-of-land-subjected-to-coastal-erosion-in-ampara/>

"Rampant erosion in the Oluvil seashore has severely affected residents in Ampara. Students of the South Eastern University and residents of the Palamunai, Addalaichenai staged a protest demanding solutions. Over 150 acres of land were subjected to this coastal erosion. Residents charge that around thirty thousand coconut trees have been washed to the sea.

Palamunai Area was turned into a Fisheries Harbor in 2008. Locals allege that environmental destruction took over right after at the Oluvil seashore. Many lands including 30 acres of South Eastern University have been destroyed due to this. Fishing boats and equipment of fishermen have been damaged paralyzing the fishing industry in the area.

Due to the intrusion of seawater in the coastal belt of these areas, fishermen cannot take their fishing boats to the shore. Locals and university students request the authorities to take immediate action in this regard.

Sri Lanka: 2021 record-breaking year for fisheries sector

<https://www.newswire.lk/2022/01/27/2021-record-breaking-year-for-sl-fisheries-sector-8-highlights/>

"The Ministry of Fisheries has reported 2021 as a record-breaking year for the Sri Lankan Fisheries Sector. In a statement, State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekara said 2021 has been a year of challenges and records for the Sri Lankan Fisheries Sector. The records have been set despite facing the challenges of the Peliyagoda cluster, domestic Covid lockdowns, lockdowns in overseas markets, freight costs tripling, the XPressPearl maritime disaster, and the floods in the Puttalam District.

Following are the records achieved by the Fisheries Sector stakeholders and the officials working together: 1. The highest export value in history – USD 318 Million (USD 215 Million in 2020). 2. The largest balance of fish trade in history – USD 192 Million (USD 23 Million in 2020). 3. The lowest import value and quantity in over a decade – USD 126 Million and 56,176 MT (USD 191 Million and 85,809 MT in 2020). 4. Highest production of shrimp farming in history – Almost double from the previous Highest quantity – 14,415 MT.

5. An increase of 162% in shrimp export value. 6. An increase of 74% in exports value of ornamental fishery – USD 21 Million. 7. More than doubled the domestic canned fish production – Domestic production increased from 90,000 cans per day in 2020 Dec to 220,000 cans per day in Dec 2021. Domestic requirement is about 275,000 cans per day. 8. A decrease of 76.2% in imports of canned fish from 2019 – 2019 canned fish imports were 36,806 MT and 2021 canned fish imports were 8758 MT.

Sri Lanka: A danger zone for sharks and rays

<https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-a-danger-zone-for-sharks-and-rays-45471/>

"An internationally renowned Marine Conservationist is warning that a species of shark found in Sri Lankan waters has disappeared along with other species of shark and ray species which are now considered critically endangered. Conservationist Dr Rima W. Jabado, consultant of the Elasmobranch project made this remark at a seminar conducted by Pigeon Island in partnership with Blue Resources Trust.

"Sawfishes (carpenter sharks) are a critically endangered species with only five species across the world, out of which two species could be found in Sri Lanka, she noted. "Surveys confirm that the two species have now disappeared, she said speaking at 'A shark story: The Future', a lecture series which aims to promote marine conservation and protection. Guitarfish and wedge fishes who are closely related to sawfishes also reported declines in population globally.

"Similar to sharks and rays, Guitarfish and wedge fishes live in coastal areas and are very slow to grow, late to mature and have very small pups, she said. "These fishes are targeted by all the small scale fishermen and are easily caught in nets which classifies them as critically endangered, she added. "Guitarfishes and wedge fishes have extremely valuable fins, with high fin needle content that could fetch up to 1000 US dollars for a kilogram of fin, she said. A shark

fin needle is a tasteless, gelatinous product incorporated with other ingredients to prepare shark fin soup, a delicacy served mainly in China.

Jabado also claimed that the area surrounding India and Sri Lanka is the hotspot of diversity for sharks and ray species and some of the largest fisheries in the world which directly impacting species. Manta and Devil rays (Mobulidae) is a family of ray species which prefers living in the open ocean rather than the ocean floor. Researchers have found that these species too are in danger of extinction owing to overfishing. When caught, the gill plates of manta and devil rays, used by the animal to filter water and get their oxygen, is extracted, dried and crushed to use as a tonic in traditional Chinese medicine.

This is highly in demand in China. Sri Lanka is the largest source in the world for manta and devil ray fisheries. “A recorded 25 per cent of sharks and rays are threatened around the world, Jabado said. “We use the ICUN Red List to conduct regional assessments. So far we have done these assessments for the Mediterranean, the Northwest Indian Ocean including Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives, she added. “We found out that 50 per cent of the populations in this part of the globe is considered threatened.

This is a reason why Sri Lanka is no longer one of the largest capturers, she said. However, Jabado claims that there is light at the end of the tunnel based on proof of many countries' success in their conservation activities targeting the recovery of many species. “We have worked with governments, local NGOs and fishing communities as well because this is not a problem which should be addressed in isolation, Jabado said. India has one of the largest whale shark fisheries in the world in the Gujarat area.

The Indian government banned whale shark fishery in 2001 and has been working closely with fishermen. They have a system in place where if the fishermen catches a whale shark in their net, they have to cut it and release it. The government will then subsidize a replacement for them. Globally there are about 60-70 reported shark and human interactions annually of which only five deaths occur, which is comparatively lower than deaths reported on human interactions with other animals. Often viewed as dangerous animals, sharks Jabado says only retaliate when humans pose a threat to them.

Sri Lanka: A request to inspect tinned fish sans standards

<http://www.hirunews.lk/235612/a-request-to-inspect-tinned-fish-sans-standards>

"Importers have requested that 10 containers of tinned fish which have been revealed not to meet proper standards and have been imported from several countries including Chile so that they could be released by customs. The inspections will be carried out by the Sri Lanka Standards Institution and its Director General Dr. Sidhdhika G. Senaratne said that already 5 samples have been received.

The Sri Lanka Standards Institution has not granted permission for the stock of tinned fish to be released up to now and she said that this stock is not in a condition suitable for human consumption even now. It has been observed that the tins containing the fish have rusted already.

Anyhow, based on the request of the importers, the Deputy Directress Keerthini Suraweera of the Sri Lanka Standards Institution said that the samples of tinned fish are being subject to inspection once again. In response to an inquiry made by the Hiru News Division from Customs Media Spokesman Sunil Jayaratne about this, he said that several containers said to contain tinned fish unsuitable for human consumption from among the 90 containers have already been sent back.

Sri Lanka: Accent on agriculture, irrigation, water supply, plantation, trade, fisheries and land

<https://island.lk/accnt-on-agriculture-irrigation-water-supply-plantation-trade-fisheries-and-land/>

"National Chamber at the outset acknowledge and appreciated the Government efforts to maintain consistency in taxation policy framework commenced last year with introduction of certain tax cuts and relaxations, without resorting to ad-hoc revenue enhancement measures in the midst of extremely difficult times confronted with Covid-19 pandemic on behalf of the membership, business community and general public at large.

We observe the budget proposals deliberated under agriculture, local diary industry, fishery economy, plantation, etc with budgetary allocations under the Ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation, Water Supply, Plantation, Trade, Fisheries and Land, etc together with wide spectrum of tax exemptions extended would auger well for SMEs of the economy where National Chamber having remarkably high level of representation.

National Chamber is cognizant that budgetary framework revolves around the sustainability of local entrepreneurship under "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour while keeping certain import restrictions in order to maintain economic stability of the economy as elaborated under Foreign Trade and National Economy of the budget speech. We sincerely expect that the Government would endeavour to reconnect with global value chain eventually starting with the regional trade collaborations at the appropriate time moving forward.

We are of the view that up-skilling of the technical know-how of the local work force would be of paramount importance in order to improve productivity level and quality of the output of the local entrepreneurs. While appreciating budget proposals directed towards in the areas of technological infrastructure, connect Sri Lanka, techno parks, distance education, and specifically opportunities for vocational education and expansion of university facilities we

stressed that such efforts need to be continued under “Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour vision of the government in order reap the benefits in the medium and long term horizon.

Finally, we are of the view that the successful implementation of the budget proposals of 2021 hinges on the achieving the revenue targets of the government which would be challenging under current prevailing circumstance and expect more light will be shed in this area through deliberations within next few days finally extending the assurance in the minds of rating agencies, investors and foreign financing agencies.

Sri Lanka: After the “worst maritime disaster” in country’s history, 1,680 tons of plastic granules put thousands of families in the country in check

<https://marketresearchtelecast.com/after-the-worst-maritime-disaster-in-sri-lankas-history-1680-tons-of-plastic-granules-put-thousands-of-families-in-the-country-in-check/214554/>

"Since the container ship X-Press Pearl caught fire and sank in the Indian Ocean between May 20 and June 2, the Sri Lankan authorities have not stopped cleaning their beaches of small plastic balls, called ‘tears of siren’. These pre-production plastic granules, as they are formally called, have been extracted from the bodies of some marine animals found dead on the coasts of the island country since then, according to informs The Guardian. While there is no evidence that these lentil-sized particles directly caused the deaths of 470 turtles, 46 dolphins and 8 stranded whales, there are witnesses that they were found on several corpses.

Another consequence is that nearly 20,000 Sri Lankan fishing families they had to stop fishing, due to the presence of the material in their captures. Disaster At the time of the sinking, Sri Lanka were concerned about the 350 tonnes of heavy gasoline that would leak from the ship, recently commissioned at the time, causing an environmental disaster on coral reefs and the fishing industry.

The accident was recognized by the UN as the “worst maritime disaster” From Sri Lanka, however, the most serious impact was caused by the contents of the many containers on deck. Nitric acid, caustic soda and methanol stand out among the chemical products that the ship was carrying and the “most significant” environmental damage, according to the UN, came from the sinking of 87 containers filled with the aforementioned small balls. It is the largest plastic spill in the world, according to the same report.

Approximately 1,680 tons of ‘mermaid tears’ were dumped into the ocean. Billions of these plastic granules are expected to make landfall on many more ends of the Indian Ocean, from Indonesia and Malaysia to Somalia. “The granules themselves are a mixture of chemical substances, they are fossil fuels,” environmentalist Tom Gammage, from the Environmental Research Agency (EIA), explained to the British media. “toxic sponges”.

“Many toxic chemicals,” he said, “which in Sri Lanka’s case are already in the water, are hydrophobic. [repelen el agua], so they accumulate on the surface of microplastics. “ Grave danger According to the expert, these pollutants “can be a million times more concentrated on the surface of the granules than in the water.” And there are also laboratory studies that suggest that “when a fish eats a pellet, some of these contaminants are released.”

The ingestion is due to the fact that birds, fish and other marine animals often mistake the plastic granules for food. Like crude oil, these ‘mermaid tears’ are very persistent pollutants and will continue to circulate in ocean currents and end up on shores for decades. However, most of them nanoparticles are detached, whose dangers are even more serious, as they are the second largest source, by weight, of micro-pollution in the ocean, after tire dust.

Sri Lanka: Allocate Rs.200 million for the development of fisheries farm zones, with infrastructure facilities

<http://www.dailymirror.lk/features/Highlights-of-Budget-2021-and-impact-on-export-sector/185-200232>

"The Export Development Board (EDB) is pleased to see an export-focused budget, which will support strong export growth, led by investment, value addition and maximising our Sri Lankan natural resources. This is a pivotal change in Sri Lanka's growth strategy, which will be led by the exporters.

For the next five years, agri, livestock and fisheries sectors to be income tax free.

Expectation/impact on exports: Increase investments and create business opportunities while focusing on a more dynamic business ecosystem. Simplify the administrative process for the exportation of most sought-after fish and aquatic plants, to develop tissue culture methods, to increase the availability of fish feed and to increase airport and cargo/freight facilities for exports.

Proposal: Allocate Rs.200 million for the development of Fisheries Farm Zones, with infrastructure facilities, in line with the environmental standards in the Batticaloa, Jaffna, Puttlam and Mannar districts, which are suitable for fish production such as prawns, lobster, carp, tilapia and modha. Expectation/impact on exports: Increase in exports of fisheries products.

Boat and shipbuilding: Proposal: Provision of separate docks, dockyard access facilities and long-term credit facilities along with a tax break of seven years for local boat and shipbuilding. Expectation/impact on exports: To promote boat and shipbuilding activities, which have high development prospects, due to the rising demand in the fisheries, tourism and shipping sectors and the high production potential of local manufacturers.

Sri Lanka: Amendments to fisheries laws, vital to develop sector – Trade unions

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2020/08/09/business/amendments-fisheries-laws-vital-develop-sector-%E2%80%93-trade-unions>

"Fisheries trade union representatives, calling for urgent amendments to the laws pertaining to the fisheries sector, expressed displeasure over the exploitation of the country's marine resources by foreign fishing vessels, leaving crumbs for local fishermen who make a salient contribution to the economy. "The legislation governing the fisheries sector of the country serves the interests of foreign entities exploiting the seas within our boundaries, All Ceylon Fisher-folk Trade Union President Aruna Roshantha Fernando said.

The Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act No. 2 of 1996 was limited to Sri Lankan waters. This provided the legal basis for the management, conservation regulation and development of the fisheries and aquatic resources of Sri Lanka. This legislation was strengthened by a series of regulations framed under the same Act. Fisheries sector association representatives said that foremost there is no proper definition as to who is a fishermen and who belongs to the sector.

"A recent Cabinet paper stated that the fisheries sector will be developed through help which will be provided to uplift the prawn farming sector. This sector is different to the fisheries sector which is a larger segment comprising marine and inland fishing, Fernando said, adding that fishing is not something that any Tom, Dick and Harry could do. Fisheries trade union and association heads said discussions to develop the sector should be had with local fisherfolk and not with foreign companies which are making the maximum use of the fisheries harbours across the country.

On upgrading technology, Fernando said that technology should be improved gradually and in a way that will not harm the environment and marine life. The fisheries associations want fuel prices slashed or at least maintained at the current level instead of being increased which is not fair when global oil prices are down.

Fisherfolk across the country have been in a precarious state during the past five months as sales dropped sharply due to the lock down depriving them of a steady income to keep the home fires burning. Fishermen were confined to their homes as prices dropped drastically due to the sharp decline in demand by over 70 percent. The lifting of the curfew and the country being brought back to normalcy has enabled resumption of fisheries activities, but the staggering cost of living including fuel prices have burdened the community.

Associations have been harping on the need for measures to eliminate the exploitation by middlemen and those in the supply chain. The fisheries sector comprises over 300,000 direct and another 200,000 indirect beneficiaries contributing around 1.5 per cent to the GDP. Sri Lanka has exclusive fishing and economic rights for an ocean area of 500,000 square kilometres and a coastal line of 1,700 km in addition to inland water bodies, which makes fishery one of the

promising industries in the country.

Sri Lanka: Assessing damage of environmental disasters

<https://island.lk/assessing-damage-of-environmental-disasters/>

"While Sri Lanka is grappling with wars on many fronts, people are reminded daily of the environmental disaster caused by the sinking of the X-Press Pearl vessel. The scenes of beaching of massive dead turtles, tons of toxic pollutants getting washed ashore, are all ominous signs of a silent killer. These are all precursors to the environmental desecration that is happening out in the deep sea away from human gaze.

However, these visceral feelings of despair need to be replaced by realistic expectations on how this can be put right. This invariably leads to the question how to assess the damage that has been caused. Damage itself has no intrinsic cost. The cost comes only in the way of loss of value to humans. Therefore, it is essential that all losses are identified, and appropriate methods are used to value or cost them.

Framework for Assessing the Damage: Unless the government puts forward a compelling case, it is likely to come out short-changed from negotiations with the shipping company. Therefore, it is essential that damages are assessed using internationally accepted methods. Herein lies the difficulty of valuation of environmental goods and services. What is the value of a turtle or a dolphin? They are not bought or sold in markets. Value that we place on the environment is essentially human centric.

A resource is valuable only as much as humans are willing to pay for it or how much they are willing to accept for its loss. If it can be replaced, then the cost of replacement to the original level is the value. There is a repertoire of methods that can be applied to capture all types of economic values of the environment.

Clean up costs: Cleaning up of the pollutant prevents further damage. Therefore, clean-up expenses is the minimum cost of any further damage that would have occurred if it had not taken place. For example, Exxon spent over US\$2 billion to clean-up the Alaskan coast after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989. This implies that if the clean-up was not done, Exxon would have anticipated at least that much more in further damage payments. Sri Lankan government should have closed all affected beaches and done a professional cleaning process immediately after the disaster.

This would have given a much more solid case to recover clean-up costs from the polluter. Due to lack of protocol, there was no organised cleaning and it is unlikely that the government would be able to present valid cost estimates. Further, due uncontrolled access to polluted beaches, pollutants are likely to have been unwittingly transported all over the island, which is still

happening. There are lessons to be learned here on how the country should be prepared and act when the next such disaster strikes, which may be just around the corner.

Damage Assessment: While clean-up only prevents future damage and loss of value, damage that has already been caused needs to be properly identified, quantified and cost. There are several immediately obvious losses, including loss of wildlife, loss of livelihood of fisherfolk, reduced fish catch and loss of tourism revenue. There may be other damages that are not as obvious, nevertheless, very real, such as damage to the seabed, that would cause enduring losses to wildlife and commercial fisheries. Health risk to those who were exposed to various pollutants is another cost.

These may need more expert investigation and assessment. What is important is no final agreement is reached until a comprehensive analysis is done. **Replacement Costs** This method is used when the damaged resource can be replaced. For example, for each sea otter rescued, Exxon paid US\$40,000 to US\$90,000 for rehabilitation. Further, US\$32 million was paid to replace the reported 2,800 sea otters that were lost. The total cost of replacing just four species including seals, eagles and sea birds was about US\$113 million. Clearly, this depends on whether the lost resources can be replaced.

This method could be used to value numerous turtles that have been killed. But first it is essential to establish how many turtle deaths can be attributed exclusively to this disaster over and above what could have occurred naturally. This requires careful scientific proof and not facetious comments by dim-witted politicians. Not only such conjectures are imprudent but also harmful. They could be picked up by the offending parties to put forward a case against just compensation.

If the replacement cost of a sea otter was about US\$47,000 over 30 years ago, one could expect the cost of replacing a turtle, a creature that is much harder to replace, would be much higher. Even with a conservative estimate of US\$50,000 per turtle, then for the 140 or so turtles that were reported to have been killed, compensation would be around US\$7 million. Further, as most were mature adults, their loss would have a significant impact on the breeding stock of this extremely critical species.

This could cause a permanent reduction in the turtle population. Then there is the cost of rehabilitating turtles and other animals that were rescued. Those who are working on damage assessment need to do some investigation to understand how replacement and rehabilitation costs have been calculated in previous similar cases. As these are already established and accepted by such institutions as the Department of the Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association of the USA, these methodologies have a solid pedigree.

Loss of direct values: These are the losses incurred by all those who based their livelihood on the coastal environment that is now polluted. These are not only the loss of profits of fisherfolk, but losses to all those who are involved in the distribution chain. This is because fish caught generate

value at each point they change hands and generate economic rent to someone. In fact, if there is any increase in market prices that causes loss of economic welfare to the final consumer, it is also a direct economic loss. Further, not just a one-time loss, but a stream of future losses until such time that fish stock recovers to pre-disaster level.

Loss of recreational value-tourism: Loss of value from tourism is hard to measure because even if these beaches become unavailable, there will be other substitute beaches that the tourists could go to. However, there are again accepted methods that could put value on a specific beach or a recreational area when individuals have a choice of similar sites. It would be good to have such studies done when the country returns to normal. So that when the next disaster hits, either man-made or natural, the country would be able to accurately estimate economic losses.

While in the current environment, there may not be a strong case for losses from international tourism, there may be a case for loss of value for domestic recreational use. The value of these beaches for those living in the vicinity or within easy commuting distance could be high, especially during these times of travel restrictions. There are well established internationally accepted methods that can be used. While they require extensive data and technical expertise, they have also been successfully applied when data and technical resources are limited.

Loss of non-use values: Demise of numerous and often valuable sea creatures, pollution of pristine beaches and real or perceived long lasting adverse environmental effects human welfare. What is important is one does not have to be directly affected to experience this loss. Hence it is applicable to all Sri Lankans. It is conceivable that even those who may never visit the affected area or see a turtle at a beach or at sea, is 'worse-off' after this disaster.

While this value is not related to any use, it is nevertheless real. Such values are globally acknowledged and known as 'non-use' values. In the case of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, these non-use values were estimated at US\$2.8 billion to all US households. Over 30 years ago, the non-use value for each US household was estimated to be about US\$ 31. Thirty years later and considering the income differences of the two countries, if one put it at a measly US\$5 per household in Sri Lanka, for the 5 million or so households, non-use value would be around US\$25 million.

Further, turtles are a global resource, which is valued by the global population as a critically endangered species. Therefore, theoretically this value could be even extended to the global population. This is by no means a theoretical concept. Robust methods, perfect over the years, exist to capture non-use value. This is palpable by the fact that the Exxon Valdez incident led to the US Oil Pollution Control Act of 1990, which held companies responsible for non-use value in the case of future oil spills.

This legislation from the major economic power provides a compelling backdrop for Sri Lanka to add non-use values to the mix of economic losses when seeking compensation. If all different components of the total economic value are added-up, it is likely that the total would far exceed

the interim compensation of US\$40 million that has been claimed. Because there are so many precedents from all over the world, Sri Lanka does not need to reinvent the wheel. The government could easily draw upon the plethora of literature that is available on this subject and seek advice and help from experts. However, it is better that the country finds homegrown expertise, without being dependent on foreign consultants.

Way forward: The government is well advised to refrain from reaching an immediate settlement in the interest of making a few quick dollars. Although a few million may look extremely attractive to a cash strapped economy, any immediate compensation should be accepted as interim payments until a proper and comprehensive economic valuation is done. There is no hurry to come up with a settlement. In all previous cases it has taken years to properly assess damage and value.

What is important is that it is done to internationally accepted standards so that there is little room for dispute. It is more than likely that the polluter, presented with compelling evidence, will agree to out of court settlements to avoid bad publicity and punitive damages. Policy making process in Sri Lanka is generally reactive. When a crisis happens, a policy is hastily conjured as a temporary solution. This invariably falls by the wayside due to lack of planning or commitment from stakeholders.

It is imperative that a highly trained, numerate and technical team of analysts are put together as a permanent task force to take leadership in situations such as these. They should comprise professionals from all relevant disciplines who are willing to work together as a team for the common good. There is no doubt that the country has many adroit young professionals who could fill these roles. This is clear from the comments expressed through different media. However, this itself is the problem.

There is no value to opinions unless they can be translated to real outcomes. Further, most appear to contradict each other and, in some cases, politically aligned. This not only effete their professional conduct, but also provide ample reasons for offending parties against any settlement. What is needed is not a scattered bunch of individuals who are on personal ego trips, or trying to impress with affectation, but a carefully put together team of fastidious individuals, who are willing to work together and produce high-quality, internationally accepted outputs.

Sri Lanka: Banks on the ocean to chart a green path toward a blue economy

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/06/sri-lanka-banks-on-the-ocean-to-chart-a-green-path-toward-a-blue-economy/>

"Authorities in Sri Lanka have called for a renewed focus on conserving the island's rich coastal ecosystems, identifying the "blue economy" as key to the nation's sustainable development. The Indian Ocean island has a coastline of 1,340 kilometers (833 miles), territorial waters spanning

21,500 square kilometers (8,300 square miles), and an exclusive economic zone of 517,000 km² (200,000 mi²), almost eight times its land area. Its coastal zone is home to most of the urban population and infrastructure as well as to bountiful ecosystems that include mangrove forests, tidal marshes, seagrass beds, and coral reefs.

However, large swaths of these ecosystems have been lost or degraded over recent decades, leaving many parts of the coastal belt exposed. “Even though we are blessed with our geographical location and with our pristine and highly biodiverse coastal and marine environment, our coastal and marine environments are under immense pressure,” Darshani Lahandapura, chair of Sri Lanka’s Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), told an annual research symposium on the marine environment in May.

“While much attention is focused on the problems facing the ocean, the ocean is also the source of potential solutions and innovations. “Ocean-based climate actions such as ocean-based renewable energy, ocean-based transportation, coastal and marine ecosystems, fisheries and aquaculture, and carbon storage in the seabed have the potential to close the emission gap and mitigate climate change impacts,” Lahandapura added. “Sustainably developing oceans and economic growth for development while maintaining ocean health can define a new era of opportunities for ocean-facing countries.”

The concept of the “blue economy” promotes inclusive economic growth and livelihood development that also ensures the environmental sustainability of oceans and coastal areas. UNESCO defines it as “the decoupling of socioeconomic development through oceans-related sectors and activities from environmental and ecosystems degradation.” Pathways toward a blue economy: A blue economy can include renewable energy, fisheries, maritime transport, tourism, waste management, and other sectors connected to the coastal and marine environment, according to Ruchira Cumaratunga, a senior professor at the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture of the University of Ruhuna.

“There are many sustainable socioeconomic development programs that could be carried out in Sri Lanka without harming or with the least impact to the natural vegetation,” Cumaratunga told Mongabay. “They are possible and economically feasible, but when preparing such development programs, suitable experts on coastal environment and vegetation should be consulted.” Sri Lanka isn’t short of ocean-related knowledge and expertise. But this expertise needs to be actively utilized and integrated into planning and implementation processes, Cumaratunga said.

Enhancing livelihoods that use coastal and marine resources in a sustainable and holistic way is often made difficult by gaps in awareness, knowledge, institutional coordination, and cross-sectoral collaboration, he added. Boosting sustainability and economic growth in the coastal belt without harming the environment can improve existing livelihoods, for example by optimizing supply chains, introducing value addition, or reducing post-harvest losses in fisheries. “With

respect to fishery waste in Sri Lanka, it is discarded haphazardly without considering that it is a valuable resource, causing serious environmental impacts,” Cumaranatunga said.

Every year, 50-60% of Sri Lanka’s fish harvest is discarded as trash fish or fishery waste and dumped into lagoons, estuaries, or the sea. However, if collected, fish waste could be converted to valuable products, for example animal feed, fertilizer, fish oil, fish-skin leather, collagen and gelatine, chitin and chitosan from crab shells and shrimp waste, or natural calcium from shellfish. Experts have long identified many opportunities to create additional livelihoods in Sri Lanka’s coastal and marine sector without destroying local ecosystems, for example through seaweed farming, which is currently only done on a small scale without value addition; coral reef transplanting to create artificial reefs; captive breeding to replenish fish populations; mariculture; or even building an underwater observatory for tourism and educational purposes.

The tourism sector itself provides many opportunities for sustainable development within the blue economy and would greatly benefit from healthy ecosystems, proponents say. “In Sri Lanka, when buildings are put up, the coastal vegetation is removed to get a better view of the ocean without thinking of its functions,” Cumaranatunga said. “If the coastal vegetation is kept as nature tracks for people to walk through and still get to the beach while enjoying the beauty of coastal natural ecosystems, it would also help to protect the coastline and act as a barrier against coastal erosion.

This kind of development will give long-term benefits while helping sustainable socio-economic development.” When restoration programs have been launched for already disturbed coastal ecosystems, the natural flora and fauna of these areas should be taken into consideration to prevent introduction of alien or invasive species, experts say. For example, when replanting mangroves, the natural diversity and density should be taken into consideration, for which aerial photographs and even Google images prior to destruction could be used. Vulnerable coastal communities that often depend on a few key livelihoods, such as fisheries or tourism, would also benefit under a blue economy, proponents say.

Climate-related impacts and other shocks can severely affect these livelihoods and push people into poverty, and if coastal ecosystems are degraded and lost, this will reduce fish populations and tourism potential as well. But thriving ecosystems would help mitigate these impacts while also providing a wide range of other goods and services, for example protection against floods, reduction of coastal erosion, and greater carbon sequestration — with mangroves and other blue carbon ecosystems being among the most efficient ecosystems in the world for climate change mitigation.

National and global alignments: Already, the shift toward a blue economy is enshrined in Sri Lanka’s national policy framework, “Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour,” which commits to “sustainable ocean resource management for a blue-green economy.” Other key policies and commitments include Sri Lanka’s nationally determined contributions under the Paris

Agreement; the national adaptation plan for climate change impacts; and the national policy on conservation and sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems in Sri Lanka.

Within the global context, Sri Lanka's efforts to move toward a blue economy align directly with the Sustainable Development Goals; the U.N. Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030; and the U.N. Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030. Sri Lanka is also the chair of the Mangrove Ecosystems and Livelihood Action Group under the Commonwealth Blue Charter and a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, which has a priority focus area on the blue economy as well as a "blue carbon hub."

Its position as an island surrounded by the natural wealth of the Indian Ocean gives Sri Lanka enormous potential to invest in its blue economy, experts say. But they note this will require the sustainable and integrated management of coastal and marine spaces, inclusion of ecosystems into planning processes, consultation of technical experts, and a legal regime that facilitates these processes.

Awareness creation and training are crucial, as is further research focused on practical application and the improvement of livelihoods, covering topics such as marine ecology, blue carbon, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, ecotourism, circular economy, renewable energy, control and treatment of land-based waste and pollution, and perceptions and risk notions among coastal populations.

Between the impacts of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need for sustainable development, coastal and marine ecosystem conservation can unlock many synergies for Sri Lanka's blue economy, proponents say. Conservation and development do not have to be at odds, they argue: they can be mutually beneficial, support livelihoods, and address the causes and impacts of climate change.

Sri Lanka: Better regulation needed to prevent marine disasters

<https://mediaindia.eu/environment/better-regulation-needed-to-prevent-marine-disasters/>

"After two weeks of on-board fire, the Singapore-registered container ship X-Press Pearl split into two earlier this month and sank just off the coast of Sri Lanka, while the other half followed suit soon afterwards. The cargo ship was carrying 1,486 containers, including 23 tonnes of nitric acid, a highly corrosive and inflammable chemical. Even before the ship had begun to sink, dozens of containers fell off into the sea, spilling their contents. Within hours, the coastal area of Sri Lanka close to the site of the disaster was covered with millions of microgranules of plastics as well as other toxic material.

The ship also carried hundreds of tonnes of fuel oil that spilled in the sea, threatening marine life in one of the richest parts of the Indian Ocean, besides ruining some of the most pristine beaches of the country that is often referred to as the Emerald Island. Sure enough, within days over 100

carcasses of turtles with throat and shell damage, as well as a dozen of dead dolphins and a blue whale, washed ashore. Anil Jasinghe, secretary of the environment ministry, told media that the animals died due to burns and also due to chemicals.

Activists say that the actual number of marine animals that died due to the disaster could be several times more. Experts warned that Sri Lanka may have mildly acidic rains due to the disaster and also banned fishing in the area, impacting nearly 6000 fishing vessels. Recurring mishaps X-Press Pearl was just one of dozens of very serious shipping disasters that have occurred around the globe since the Exxon Valdez incident in 1989 which ran aground in Alaska, spilling millions of gallons of oil that contaminated over 2000 km of Alaskan coastline and caused the death of thousands of birds, fish and other animals.

Reports suggest that almost 30 years later, despite a huge cleanup effort, traces of oil can still be found in Alaska. Exxon Valdez was as severe a warning as possible to deliver to the world that it needed to be more cautious and protective of its seas. But it seems to have been duly ignored as the last 30 years have seen hundreds of marine accidents, including some matching or even exceeding the damage caused by Valdez, leaving deep impact on the marine life across the world, even as the oceans battled the toxic effects of climate change and global warming that have exacerbated every succeeding year.

Just last year has seen over a dozen major shipping disasters in places as distant as Brazil and Mauritius. In July last year, a Japanese bulk carrier MV Wakashio ran aground on a coral reef near Mauritius and within days spilled over 1,000 tonnes of fuel oil in the sea, leading to the worst-ever disaster to hit the pristine waters and beaches of the Indian Ocean island. Growth without responsibility: With sharp rise in global trade over the past 30 years, shipping industry has increased multifold in size, both individual ships as well as the number of ships afloat around the world.

This poses a twin set of problems for the world, both with serious impact on pollution and climate change. While the modern ships may have better safety standards, but their sheer size means that the impact of even a single accident is several times more than the ships of smaller sizes, carrying the same cargo. One recent example of what the super-large sizes can mean to the environment or the seas is from the obstruction of Suez Canal by Ever Given, one of the largest container ships in the world. It remained blocked in the world's busiest canal for nearly 10 days, leading to severe disruptions in the trade.

Fortunately, it did not directly cause any pollution, but it gave a foretaste of how inadequately prepared the world and its ports are to handle super-sized ships, economical as they may be for shipping companies. Even when the ships don't meet with any mishap, they cause pollution, and a lot of it. First and foremost is carbon footprint of the shipping industry due to use of fossil fuels. Shipping industry contributes to over 3 pc of the global carbon dioxide emissions every

year, almost the contribution of major carbon-emitting countries and this footprint has been growing, despite calls to curb them and several commitments by the industry to do so.

In fact, if global shipping were a country, it would be the sixth largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions. Only the United States, China, Russia, India and Japan emit more carbon dioxide than this industry. Despite this, the emissions remain unregulated, with no curbs being imposed by any governments. Besides carbon, the shipping industry also releases tonnes of sulphur in the air, which is the primary cause of acid rain. Shipping fleets should implement technical and operational measures to reduce global warming pollution immediately.

Such measures include speed reductions, weather routing, fuel switching and specialised hull coatings. The IMO calculated that a speed reduction of just 10 pc across the global fleet would result in a 23.3 pc reduction in emissions. Hapag-Lloyd found that slowing some of their ships by just five knots, or 20 pc, resulted in savings of around 50 pc on fuel costs. Restrictions on vessel speed would reduce emissions of carbon dioxide, black carbon, nitrogen oxides, and nitrous oxide. They also need to review the design of ships and the materials used in order to cut their fuel consumption.

They also need to invest in research and development to come up with options of cleaner fuels or cleaner ways of powering ships. Of total global air emissions, shipping accounts for 18-30 pc of nitrogen oxide and 9 pc of sulphur oxides. Another source of pollution is wastewater dumped by cruise liners. According to some studies, cruise liners dump about 970 m³ of greywater, from showers, laundry and cleaning activities, and 110 m³ of blackwater, mainly from sewage, that contains bacteria and viruses which are often fatal for marine life.

A large cruise ship of 3,000 passengers and crew generates an estimated 55,000 to 110,000 litres per day of blackwater waste. Estimates of greywater range from 110 to 320 litres per day per person, or 330,000 to 960,000 litres per day for the 3,000-person cruise ship. Another hazardous product released by ships is bilge water or water from engines that is mixed with oil. A typically large cruise ship will generate an average of 8 metric tonnes of oily bilge water for each 24 hours of operation.

Though there are processes and norms for filtration before release of bilge oil into the open seas, more often than not these are blatantly violated, leading to large-scale pollution. The shipping industry has so far gotten away with polluting, only because the governments have failed to act. With limited time left, if at all any, to cut down the pace of global warming and to keep the rise in global temperatures to even below 2.5°C from the pre-industrial era, shipping industry needs to be reined in, and immediately.

Sri Lanka: Boat industry seeks opportunities in Southern Africa

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2021/10/03/business/sl-boat-industry-seeks-opportunities-southern-africa>

"The Sri Lanka High Commission in Pretoria in collaboration with the State Ministry of Warehouse Facilities, Container Yards, Port Supply Facilities, Boats, and Shipping Industry Development, organised a webinar recently to identify business opportunities for the Sri Lanka boat industry, paying special attention to the fisheries sectors of Mozambique and Namibia. The focus of the webinar was on fish-producing markets in this region which give lucrative opportunities for the international business community.

A considerable amount of fisheries products of Mozambique and Namibia are exported to the European and Asian markets. Sri Lanka High Commissioner Amarasekara outlined the opportunities available in these two markets and the movement of the international investment grants to the fishing industry focusing on community development. The competition comes from Spain, China, and Japan since they have already established their fishing businesses in this region. The unsaturated harvesting capacity of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans encourages new investments/ businesses to enter these markets.

Small and medium level entrepreneurs of the above two countries may be encouraged to venture into the fishing industry by introducing vessels of appropriate size and designs, for which, Sri Lankan boat manufacturing companies have the capacity. State Secretary Dammika Mataraarachchi outlined the necessity of penetrating this market by advanced business models going beyond the traditional export business and promoting the high calibre boating technology similar to the European and Japanese industries.

High Commissioner Amarasekara agreed to discuss with the authorities of the two countries to seek opportunities for Sri Lankan boat manufacturers. State Secretary Mataraarachchi agreed to play the facilitating role for the Sri Lanka side. Representing the industry, Kapila Sumanapala of Neil Marine, Z.M. Hairu of Hairu Naval Craft Engineering, Sumithra Fernando and Sachitra Fernando of Dhanusha Marine, D.V. Abeysinghe – Colombo Dockyard, Indra Rajapaksha – BAFF Polymech participated. The Commercial Section of the Mission organised the event.

Sri Lanka: Budget 2021 –Govt proposes to increase freshwater fish production to 250,000 metric tons

<https://www.lankabusinessonline.com/sri-lanka-budget-2021-live-coverage/>

"The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Mahinda Rajapaksa presented the Budget for the Year 2021 to Parliament today. Govt proposes to increase freshwater fish production to 250,000 metric tons by releasing 50 million fingerlings annually to tanks and freshwater reservoirs with an allocation of Rs. 150 million. Govt proposes to establish 5 fully-fledged plug and play Techno Parks in Galle, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Kandy and Batticaloa districts.

A fund allocation Rs.10,000 million to develop these Techno Parks as eco-friendly new cities connected to the expressway network. Earnings from both domestic and foreign sources by those engaged in businesses in Information Technology and enabling services and also their earnings when made while being resident or non-resident will also be exempted from income taxes. Individuals and companies engaged in farming, including agriculture, fisheries and livestock farming will be exempted from taxes in the next 5 years.

Personal Income Tax will apply on earnings from employment, rent, interest, dividends or any other source only if it exceeds Rs.250, 000 per month. Withholding tax on rent, interest or dividends and the PAYE tax (Pay As You Earn) and taxes on interest have been abolished. Retirement age of men and women increased to 60 years. Under current laws men retire at 55 and women 54. Govt proposes to maintain the VAT unchanged at 8 percent, for businesses with a turnover of more than Rs. 25 million per month engaged in the import and manufacture of goods or provision of services, except in the case of banking, financial and insurance sectors.

Banking laws will be amended allowing commercial banks to carry out activities of the investment banks in order to restructure the whole financial system. Financial sector consolidation will be strengthened through mergers. Single use polythene and plastic to be banned from Jan 2021. State Owned Enterprises will not be privatized. Steps will be taken to make them more profitable. Banks and Financial Institutions to be strengthened through special government initiatives.

Govt to allocate Rs. 20,000 million for judicial services, with special focus on expanding the judicial workforce and infrastructure. Companies recycling construction waste will get a 10-year tax break and concessions to import machinery. Govt to simplify approvals, certifications and permits, and improve access to raw materials such as sand and imported inputs for housing will be exempt from import taxes.

Housing in Colombo's suburbs and main cities to be improved – 25 year loan with an interest rate of 6.25 percent to be granted for applicants of these state housing project. Import tax to be reduced on motor vehicle spare parts. Import levies on the motor vehicle industry to be provided tax relief. Dividend tax of foreign companies will be exempted for 3 years if they wish to expand their businesses or investing in the securities market (CSE/SL sovereign bonds). Capital Gains Tax to be simplified. Tax will be charged over the property sales price or government assessor's value, whichever is higher.

Tax consultants, audit firms, etc. who prepare false tax files, returns and statements will be penalized and disqualified from such services. New provisions will be introduced. 70 percent of Sri Lanka's energy supply to be sourced from renewable energy sources by 2023. Three year programme to develop road infrastructure to be carried out in the all 25 districts and railway network including Colombo and Kelani Valley to be expanded, Rs. 1300 million investment.

Repayment and re-financing loan schemes provided by the CBSL to tourism sector extended till Sept 2021. 300 megawatt coal unit and 600 mw LNG power plants to be added to the Lakvijaya power plant. Rs. 150 million allocated for local fisheries development. e-Filing scheme will be mandatory for all companies from 01.04.2021. Tax law will also be amended to use Tax Identification Number (TIN) for paying taxes. Marine drive in Colombo to be extended up to Moratuwa. Estate workers wages to be increased up to Rs. 1000 from January 2021. Sri Lanka to importing milk cows and cultivating cattle feed locally. A loan up to Rs. 500,000 proposed for development of dairy farming.

Govt propose to increase milk production in the country and reduce import costs. Govt to allocates Rs. 1000 million USD 1,000 million for national Sports economy. Also proposes to increase women participation in sport. 8 percent VAT will be maintained for businesses with over Rs25mn monthly business turnover that are involved in goods imports, manufacturing, and services. Youth engaged in technical skills courses can apply for a Rs500,000 loan to set up a business.

Companies that will be listed on the CSE before 31.12.2021 will receive a 50 percent income tax relief and 14 percent income tax for the next 3 years. Companies employing more than 50 to be charged a tax of 0.5 percent of revenue to fund a Covid unemployment insurance scheme. New investment zone to be introduced for local and foreign investors. Allocation of investment of Rs. 15,000 million for Telecom Development Fund between 2020-2022 for mobile and fixed broadband services.

Govt allocates Rs. 8 billion to develop Tech and related industries, with necessary infrastructure and to tighten data protection laws, cybersecurity and IP rights. Remove capital gains taxes and reduce stamp duty to 0.75 percent to encourage expatriates to invest in luxury apartments and homes listed on the Real Estate Investment Trust regulated by the SEC. Retired, injured or deceased military to get 750 million rupee fund for housing, health, education and entrepreneurship.

Several new measures will be introduced for Sri Lankans living abroad to purchase luxury apartments. Income that will be generated through agriculture and fisheries sectors exempted from income tax for next 5 years. New loan scheme for Samurdhi beneficiaries with 7 percent interest. Sri Lanka to introduce a separate common tax for goods and services. This will contribute over 50 percent to the national tax revenue (These include liquor, cigarette, telephone services, betting, vehicles).

Special Court of Appeal to hear public complaints on tax and changes to the Inland Revenue Department to encourage tax auditing are proposed. Sri Lanka to increase social welfare measures to alleviate poverty. 65 percent of foreign loans to be utilized for development initiatives with the exception of technical developments. Sri Lanka's National debt should be reduced to 70 per cent. Sri Lanka will be put on a path of industrialization focusing on

agriculture and services using new technology and moving away from imports.

Sri Lanka: Can the country reduce marine pollution by 2025?

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2021/10/28/can-sri-lanka-reduce-marine-pollution-by-2025/>

"Sri Lanka has faced multiple disasters in its waters over the last few years. This has created questions on whether the government can reduce marine pollution. The Singaporean X-Press Pearl ship sunk in June causing massive damage. Plastic pellets from the ship have washed ashore or ended up inside fishes. Sri Lanka has to reduce marine pollution by 2025. That is part of the Sustainable Development Goals. But experts say pollution is on the rise.

"Waste management is important. There are some rules and regulations. But what we need is proper application at grassroot levels," Prof. Terney Pradeep Kumara, a marine scientist said. 1.6 million plastic items were found within a kilometer on Sri Lanka's coast in 2018. The recent disaster means more trouble. "It's very difficult to say if Sri Lanka can achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Because you will have events which will happen," Charitha Pattiaratchi, a professor of coastal Oceanography at the University of Western Australia said.

Sri Lanka: Canned fish industry eyes exports with government backing

<http://www.dailymirror.lk/business-news/Canned-fish-industry-eyes-exports-with-government-backing/273-189498>

"Encouraged by the recent move to re-impose special commodity levy on canned fish imports, Sri Lanka's canned fish manufactures say that the country could commence exporting canned fish products within two years with the right backing of the government. The Canned Fish Manufacturers Association of Sri Lanka welcomed the recent move by the government to impose a special commodity levy on canned fish imports to the country, although the Association lobbied to reinstate the previously imposed full levy on canned fish imports.

Despite the recent tax hike on canned fish imports, the Canned Fish Manufacturers Association of Sri Lanka President Shiran Fernando assured that local manufactures wouldn't increase prices of canned fish for consumers. The Association has already informed this to Sathosa and the Ministry of Fisheries in writing. Fernando outlined that the benefit of the tax hike over imported canned fish products would ultimately benefit local fishermen.

"We can now pay a higher price for the fish we buy from local fishermen and we can also buy more local fish benefiting local fishermen, he added. He believes that by offering higher prices, the local fishermen would be more encouraged to increase their output and it would also attract

newcomers to the industry, creating a boom. Presently, the local fishing industry employs around 600,000 persons and supports livelihoods of 1.5 million people in the country. He noted that higher prices would encourage more people to engage in fishing activities in particular in the East coast where the industry is still struggling to make a rebound after fishing activities were disrupted by the civil war.

At present, on average 1,000 tinned fish cans are manufactured daily among 5 canning plants working under capacity while the local consumption of canned fish remains around 200,000 cans per day. However, Fernando was optimistic that Sri Lanka not only could become self sufficient in canned fish production, but also potentially export canned fish products, possibly within two years, if the government promotes the local canned fish industry. He pointed out that the government could promote the industry by setting up the much-needed cold storage facilities in key fishing villages across the country.

Meanwhile, Fernando noted that it would likely take several months for local canned fish manufactures to benefit from the taxes on imports as importers have stocked up canned fish products for several months. Sri Lanka's current import bill on canned fish products amounts to around US\$ 65 million per annum. The Association also pointed at numerous health benefits that could be gained by consuming locally manufactured canned fish.

According to health statistics, around 33 percent of the country's population suffer from Anemia, leading to several serious conditions including, dizziness, organ failure, dementia, irritability, tiredness, headache, difficulty in focusing and chest pains. Fernando noted that this was mainly due to the low consumption of protein despite having more than sufficient sources of protein around the island. He opined that by consuming locally produced canned fish the masses could absorb these proteins.

As local producers complete the canning process of fish caught within three days maintaining the freshness and nutritious value of fish in contrast to the imported canned fish products, which remain in refrigerators for months or even for years before canning, he emphasised that nutrients such as Omega 3 and other fish oils can be only found in fresh fish canned locally.

Speaking on the potential of the local canned fish industry, he outlined that while Sri Lanka does not produce even the canned fish to feed its local population, Thailand which has a much smaller sea area (316,000 km²) than Sri Lanka (517,000 km²) is processing 800,000 tons of fish annually, becoming the fourth largest-tuna canned fish exporter in the world.

Sri Lanka: Canned fish producers say undercutting by importers has badly hit the industry

<https://island.lk/sls-canned-fish-producers-say-undercutting-by-importers-has-badly-hit-the-industry/>

"Asserting that importers enjoy a competitive edge in Sri Lanka's canned fish industry, beleaguered local producers called for a level playing field, saying they are "being pushed to the wall due to undercutting. The local manufacturers threw a lifeline to the troubled fisheries industry by procuring 700 metric tons of 'Linna' (Mackerel fish) in the backdrop of the drastic drop in fish consumption following the eruption of the Peliyagoda Covid-19 cluster, but questions are now being raised whether the move was viable as importers are one step ahead in terms of competitive pricing.

"How can Sri Lanka's canned fish industry be developed when importers pay a duty of a negligible twenty five cents per kilo on the consignments they inject into the local market?, asked Kamal Addaraarachchi, a member of the Canned Fish Producers' Association of Sri Lanka. This is ridiculous, he protested, adding that importers are given priority to the detriment of the local industry, which remains largely side-lined and fettered in its ambitious drive to boost the country's economy. With island-wide consumption at 250,000 cans per day, Sri Lanka imports canned fish worth Rs. 14.43 billion (US\$ 78 million) annually.

The products come largely from China, while Chile is also a source for procurement. Though there are seven registered canned fish producing companies in Sri Lanka, only five are in active business, he said. The local demand for canned fish has shot up as most people now avoid consumption of fish following the Peliyagoda corona outbreak. Canned fish is sold between Rs. 260-300 per 425g and small cans at Rs. 130-150. However, with no effective price control mechanism coupled with the disruption in distribution, some traders have cashed in on the existing shortages to make a fast buck, consumers complained.

Unlike local producers, importers have no worries as they pay low duties and maintain a substantial margin so much so they can reduce as much as Rs. 25-50 per 425g can at any time and still make a profit, Addaraarachchi claimed. The government should impose a cess on imported products to encourage local production, he emphasized. He said that when procuring fish locally, there's invariably 35% depreciation in terms of quality and another 15% is rejected due to poor handling.

The fish that's turned down is later sold as dry fish by suppliers, which is an unhealthy practice, he noted. The high rate of rejection is due to non availability of facilities for fishermen to preserve their catch, which is an area that needs priority attention of the authorities to make maximum use of the country's marine resources, he further said. "At times, we import frozen fish from Japan, China and Chile to meet production demands, he continued.

Asked whether the local industry has the capacity to meet the country's annual demand for canned fish, Addaraarachchi outlined that imports should be gradually phased out until producers geared themselves to enhance production capacity. Initially, if a stock of 150,000 cans is imported on a daily basis, this can be trimmed to 100,000 in a process that allows local

production to systematically meet the shortfall. At the end of the day, the country will be saving a substantial volume of foreign exchange, he explained.

“We don't want government subsidies. What we are asking for are adequate bank facilities to build up the industry. Within three months, we will be self-sufficient in canned fish and within a year even have excess stocks for export, he added. Addaraarachchi said the Association discussed their grievances with Trade Minister Bandula Gunawardena, who assured that the issues pertaining to duties (on imports) will be taken up with the Prime Minister and the Finance Ministry.

Sri Lanka: Caught between devil and troubled waters

<https://island.lk/caught-between-devil-and-troubled-waters/>

"MV X-Press Pearl, which sank in the western Sri Lankan coastal waters in late May, led to huge environmental destruction and losses of fishing livelihoods and incomes. The most directly affected party was the fishing community, from Kalutara to Chilaw, following the imposition of the fishing ban on May 21, 2021, which continues to date, keeping fishers away from their productive environment. An initial payment of Rs. 5,000 was paid to fishing-related stakeholder families, while a part-payment is now being made from indemnities paid for the initial claims. Yet, the human suffering is tremendous and this article attempts at highlighting some of these impacts on fishing livelihoods, which cannot be easily compensated by payments, calculated on the basis of lost incomes.

“Things will have to be seen as ‘they are’, not as ‘we are’” (Anais Nin, French Writer). A 186-metre-long container ship, called X-Press Pearl, registered in Singapore, arrived in Colombo on the night of May 19, 2021 carrying 1,486 containers. On May 20, it was reported that the ship caught fire, which was only 9.5 nautical miles (17.6 km; 10.9 miles) away, north-west of the Colombo Port. On May 25, a large explosion occurred inside the vessel, and by late afternoon containers were dropping from the vessel into the sea. The ship sank on June 2, while it was being towed to the deeper seas, after burning for 12 days.

The incident was deemed the worst marine ecological disaster in Sri Lankan history. The ship's cargo included, among others, 12,085 MT of plastics and polymers, 8,252 MT of chemicals and 3,081 MT of metals. Since the time the ship caught fire, ship debris, burnt goods and plastic pellets washed into the shore in large quantities. Dead fish, turtles, whales and dolphins were found along the western coast and plastic pellets were observed trapped in the gills of fish. While such debris was initially noticed in the Negombo coast, other areas from Kalpitiya up to Matara also reported ship debris, dead fish and turtles, indicating wider spread damage.

Impact of oceanic pollution on fisheries: When various kinds of debris washed up on the coastal areas of the Western Province and large numbers of dead fish were found, the Department of

Fisheries decided to ban fishing in the coastal districts of Kalutara and Negombo on May 21, 2021, which continues to date. The major impact area was demarcated as the coastal strip between Wadduwa (FI division) of the Kalutara District to Kochchikade (FI division) of the Negombo coastal district.

Fishing community actors affected by disaster: The coastal fishing fleet of the three districts, that cover the impact area, consists of 51 multiday craft (IMUL), 204 day boats with inboard engines (IDAY), 2,504 FRP boats with outboard motor (OFRP), three Mechanised traditional boats (MTRB), 1,905 Non-mechanised traditional boats (NTRB) and 75 Non-Mechanised Beach Seine boats (NBSB), totalling 4,612 craft. Altogether 12,731 fishers were affected by the ship disaster (both skippers and crew).

Apart from those who are directly involved in fishing, there are large numbers of diverse stakeholders, fish value chain actors, involved in ancillary services and other fishing related activities, who include fish vendors, sellers, dry fish vendors, dry fish producers, ice producers, ice distributors, fibreglass repairers, engine repairers, fuel distributors, net menders, bait producers, vessel cleaners, food suppliers, dry fish sellers on bicycle, beach seine helpers, landing site helpers, divers, women engaged in marketing and fish processing and more. Altogether 3,995 such actors were identified in the HIA, which added up to a total of 16,727 affected persons. Assuming a family size of 3.8 persons (in 2020), the total affected population is estimated as 63,563 (this study).

Shocks and threats: With the enforcement of the fishing ban on May 21, 2021, which prevented fishers from going to the sea, especially because of the mounds of ship debris scattered in the coastal waters posing threats of damage and loss of fishing equipment on the one hand, and the uncertainty of the impact of ship's cargo on fish, on the other, the fishing community suffered several shocks overnight. These included, loss of income, loss of supplementary income (female employment), drop in demand (drop in consumption of fish for fear of contamination), loss of assets (gear), well-being loss and loss of traditional sources of insurance (because the fishing ban affected all [collective shock] no assistance was available within the community).

Covid-19 impact: The ship disaster hit the coastal fishing community of the western coast, at a time when they were suffering from the COVID-19 pandemic. During the first wave of the pandemic, all links in the fish value chain were seriously affected, dismantling almost all of them; fish landings, marketing, distribution and processing. Due to the imposition of curfews, low demand, low prices and disruption of the marketing system, fishing was seriously affected (45 to 65 percent less than normal). The second wave of the pandemic hit the country on October 4, 2020, when COVID-19 cases were reported from a private garment factory (Brandix) at Minuwangoda in the Gampaha District.

Following this cluster, emerged another COVID-19 cluster at the Peliyagoda fish market when 19 cases were reported on October 21, 2020. Many people believed that fish was a Coronavirus

carrier and stopped consuming fish for fear of COVID-19 infection. Consequently, prices came down drastically. Quite alarmingly, before the affected population started to recover, the third wave of COVID-19 hit the country, which rose to prohibitive levels after the Sinhala and Tamil New Year, in late April, with deaths rising to 198 per day (August 20, 2021). While the weak economy and stagnant incomes hit the poorer groups badly, fishing restrictions and poor demand for fish resulted in reduced fishing incomes and livelihood threats to fishers, especially the small-scale fishers who cater to the local market. The X-Press Pearl ship disaster hit the fishing community at a time when they were confronted with the vagaries and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Market impact: Analysis of price behaviour, which took into account average weekly prices in May and beginning of June 2021, revealed a drop in the wholesale prices in the fourth week of May when the impact of the X-Press Pearl disaster was felt. Dead fish and other marine animals washed up on the shore, along with tons of debris, which contained, among other things, huge amounts of plastic pellets. Later, it was made known that the ship's cargo contained certain hazardous chemicals, which caused a significant drop in fish consumption, which further reduced wholesale prices.

Low demand is also a result of loss of employment and income by those self-employed groups. In respect of the retail trade, many retail outlets remained closed and normal distribution (by motorcycle traders, bicycle traders) was also disrupted. Only a few retailers were present to distribute fish. This led to increases in consumer prices of fish. At a time when wholesalers were complaining of low fish prices, consumers were complaining that the price of fish was too high. Communication with officials of the Fish Wholesalers Association at Peliyagoda fish market revealed that nearly 60 percent of the fish, such as skipjack, were sold for dry fish making, due to lack of demand for fresh fish.

Fishing community's response to ship disaster: The fishing ban which was imposed on May 21, 2021 posed severe livelihood threats to the affected families. Nevertheless, a payment of Rs. 5,000 was made, by the government, to affected families, which was the payment made to all those self-employed families hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. This amount was equal to 10 percent of the mean monthly expenditure of an average Sri Lankan household in 2016 (which was Rs. 54,999). Since then a payment has been channelled to fishing communities only once (recently), from monies received from the ships insurance companies (an interim payment of Rs. 720 million), of which about Rs. 400 million has been allocated to fisheries.

Yet, the process has not been completed. The long payment intervals and the smaller size of the payment would have caused mammoth adversities for households striving hard to make the ends meet. Of course the immediate response of the fishing community was to reduce consumption, tightening the belt, which often puts more weight on women fisher folk, who have been traditionally accustomed to shouldering the burden of consumption shortfalls in ensuring that men are kept physically fit to carry out fishing operations.

Nevertheless, food insecurity could be only one of the immediate impacts of the ship disaster, which often leads to nutritional insecurity, which has more injurious impacts on the nutrition of children. A quite painful impact would have been the inability of affected households to pay regular bills (house rent, electricity, water and goods taken on installments). In a study carried out in 2020 by the author, it was revealed that debt repayment obligations of an average fishing household to be around Rs. 20,000 per month (Samudra Report, No. 85).

Of course, such debts will accumulate if a fishing household has no other source of income, which is usually the case. Parental care too is an issue because parents usually live with children in their old age, a practice that is quite characteristic of Sri Lankan society. Expenses related to such care-giving could be excessively high. Cries of children to have a bite of sweets or a lick of ice cream would remain 'unheard'. The whole family will be cut off from involvement in leisure activities, films, pleasure trips and social and religious obligations. All this could mean colossal psychological stress on all members of the family, which cannot be expressed in value terms.

In the absence of insurance markets for fishing related risks, people resort to credit. In fishing societies, exchange of small loans is very common. Because of high catch variability, incomes of all fishers do not correlate. One who is lucky will offer part of his earnings to an unlucky one, knowing that one is not lucky or unlucky every day. However, the ship disaster hit everyone equally and the fishing community's insurance function was lost. In such a context people tend to mortgage jewellery, sell assets or borrow from outside money lenders, who sometimes charge exorbitant rates of interest, which could be as high as 180 percent per year.

Since the day the fishing ban was imposed (May 21, 2021), debt repayments (interest and principal on loans) of fishing households would have accumulated adding to the existing pressure on household chores, leading to great human suffering. Contextual issues: Blue justice
In analysing the impact of the ship disaster on the fishing community, one cannot refrain from underlining the context in which small-scale fisheries take place. Some of the most notable impacts observed recently have been the injustices caused by the process of Blue Economic Growth.

Complaints of exclusion of communities from development related decision making, absence of any community consultation in implementing development projects, coastal land grabbing by tourism interests (land tenure issues) and marginalization of small scale fishers, were heard from all around the country. Conflicts among fisheries and tourism stakeholders have risen to prohibitive levels. Many fishers have lost their beach seining sites, craft anchorage sites and fish drying sites, first, as a result of climate-induced sea erosion and second, as a result of land grabbing by tourism interests.

While coastal waters traditionally provided livelihoods to thousands of small-scale fishers who had customary rights to fish resources in such waters, today the 'small fry' has been chased away and the coastal waters have become the arena of sea sports and leisure. The public beaches have

become private and some beach access roads have become private property of tourism stakeholders. These are all injustices emerging from the unregulated growth of the blue economy which have pushed the small scale fishers to the margins.

Evidently, there is tremendous suffering among diverse fishing related households. Livelihoods and incomes are lost, ill-being is quite pervasive, food insecurity and nutritional insecurity is on the rise, drops in consumption and expenditure is causing misery, households are unable to attend to parental and child care and debts have accumulated. The government has tried to redress the situation by providing the affected households with Rs. 5,000 initially and now by making an interim payment.

Unfortunately, there have been huge delays in making these payments due to delays in making claims and payment of indemnities by the ship's insurance agents. The longer the delays in payment, the higher would be the human suffering. The fishing ban will continue until the debris is cleared from the bottom of the sea by the responsible party, and thus the agony and misery will continue to grow. Two things are worthy of mention at this juncture. First, what has been paid so far has been hardly sufficient to meet the family subsistence needs.

Apart from making a payment equal to lost daily wages, a premium that covers the various costs incurred by the affected parties in resorting to borrowing, in mortgaging assets and psychological stress, will have to be paid. Second, it is of paramount importance in developing strategies to improve the resilient capacity of fishers to external shocks, which would involve, among other things, strengthening community sources of insurance (fisheries cooperatives, coop savings), promoting self-insurance strategies (savings, alternative livelihoods, women employment), and addressing social injustices caused by the process of Blue Economic Growth.

Sri Lanka: Chemical cargo ship sinks off, fouling rich fishing waters

<https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/chemical-cargo-ship-sinks-off-sri-lanka-fouling-rich-fishing-waters-1810127-2021-06-02>

"A cargo ship carrying tonnes of chemicals sank off Sri Lanka's west coast, its navy said on Wednesday, and tonnes of plastic pellets have fouled the country's rich fishing waters in one of its worst-ever marine disasters. The government on Wednesday suspended fishing along an 80-km (50-mile) stretch of the island's coastline, affecting 5,600 fishing boats, and hundreds of soldiers have been deployed to clean affected beaches. The Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl, carrying 1,486 containers, including 25 tonnes of nitric acid along with other chemicals and cosmetics, was anchored off Sri Lanka's west coast when a fire erupted onboard after an explosion on May 20.

Flaming containers laden with chemicals tumbled into the sea from the ship's deck as emergency crews sought to contain the blaze over the ensuing two weeks. The craft began to sink early on Wednesday, and a salvage crew tried to tow the vessel to deeper water away from the coast, Fisheries Minister Kanchana Wijesekera said in a tweet, but the attempt was abandoned after several hours. "The towing of the fire-engulfed X-Press Pearl ship was stopped due to the rear end of the vessel hitting the sea bed," navy spokesman Captain Indika de Silva told Reuters.

Photos taken by the country's air force showed the charred wreck of the ship spewing white smoke as it listed to the right and began sinking, and part of it soon touched the seabed, just 22 metres (73 feet) deep in the immediate area. The navy was preparing to deal with an oil spill after the ship sank, Silva added. "The ship has dealt a death blow to our lives," said Joshua Anthony, head of a region fishing union. "We can't go into the sea which means we can't make a living." The MV X-Press Pearl had left the port of Hazira in India on May 15 and was on its way to Singapore via Colombo.

Sri Lanka: Chinese scientists help country cope with marine disasters, climate change

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-06/04/c_139987726.htm

"On June 2, hundreds of security personnel in COVID-19 protective clothing were busy removing tons of chemical pollutants and plastic from a beach in Colombo. About 9.5 nautical miles into the sea, they could see the charred remains of a foreign vessel swaying in the gusty monsoon wind. On May 20, the X Press Pearl container vessel loaded with chemicals exploded and caught fire off Colombo Port. Many of the containers and other polluting materials on board fell into the sea and were being washed ashore, posing a serious threat to the environment.

On day two after the explosion, Chinese experts from the China-Sri Lanka Joint Center for Education and Research (CSL-CER) received a request from Sri Lanka's National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), the principal national institute responsible for safeguarding aquatic resources in the country. Through a forecast model, the CSL-CER helped evaluate the scale of the pollution caused by the debris and the extent to which the chemicals could spread.

The southwest monsoon makes frequent landfall in Sri Lanka in May. At the observation site of the CSL-CER based on the campus of the University of Ruhuna in the south of the island nation, an Automatic Weather Station (AWS) has been recently updated to study the effects of the monsoon outbreak. Luo Yao, associate professor at the CSL-CER, told Xinhua that the AWS can improve the accuracy of forecasting models, and it can forecast marine environmental disasters caused by the burnt cargo ship. "The AWS can monitor the atmospheric pressure, wind speed and direction, solar radiation and other marine atmospheric parameters.

The accumulated data through long-term observations can be used to study the impact of climate change, sea level rise and other issues in the Indian Ocean and surrounding areas," Luo said. Sri Lanka is located in an area with warm currents between the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean and is one of the most active regions on the path of the monsoon, with frequent marine meteorological disasters.

Due to the shortage of marine scientific research personnel and the lack of a mature monsoon climate forecast system, Sri Lanka is vulnerable to marine disasters. In order to strengthen the capacity to cope with climate change, the CSL-CER was established in 2015 at the University of Ruhuna, the only university in Sri Lanka with a faculty of fisheries and marine sciences. Gamini Zoysa, former Sri Lankan minister of fisheries, once spoke highly of the observation network, saying that "the network has provided scientific and technological support for the development of the marine economy in Sri Lanka and the reduction of marine meteorological disasters caused by extreme weather such as tsunamis and storms, which are related to people's livelihood and economic development."

" Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused some difficulties for personnel exchanges at the center, it has not stopped its activities. In March this year, the China-Sri Lanka Joint Workshop on Monsoon Climate and Marine Environmental Resource was held as scheduled in both China and Sri Lanka simultaneously by combining online and offline methods. "As an island country, Sri Lanka is particularly concerned about the monsoon. The enhanced cooperation between China and Sri Lanka on the monsoon issue will enable us to better understand the impact of the monsoon on the environment and reduce disasters caused by climate change," said Tilak Gamage, co-director of the CSL-CER. "

"The successive bilateral seminars on the ocean and climate have greatly enhanced Sri Lanka's capacity to address climate issues and influence in the international arena," Gamage said. Zhang Changsheng, director of the CSL-CER, told Xinhua that since its establishment, the CSL-CER has not only done research but also paid attention to cultivating marine science talent in Sri Lanka. The center has trained about 30 Sri Lankan graduate students in the fields of marine science and environmental science. They have later engaged in further scientific research in Sri Lanka.

The center has also conducted hydrological training for Sri Lankan institutions and trained personnel for meteorological observation, instrument use, and maintenance. Charith Madusaka, a research fellow currently employed by both the CSL-CER and his alma mater the University of Ruhuna, is the first China-trained master's degree student in oceanography from Sri Lanka. Madusaka said, "Since I went to China, many of my classmates have turned to China." Nalin Wikramanayake, a senior Sri Lankan oceanographer, told Xinhua that the CSL-CER has made a major contribution to marine sciences and oceanography in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka: Colombo Port City construction severely impacting the livelihoods of local fishermen

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/the-belt-and-road-in-sri-lanka-beyond-the-debt-trap-discussion/>

"China's investment in Sri Lanka is often portrayed as “debt trap diplomacy. While it's true that China invested almost \$12 billion between 2006 to 2019, a recent Chatham House report paints a more complex and nuanced picture. According to available data, Sri Lanka is not in a Chinese debt trap Sri Lanka's debt to China amounts to only 6 percent of GDP. Rather, Sri Lanka has a general debt problem, owing about 27 percent of GDP to international financial markets and multilateral lenders like the World Bank.

This false debt trap narrative has dominated discussion of the Belt and Road Initiative in Sri Lanka, at the expense of important questions about the wider impact of Chinese investment. In particular, Sri Lanka should consider the environmental and labor impacts of Chinese investment to ensure they get the most out of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). We found there to be significant environmental and labor implications of Chinese investment in Sri Lanka, which reveal benefits and costs for the local environment and labor force.

These impacts should be prudently managed to ensure that Sri Lanka maximizes the gains and minimizes the risks of the BRI. Environmental Aspects: While China's “Green Belt and Road has received considerable attention, the environmental impact of Chinese investment projects in Sri Lanka has been mixed. According to environmental advocates, early infrastructure projects, including the construction of Hambantota Port and Norochcholai Power Plant did not meet international environmental standards with respect to feasibility studies and domestic legislation processes.

Similarly, some sources reported that construction of Colombo Port City (a commercial and residential project on reclaimed land near the Colombo port) resulted in a decrease of fish stocks, severely impacting the livelihoods of local fishermen. Sri Lanka has comprehensive domestic environmental legislation, encompassing a wide range of regulations and standards. The detail and implementation of such legislation, however, is wanting.

For example, although Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) are legally required for development projects, the Colombo Port City appears to have been initiated without a comprehensive study and subsequent EIAs for the project were criticized for lacking specificity, transparency, and due consideration of project alternatives. More recently, however, Chinese investments have shown positive environmental signs. Colombo Port City has committed to a long-term Sustainability Master Plan, setting standards and protection measures for pollution, waste control, and biodiversity.

The Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT), a Chinese-built and operated terminal of the Colombo port, has prioritized green technology, becoming the first terminal of the port to

convert its regular cranes to zero-emission electric cranes, minimizing air pollution and carbon emissions. The CICT terminal is the most profitable terminal of the Colombo port, demonstrating that Chinese investments can simultaneously pursue commercial success and environmental responsibility.

Chinese investors have also shown agility in adapting and responding to public concerns. In particular, the CHEC Port City Colombo (CPCC), a local subsidiary of China Communications Construction Company, which is developing Colombo Port City, spent about \$3 million from 2016 to 2019 to support around 9,000 fishing families as part of their corporate social responsibility measures.

Yet while progress has been made in all these areas, Sri Lanka must still improve its domestic environmental laws and regulatory powers to ensure consistent environmental standards. Labor Issues: Two common perceptions about Chinese investment projects in Sri Lanka are that they rely on Chinese labor, displacing local workers, and that among this labor force there are many illegal migrants.

Sri Lanka lacks a publicly available database on inbound migration and has limited ability to monitor illegal migrants due to the absence of a central data collection system. Estimates indicate that there are approximately 7,500 Chinese workers in Sri Lanka, accounting for just 0.1 percent of the total labor force. Chinese projects recruit substantial numbers of local workers, although the figures tend to vary by stage of the project. For instance, Colombo Port City, which is still being constructed, has roughly 1,637 workers, of which about 22 percent are Chinese. On the other hand, the now completed and operational Hambantota Port employs about 900 workers, of which less than 4 percent are Chinese.

The concern about large numbers of illegal Chinese migrants appears to be unfounded. While there are a few reported cases of Chinese workers not possessing valid work permits, available data indicates that illegal workers in Sri Lanka come mostly from neighboring countries like India and Pakistan and only a small (single digit) percentage from China. Chinese migrant labor is beneficial and indeed necessary for the Sri Lankan construction sector, which is valued at roughly \$8 billion (2018). Industry experts observe that Sri Lanka has a high rate of external migration to foreign countries, and those workers that remain see little appeal to working in the industry or lack relevant qualifications.

As such, it has been estimated by the Chamber of Construction Industry of Sri Lanka that the country needs 400,000 workers to meet the shortfall of labor in the construction sector and the influx of Chinese workers has helped to fill this gap in the labor market. Notwithstanding these benefits, two key areas require attention; limited data availability and the need for inward migration regulation. To address the significant data gap, a centralized data-gathering mechanism should be introduced across relevant government agencies. Better coordination and monitoring would allow for more current data to continually feed into the policymaking process.

With this mechanism in place, Sri Lanka could look to regulate inward migration by identifying priority sectors.

While the National Human Resources Development Council does research on the inflow of migrant labor based on market demands, it lacks the requisite capacity to act on policies. In addition, foreign investment companies should be mandated to train and upskill local workers. Some Chinese companies in Sri Lanka have initiated programs to transfer know-how and best practices, although these programs are ad hoc initiatives rather than mandated by law.

Conclusion: Chinese investment in Sri Lanka has not led to a debt trap, as such, but concerns around its impact on the local environment and labor force in Sri Lanka reveal areas for improvement.

These include improving the availability of data about investment projects, ensuring the clarity and implementation of existing legislation (for example, on environmental protection), and adopting new legislation (such as on inward migration). While there are important areas for improvement to protect the environment and the local labor force, the BRI offers Sri Lanka benefits and opportunities for the future.

The post-construction plans for Colombo Port City appear positive, including the adoption of an ecological plan to enhance biodiversity and a Sustainability Master Plan to ensure the overall design is consistent with international best practices and concepts like “smart cities. Likewise, Chinese investments have helped to ease labor shortages in key domestic industries, but Sri Lanka's task is to concentrate on ensuring the transfer of skills and know-how to local workers. Colombo should look to maximize these advantages by strengthening domestic laws, setting overarching policies and guidelines, and improving interagency coordination to monitor, tackle and evaluate the apparent challenges.

Sri Lanka: ComBank confirms support to Phase 2 of Koggala mangrove restoration project

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21A/Mar09_1615309452CH.php

"A protective boundary of 3,750 mangrove saplings is to be planted around Kath Duwa, an island in the Koggala Lake, with the continued support of the Commercial Bank of Ceylon to the ‘Koggala Mangrove Restoration and Conservation Project’ of Wildlife and Ocean Resource Conservation (WORC) of Sri Lanka. Phase 2 of this project follows the immense success of the first phase, during which the Bank funded the planting of 2,000 mangrove plants, 750 mangrove associates and 500 terrestrial plants on this 13.5-acre island in Habaraduwa, which is situated close to ‘Madol Duwa,’ the island made famous by Martin Wickramasinghe’s novel of the same name.

Phase 2 seeks to prevent marsh-edge erosion and will continue to utilize the barrel planting method which proved efficient in the first phase. Ms. Patricia Scotland, Secretary General of the Commonwealth's Blue Charter Action Group commended the project on her visit to Sri Lanka in 2019 and identified it as the best mangrove planting site in the country, the Bank said. The first phase took two years to complete in conformity with conservation and habitat restoration methods, as promised by WORC.

The primary objective of the project is the restoration of the degraded ecosystem and to inspire a culture and community of environmental stewardship in the area. Besides funding and monitoring the restoration project, Commercial Bank has also supported WORC to build partnerships with local communities, raise education and awareness, and collaborate with the organization to identify sustainable livelihoods and business opportunities associated with the project and help kick start related activities.

These contributions enable the Bank to play a part in the development of eco-tourism in the Koggala lagoon by supporting the lagoon community through reducing the impact of erosion and providing education on how to carry out activities in a more environmentally responsible manner. The Koggala Lagoon has a surface area of approximately 7.27 km² and is largely fed by several connected streams. Thanks to its rich biodiversity and ecosystem, it is one of the main attractions for tourists visiting the Southern coast. It sustains a few scattered small islands with mangrove swamps along their shorelines.

Human activities and high tide have caused severe lagoon bank erosion and brought about destruction to the ecosystem of mangroves in the past few decades. The 'Koggala Mangrove Restoration and Conservation Project' that is implemented in 'Kath Duwa' seeks to remedy part of this problem. Mangroves are evergreen shrubs that grow in coastal saline or stagnant water. They are important because they have a large capacity to absorb carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and trap them in flooded soils.

It has been found that the carbon dioxide storage capacity of a mangrove forest is more than twice that of a tropical rainforest. Mangrove ecosystems also play a vital role in buffering the force of the strong waves and in protecting the human inhabitations in addition to performing vital hydrological functions and serving as breeding grounds for fish and other marine species.

Mangrove systems covering an area of 8000-12000ha are interspersed along the coastline of Sri Lanka. Wildlife and Ocean Resource Conservation is a not-for-profit organization focused on conservation and ecosystem restoration in Sri Lanka. It supports community-based sea turtle conservation in Panama and Pottuvil, mangrove forest conservation and restoration in Koggala, and coral reef conservation and restoration in Rumassala. WORC offers travel experiences in all of these areas and all income from ecotourism is used to fund ongoing conservation and restoration work.

Sri Lanka: Could benefit from Myanmar-Bangladesh ties

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/15122021-sri-lanka-could-benefit-from-myanmar-bangladesh-ties-oped/>

"Myanmar is one of Bangladesh's closest neighbors with historic connectivity going back centuries. The 271 km long Bangladesh-Myanmar border is very important for Bangladesh due to its strategic position, although at present the area is militarized due to its ongoing internal conflicts. Were this to be resolved, Bangladesh could develop routes via Myanmar to access China to the east, and other southeast Asian countries to the south. On the other hand, Sri Lanka is a one of the stakeholders in the region.

Although Sri Lanka is a South Asian Island state, Sri Lanka is very closed to Bangladesh and Myanmar geographically. Sri Lanka can be able to access in Southeast Asia through Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. There is a huge potential of Lankan products in the regional markets. If Sri Lanka connects itself with Bangladesh-Myanmar-Thailand-India connectivity project and Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar connectivity corridor, Sri Lanka Could benefit. A huge potential is waiting for Sri Lanka. If the two projects can be implemented truly, Sri Lanka will be also gainer in this regard.

Bangladesh-Myanmar improved ties is very needed in this regard. Sri Lanka is a very friendly country to both Myanmar and Bangladesh Sri Lanka can also use Bangladesh, Myanmar as a transportation route to reach markets such as Nepal, Bhutan, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar all are members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), an organization consisting of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand that seeks to foster regional and economic cooperation. Sri Lanka can and should utilize BIMSTEC as a common regional platform to reap the benefits. Being a maritime hub between South East Asian and South Asian country, Sri Lanka can use the routes to enter South Asia and South East Asia through the use of the Bay of Bengal and Indian ocean easily through Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Then it would be able to bolster its trade ties with South Asia, South East Asia (SAARC and ASEAN free trade of zones) Bangladesh is a Southeast Asian country and can be used as an important hub to connect ASEAN and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). members of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka is difficult. Myanmar too, as an ASEAN member, can access the SAARC free-trade bloc through Bangladesh. Such a way, Sri Lanka would benefit economically to boost up their trade ties. Sri Lanka will be able to ensure its maximum business interest. Sri Lanka can access into the market of North East India, Nepal, Bhutan, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam through Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. Myanmar and Bangladesh have also resolved a dispute over their maritime borders through the International Court of Justice.

As a result, the rights of Bangladesh have been established in an area of 1,11,000 square kilometers. Myanmar's waters have also been properly identified. Bangladesh-Myanmar-Thailand-Sri Lanka has potential to invest in maritime business in the Bay of Bengal. These countries should utilize and extract the maritime resource from the maritime zone. Blue economy can bring benefit for Bangladesh-Sri Lanka-Myanmar-Vietnam-Thailand also. The proposed construction of the Asian Highway, funded by the Asian Development Bank can increase land connectivity between the two countries and increase trade in products such as fertilizers, plastics, cement, and furniture, etc.

Sri Lanka should and can join the project to ensure its maximum business interest. Sri Lankan entrepreneurs can utilize to ensure their business interest by investing in Bangladesh's agriculture, garment factories, food processing, shipbuilding, electronics, leather, jute, light engineering and handicraft industries. Myanmar and Sri Lanka which at present does have sophisticated manufacturing, can import electronics and pharmaceutical products that are readily produced from Bangladesh and benefit from the technology transfer. Bangladesh-Myanmar-Sri Lanka has potential of agro products and fishery production, blue economy.

Trilateral effort is very needed here. Bangladeshi medicines, agricultural products garments, footwear and leather goods, knitwear, pharmaceuticals, tableware, home textiles, textiles, seafood and marine products, tea, potatoes, jute and jute products, light engineering products, spices, cosmetics and ceramics, Toilets, etc. can be exported easily to South East Asia through Myanmar and Thailand. Sri Lanka can benefit from the improved ties between Myanmar and Bangladesh. But one of the major problems is the lack of adequate transport links for the expansion of bilateral trade between the two countries.

Both countries are working to resolve this transportation issue (smooth maritime connectivity). All should remain in the process of joining the Asian Highway Network, which is expected to address this issue. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are longstanding friends and connected by the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and maritime routes, Bangladesh-Myanmar -Sri Lanka should intensify cooperation in trade, investment and regional connectivity. According to Bangladeshi media outlets. Bangladesh-Myanmar-Sri Lanka trilateral relations matters for ensuring great regional interest. Huge growth is possible in trilateral trade amongst the three nations.

Bangladesh will able to create a dedicated economic zone for Sri Lankan investors, and pledge to extend all-out support. Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka can Boost cooperation under the BIMSTEC framework. The Bangladesh Government has taken the initiative to export 21 products to Sri Lanka with the duty-free facility. At the same time, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have started work to expand bilateral trade, increase investment, and develop the shipping and tourism industries.

Ready-made garments, medicines, jute and jute products, ceramics, juices, food products, vegetables, pepper, construction materials, melamine, paper and paper boards, flowers, plastic

products, leather and leather products, shoes, soybean oil, potatoes, fertilizers and cosmetics are included in the export list, as there is a huge demand for them in the Sri Lankan market. On the other hand, Sri Lanka-Myanmar trade ties have been established since 1999, with Myanmar exporting rice, wood, pulses and beans, gems, jewelry, natural rubber, and fisheries products. Sri Lanka exports rice, maize, apparel, paints, rubber, porcelain products etc.

Maritime trade is an important contributor to the economies of many countries, especially those located at sea. Sri Lanka is geographically located close to the main east-west sea route which creates multiple logistical advantages over the adjoining countries. This paper considers maritime trade dependence between Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka focusing on potential impacts and a future outlook. China is now the biggest investor in Myanmar. China has invested over US\$3 billion since the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

One of the most strategic components of these investments is the US\$1.3 billion Kyaukphyu deep seaport, which when completed, can provide China's Yunnan province a shortcut to the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh can extract some benefits from the investments for its own gain. The country's biggest economic advantage for Myanmar is that they are a member of ASEAN. ASEAN controls about 24 percent of total world trade and its share in world trade is growing yearly.

ASEAN's trade relations with China, Japan, and South Korea are deepening due to the increase in trade and the upcoming RCEP agreement. ASEAN countries account for more than 50 percent of total trade between themselves and these three countries. Bangladesh is keen to provide assistance to Myanmar. Covid-19 vaccine distribution and counter-terrorism training are some areas for cooperation. The Rohingya refugee problem has, however, created some tension between the two countries, and find the solution can serve the longer-term interests of Bangladesh and Myanmar even Sri Lanka also.

Myanmar and Bangladesh should solve this problem to serve its own and regional interest. Myanmar should understand that it is the issue of the region. Whole South Asia and South East Asia may be volatile and unstable for this problem. Sri Lanka can play a very significant role in this regard. Sri Lanka can mediate to bolster the strained relations between Bangladesh-Myanmar. Sri Lanka can play to repatriate the Rohingyas in Rakhine in Myanmar. Sri Lanka can easily solve the problem because it has a very good relations with Myanmar.

However, Sri Lanka can support for Bangladesh's issue in the ASEAN Sectoral Partnership. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka can closely cooperate in different regional forums including BISMTEC, ARF, SAARC and multilateral forums including UN, WTO and ITU. Both states as regional stake holders should try their level best to join the ASEAN as a regional platform. However, the three countries can also increase production in the agricultural sector through joint ventures.

Apart from adopting joint investment projects, Bangladesh can increase imports of various agricultural products including pulses, spices, fish and rice. Thus, enhancing trilateral relations could contribute to the growth of trade and investment relations with SAARC, ASEAN and BIMSTEC countries. This will create an opportunity to solve the Rohingya problem and stop militant activities. Therefore, Myanmar should take effective steps to strengthen bilateral relations to connect the South East Asia with South Asia. Sri Lanka should and can play an effective role to motivate Myanmar to bolster ties with Bangladesh. Benefit is waiting not only for Myanmar but also for Sri Lanka..

Sri Lanka: Could Country's ship fire have been avoided? Here's what we can learn from the shocking environmental disaster

<https://theconversation.com/could-sri-lankas-ship-fire-have-been-avoided-heres-what-we-can-learn-from-the-shocking-environmental-disaster-162770>

"Hundreds of dead turtles continue to wash ashore in Sri Lanka, almost two months after a newly built container ship caught fire while anchored off Colombo's port. The X-Press Pearl was carrying 1,486 containers and burned for two weeks. It then sunk in early June, causing one of Sri Lanka's greatest environmental disasters. Chemicals contaminated waters, killing marine life and destroying breeding grounds. The contaminants include nitric acid, sodium dioxide, copper and lead, and tonnes of plastic nurdles (pellets) which can take centuries to decompose.

Local communities entirely dependent on fishing for their livelihoods have been ordered not to fish. Now, the environment faces the threat of an oil spill, which authorities, with international assistance, are desperately trying to contain. Local police have launched a criminal investigation. Meanwhile, the Centre for Environmental Justice has filed a fundamental rights petition in the Sri Lankan Supreme Court. In the wake of the disaster, many commentators have sought to explain what went wrong. But these have largely missed a broader, though crucial, issue this disaster exposed: the tension between economic development and environmental protection.

This makes shipping a realm of ultra-free trade distant from, and sometimes untouched by, regulations. I'll help unravel what went so drastically wrong, and how we can try to prevent similar disasters in future. When cargo ships catch fire It is believed the leakage of properly declared, but inappropriately or incorrectly packed or stowed nitric acid caused the X-Press Pearl fire. Nitric acid is a corrosive, toxic and flammable liquid — and the X-Press Pearl was carrying 25 tonnes of it.

Nitric acid is an essential component of ammonium nitrate — a popular fertiliser around the world and a raw ingredient in explosives manufacturing. Impounded ammonium nitrate is what triggered the 2020 explosion that obliterated the Port of Beirut. Any fire on board a ship is a clear risk to the lives of the crew and the environment. Yet, container vessel fires occur

frequently. Insurers are notified of fires about once every two weeks and major fires every 60 days.

The source of these fires is changing. Fires once emanated from engines, but they are now just as likely to originate in the cargo itself, with incorrectly packaged or misdeclared chemicals the second-most prevalent cause of fire after charcoal. In fact, data indicate the possibility of more than 150,000 annual cases of undeclared or misdeclared dangerous goods capable of causing fires. The incidence may be higher depending on the shipping route. Another fire risk has to do with competition between shipping companies, which is based on carrying capacity and efficiency.

This has forced an exponential growth in container ship sizes, which escalates the probability of a fire. It also makes detecting a fire difficult, if not impossible, until it is well advanced. Fire safety on ships could be improved with better training to promote best practice in protecting and preserving the integrity of cargo. SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) regulations govern on-board firefighting. But these are outdated, having come into force in 1980. They need to be amended to suit the current era of large and ultra-large vessels, like X-Press Pearl.

Organisational procedures, such as those of the American Bureau of Shipping, promote earlier fire detection and more efficient methods of fire suppression. They're better suited to the design and operations of ships in modern maritime industries. A tale of two ports The nitric acid leak aboard the X-Press Pearl was discovered at Hamad Port in Qatar, which refused the ship's request to discharge the container. The ship made the same request later to Hazira Port in Gujarat, which was also denied.

The disaster at sea could have been avoided had either port offloaded the container. Why did they refuse? And what were their obligations in these circumstances? It's unlikely their actions will be examined in the official investigation, which will focus on the causes of the fire and actions of the crew. However, these answers reveal the hugely problematic conditions of shipping operations. Both ports claimed they lacked the manpower and equipment to discharge the leaking container.

But it's hard to imagine such recently built, state of the art, and well-resourced facilities — according to their corporate websites — lacking the means to deal with a nitric acid leak. Ports may be reluctant to accept hazardous vessels because they lack emergency and contingency plans and preparedness. It's one thing to adopt hazard and environmental policies, but quite another to actually implement them. This would require providing the training, and maintaining the necessary equipment, to address potential threats. Port services are just as competitive as shipping companies.

Ports aim to maximise the moving of containers through terminals. This makes the physical investigation of the contents of containers impossible, and any processing delay unaffordable. Nevertheless, efficiency and profitability don't mean quality services should be sacrificed. There

are three ways to begin addressing this issue: 1) rigorous enforcement of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods regulations, which control their handling and stowage 2) better training for supply chain workers who apply these regulations 3) stronger sanctions issued by states where cargoes originate, and by shipping companies.

Could the crew have sought shelter? The investigation into the X-Press Pearl disaster will reveal whether the crew sought a priority berth for shelter while the ship was engulfed in flames at Colombo port. Arguably, ships in distress have traditionally enjoyed the “freedom of ports” to seek shelter in the territorial waters of nations if they are facing the total loss of the vessel and its cargo, or the lives of its crew. But states may deny ships entry if, for instance, they pose a serious threat to the environment or the safety or security of its people.

Given the increasing size of vessels and the uncertain nature of the threat they pose, refusal of entry is the norm. In 2003, following several high-profile incidents, the International Maritime Organization adopted resolutions creating “places of refuge” for vessels in distress. These are sheltered waters, and not ports with the infrastructure to counteract serious problems on board. So while refuge may address the threat of fire, it does not avert the far greater risk of environmental pollution.

Places of refuge have assuaged some concerns, but they are not an international obligation. They also tend to be concentrated in developed maritime regions, and are virtually nonexistent where they’re most needed — where substandard vessels carrying illicit dangerous cargoes ply their trade. It’s important we do not let the X-Press Pearl settle into the background as another spectacular story about a ship ablaze at sea. It should spark change, and serve as the cautionary exemplar of what happens with alarming frequency when we want our goods cheap and now.

Sri Lanka: Demise of the small fry: Exclusion of small-scale fishers in Sri Lanka’s blue growth

<http://www.ft.lk/opinion/Demise-of-the-small-fry-Exclusion-of-small-scale-fishers-in-Sri-Lanka-s-blue-growth/14-707309>

"Despite all efforts made by the Government in the development of the Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) sub-sector since its strong intervention after independence, one cannot be very happy about the status of Sri Lanka's SSF as at present. Fishers complain of low catches and incomes and, in a context of inadequate opportunities for alternative employment, many have fallen into the dumps of poverty.

Recent interest in blue growth has opened up new avenues of exploiting the oceans for economic growth. However, evidence points to issues related to ecological externalities and marginalisation of small-scale fishing communities. Unfortunately, even the State does not

understand the importance of the SSF sub-sector for food security, nutrition and employment of the low income populations of this country and very little attention has been paid in rescuing the small fry from murky waters.

The SSF sub-sector In SL, as well as globally, small-scale fisheries are threatened more by anthropogenic pressures coming from both inside and outside the communities, and less by natural factors. High rates of resource exploitation, unregulated technological change, increasing fishing pressure, etc. are causing threats to aquatic ecosystems, leading to resource degradation. Research results also indicate that harvesting of coastal fish resources in certain coastal waters remains beyond the maximum catch that one could obtain from the fishery in a sustainable manner (MSY) and that the catch per boat (CPUE) is falling. From the point of view of fishers, they complain of too many crafts and fishers and falling catch per boat and incomes.

The question is whether such situations have raised an alarm among the fisheries authorities/decision makers to do something to save the small fry. In respect of the wellbeing of fishing populations, there is a huge void because very little is known about them. The gap between the decision makers and communities remains quite wide, and communities are not invited to the decision-making table. Unfortunately, governors see fishing as an activity of 'catching fish to earn an income', and their knowledge of fishing communities, the issues confronted by them in their day-to-day life, social development needs, social security protection, levels of poverty and threats posed to them by other coastal resource users, etc. remains very poor.

No efforts have been made to invest in studies concerning fishing communities, after the last census of fisheries carried out in 1972. Blue growth and the SSF sector: The inclusion and exclusion phases After fully utilising terrestrial resources, man is now turning to the sea to provide for his wellbeing improvements. Even Sri Lanka has attached significant importance to the blue economic growth strategy. However, from what is being heard today, one gets the impression that blue growth is a quite recent phenomenon. True, there is a new revival of the concept. But blue growth started in the 1950s with the onset of the blue revolution in the field of fisheries.

In Sri Lanka at least those who adopted the new blue revolution technology (mechanised crafts, nylon nets, etc.) were the artisanal fishers, who were able to access new technology through cooperatives, offering group guarantees as collateral with very generous State assistance (up to 50% subsidies). There were no conflicts among technological categories and this 'blue growth' was well accepted by the SSF communities. This phase lasted up to 1990, which can be called the 'inclusion' phase, where blue growth encompassed the inclusion of SSF communities who benefitted significantly from this expansionist wave.

The entrance of multiday fishing at the beginning of the 1990s led to the infiltration of an outside business class into fisheries, who started exploiting the offshore area up to the edge of the EEZ

and further away into high seas. The crew workers were the SSF fishers who worked as labourers, who had to work long fishing trips, confronted with limited space for accommodation, clean water, safety issues and even risk of arrests for poaching, etc. Evidently, human rights were violated in many instances by the boat owners, but the crew hardly knew what rights they possessed. The Government has so far not ratified the ILO C188 convention that provided protection against most of these issues.

This marks the emergence of negative externalities of blue growth or the exclusion phase. Exclusion of communities from development decision making, absence of any community consultation in implementing development projects, coastal land grabbing by tourism interests, marginalisation of small-scale fishers were recently highlighted at a meeting of the People's Tribunal for Blue Economic Growth, held in late August 2020 in Negombo. Fishers have lost their beach seining sites, craft anchorage sites and fish drying sites, first, as a result of climate-induced sea erosion and second, as a result of land grabbing by tourism interests and mega development projects such as the Port City project.

While the 'grievance' argument of the SSF fishers is being strongly voiced today, the other side of the coin is that those grieved fishers have now joined hands with the rejoiced coastal stakeholders to chase their 'own', in search of a better life. Some fishers, especially the young entrants, have found employment in the coastal tourism sector – less risky employment with a better pay. They often entertain the entry of tourism interests into the coast, unintentionally chasing away their fisher 'fathers'.

Thus, the SSF communities complain that their customary rights to the beach are violated, when those from the same communities are involved in chasing them out; they are involved in both 'running with the hare and hunting with the hound'. Who is responsible? In the context of land tenure issues among multi-stakeholders in the coastal zone and land grabbing by tourism stakeholders, co-management has emerged as a panacea. Yet, there is hardly any understanding as to what it is.

At present such co-management bodies are a conglomeration of State and community stakeholders sitting together, with the 'show' being run by the more powerful State actors. There is cross sectoral participation, but quite ineffective because participating institutions have different mandates preventing any effective coordination among them. The community stakeholders are just spectators watching the show without knowing what is happening and without having any knowledge in co-management with no capacity to actively participate. Women and the marginalised groups are completely kept away.

Fisher community organisations are now in a complete disarray with the establishment of rural fisheries organisations, which crippled the fisheries cooperatives which were doing extremely well in Sri Lanka since independence. The Department of Coastal Conservation and Coastal Resources Management has launched a Special Area Management (SAM) process as a

mechanism of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) but fisheries are omitted as a component of coastal management, separating the coastal fisheries from the coast. So far, Sri Lanka has never had a National Fisheries Policy, and the current policy (National Fisheries Policy 2018) is only a white paper.

While Sri Lanka's advantageous position with its endowment of natural beauty provides ample opportunities for tourism development, this process has to be regulated like other development activities. There is an unprecedented growth in tourism activities along the coast, violating the coastal zone boundaries and violating the rights of fishers. Rescuing the small fry Sri Lanka cannot afford to manage its fisheries in a policy vacuum any longer. The National Fisheries Policy of 2018 is deficient of certain important aspects that affect the small-scale fisheries of the country.

A process of implementation of FAO Voluntary Guidelines for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries, which took place in 2018-2019 led by the Sri Lanka Forum for Small Scale Fisheries (SLFSSF), with islandwide stakeholder consultation, led to the development of a small-scale fisheries policy and there is a strong need to combine the two and produce an effective National Fisheries Policy. As a means of addressing the issue of coastal resource degradation, stocks of coastal fish resources will have to be enhanced and fishing pressure on coastal waters will have to be reduced. Shifting of fishing pressure in coastal waters to less exploited off-shore areas, aquaculture, integrated sustainable tourism, fish processing, and alternative employment need to be undertaken.

There is an urgent need to strengthen fisheries cooperatives and train and build capacities of cooperative officials to participate in development decision making and in co-management. The process of co-management of the coastal area need to be integrated (integration of all sectors), inclusive (inclusive of all stakeholders including women and marginalised groups, participatory (active participation of all) and holistic (looking at the system as a whole). It is also necessary to build awareness among fishing communities of their rights (human rights), build capacities of women and men in adopting alternative employment, and provide them with affordable access to basic education, health and social security protection.

The ILO convention C188 on 'work in the fishing sector' needs be ratified to provide the fishing labour in commercial vessels with social security protection, security of employment, medical care, safety, etc. The authorities must also make sure that the process of development decision making goes through science-community platforms, meaning that eminent scientists (who possess the best available scientific evidence) and community representatives (the beneficiaries of development) need to be invited to all development decision-making platforms.

Sri Lanka: Development of local canned fish industry could save country US\$ 70 mn annually

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2020/07/15/finance/223252/development-local-canned-fish-industry-could-save-country-us-70-mn>

"The Canned Fish Manufacturers Association of Sri Lanka (CFMASL), thanked the government for assisting local producers and industries during the Covid lockdown period, its President Shiran Fernando said. Fernando said during the Covid lockdown period the country faced difficulties in importing goods into the country. At that time President Gotabaya Rajapaksa requested the CFMASL to produce canned fish for Sathosa and pledged whatever support they needed during the curfew time.

The President delivered the assistance through the fisheries ministry and police and they were able to manufacture canned fish with additional shifts including night shift by recruiting additional staff from the vicinity of its factory. He said if the government continues to assist them within three years, local fish manufacturers will be able to produce the full requirement of the country and within four years enter the export market. In 2019 Sri Lanka imported over 250,000 salmon cans daily and this has now come down to 150,000 cans per day which will result in a substantial reduction in import cost of canned fish.

He also said Local canned fish manufacturers have increased their daily production to 150,000 cans and plan to increase it up to 200,000 with the existing machinery. He also thanked the government for reemploying the tax on imported fish to Rs 100 per kilogram from Rs 50 per kilogram. Fernando however noted that Local producers have not increased the price of locally produced salmon cans. In 2019 Sri Lanka imported US\$ 70 million worth of canned fish. This full amount could be saved if local industries are developed.

When canned fish is produced locally there is 100 percent value addition as they purchase fish, tins, salt and labels from within the country Also local fishermen will receive a better price and higher income which would lead to their development. Local empty tin manufacturing companies will also expand with more plants and employees. He said although in the Western Province the fisheries industry has made a marked improvement, the Eastern Province has not seen the required development in the fisheries industry.

Fernando therefore urged the government while assisting the local industries to pay attention in the development of the Eastern Province fisheries industry which has a huge potential. He said due to the 35 year war one generation has gone out of fishing in the Eastern Province needs to be developed in order to be able to have a fish harvest throughout the year. Therefore the Oluvil harbour in the Eastern Province should be developed without delay.(MFJ)

Sri Lanka: Digging our own grave: Inadequate and short-sighted coast conservation

<https://colombogazette.com/2020/04/29/digging-our-own-grave-inadequate-and-short-sighted-coast-conservation/>

"This is a time nature has asked us to stop doing what we do; destruction, excessiveness, greed. Nature is telling us to stop and slow down and to change our ways. And we are not listening, stressed Otara Gunawardene. The media has been abuzz with concerns raised on beach nourishment projects being conducted along the coast of Sri Lanka, namely that of Calido Beach in Kalutara, the stretch between Ratmalana and Angulana, and Mount Lavinia Beach. While environmentalists, and also the public, have expressed their concerns on these activities, the Coast Conservation Department (CCD), which is the project proponent, continues to justify its work.

Undoing a past wrong at Calido The sand filling activity at Calido Beach is being done to rectify the effects of a hasty decision that was taken in 2017 to control the floods in Kalutara, shared Rainforest Protectors of Sri Lanka Convenor Jayantha Wijesingha, speaking to Colombo Gazette. Before 2017, Calido Beach, in its natural form, had served two purposes. The flow of freshwater from the Kalu River into the sea was slowed while sand was deposited in the estuary, and sand dunes controlled the speed of the waves, thereby reducing degradation or erosion.

However, in 2017, in an effort to prevent the reoccurrence of the floods which gravely affected many areas including Kalutara, where almost 50 deaths were reported and many went missing, Calido Beach was cut. "They cut it to regulate flooding that was taking place in 2017, shared Wijesingha. "Little did they realize that after doing so, the forces of the waves would eventually make the river freshwater saline and undrinkable, which was experienced by the people of Kalutara over the past one and a half years. This got worse during the drought period. He also shared that another key factor that led to this was excessive sand mining along a stretch of almost 10 km from Kalutara to the Kalutara water pumping station.

"There were about 40 sand mining spots. The extent to which this was done should have been restricted, because sand mining increases the depth of the water and so saltwater gets mixed much easier. "The Government later realized that cutting the beach had resulted in severe degradation along the coastline and so they now decided to restore it, he shared, stating that a short-sighted decision has resulted in the State having to spend Rs. 890 million to rectify their mistake.

Not permanent: "This sand nourishment project was approved by the Cabinet of Ministries and also the concept (was approved by) H.E. the President; he has already visited the site and he has given the advice to do this project, shared CCD Director General (DG) General Prabath Chandrakeerithi. He explained that an artificial beach stretching 2 km will be made in Kalutara's Claido Beach, 1 ½ km along the Ratmalana-Angulana stretch, and 500 m in Mount Lavinia. 800,000 m³ of sand is being dredged for this project; 300,000 m³ for Calido Beach, 350,000 m³ for the Ratmalana-Angulana stretch, and 150,000 m³ for Mount Lavinia. Chandrakeerthi explained this project was necessary to control erosion. "This is the soft method we can introduce (for) our beaches rather than putting rock boulders to the beach.

For this sand nourishment project, we are going to take the permanent solution for the coastal erosion, he said. Upon questioning Wijesingha on Chandrakeerithi's claim that this was a permanent solution, he shared: "This is a soft solution. In beach nourishment, there are soft solutions and hard solutions. The hard solutions – permanent solutions – would be to have beach nourishment going along with other permanent solutions such as having submerged breakwaters and groynes around the development area and also having a coastal mangrove strip or a block if possible. But even then, some of these permanent solutions are not permanent if you don't address the root cause of it.

Environmentalist and Attorney-at-Law Jagath Gunawardena shared his sentiments on this with Colombo Gazette. "I don't think there is any permanent solution to any of these problems. What they can do is to propose and implement a technical solution; whether it is permanent or not will be justified only with time. I think this is an overconfident statement, he said, referring to Chandrakeerithi's claim. Coastal constructions vs. Conservation: With a cost of Rs. 890 million, the least we would expect is for this project to have a lasting effect in controlling erosion. However, it would seem, as per Wijesingha's estimation, that this would last only 4-5 years. Projects of this nature have been carried out in many other areas over the past years; some of the larger projects were in Kirinda, Uswetakeiyawa, Unawatuna (cost Rs. 850 million), Marawila (Rs. 350 million), and Negombo. "Most of these didn't work well, shared Wijesingha, "They didn't understand the ground situation and didn't do it right.

While these projects cost billions in taxpayers' rupees, the major developments along the coast are to blame for most of the erosion and degradation, mainly those executed without the necessary assessments being conducted to evaluate impacts on the environment and the people in the area. Citing an example, Wijesingha shared: "The Oluvil Harbor project in 2013 was done on political will and had no scientific basis. To date, it has not been operational and is not utilized. Loss of coastal barriers, fish, vegetation cover, coastal biodiversity, economic activity, and sand barriers, and increased coastal pollution were some effects of this project.

The total cost of the project was Rs. 7 billion. And we have nothing to show for it apart from more problems. The effects of the Colombo Port City Project, which involved excessive sand dredging and filling, will also be felt in the near future, if not already. Wijesingha warned that we should be mindful of newer projects in the pipeline that may aggravate the situation, such as the Marine City Project which would be along the coastline from Galle Face to Mount Lavinia covering 100 hectares. According to Wijesingha and information he gathered via foreign sources, the project cost is \$ 300 million.

EIA inadequate: Whilst the restoration of Calido Beach seems somewhat justified, albeit being to cover up a past wrong, concerns continue to increase over the sand filling at Mount Lavinia Beach. People of the area were troubled to see sand being filled at the iconic Mount Beach during a time the entire county was in lockdown, and the Western Province was still under curfew. The area was also heavily guarded by the armed forces.

Explaining this situation to Colombo Gazette, CCD DG Chandrakeerthi said: “While the project was going on, many people gathered around the project area as this was new project for the area people. The general public needed to be kept from the project area because of the coronavirus situation, as we have to practise social distancing. People were gathering and collecting sea shells as well; we needed to stop that, which is why we put a police point there. “We have done an EIA for the sand borrowing pit, from which the 800,000 m³ of sand was sourced, shared Chandrakeerthi.

“I don't think they have done an EIA for that, because if it is beyond 2 km of the low-water level of the coastline, they should have gotten it approved from the CEA (Central Environmental Authority), shared Jagath Gunawardena. “I doubt his statement because if there was an EIA, there should have been two EIAs – one for the filling and another for the dredging, under two enactments, and they should have got approval from two different authorities, he stated. He also shared that the relevant EIAs should be available on the CEA website if it has been completed, but they were not online.

Just this week, the Central for Environmental Justice (CEJ), in a letter to the CCD, had raised concerns over the dredging being done too close to the shore. It stated that this would result in the sand sliding, thereby affecting the reefs. In addition, it also raised concerns that fishing habitats could be destroyed, and compared it to the effects of the Colombo Port City Project. Wijesingha, meanwhile, was of the opinion that while an EIA may have been done for the dredging of sand, it was the minimum possible in terms of an environmental assessment that could have been conducted, and grossly inadequate.

“I think this should have gone through a strategic environmental assessment, and not just for the dredging, because that is only part of the project. The whole project has various components comprising all the areas they are filling as well, and as far as I know, no complete EIA study of this nature was done, he shared with Colombo Gazette. Environmentalist Jagath Gunawardena further shared that it was a gross violation of the law if the CCD, the project proponent, had approved its own project, stating: “Since the CCD is the project proponent, they can't approve their own project.

This would be a gross violation of the common law principle that you can't be the judge of your own case. We questioned Jagath Gunawardena on the effects this project would have on the biodiversity of the area, the environment, and coastline, he responded: “That is what the EIA is supposed to do in the first instance. The EIA should look at less environmentally harmful/unfriendly options and why such options were rejected and this particular option selected instead. So that justification should be part of the EIA. “That's where we all take up the issue that they should have done it through an EIA process where all these issues could have been addressed before the project was embarked upon – which is of course the spirit of the law.

Why the hurry? “And I don't understand the urgency of doing this during this time, shared Jagath Gunawardena. Speaking to Colombo Gazette, Otara Gunawardene questioned: “This was being done while we were all under curfew. We are all meant to be indoors and staying home, so why put all these people out there to do this? Many are also outraged that the Mount Lavinia beach is being filled, as it is a landmark and has been in the same state for decades. Jagath Gunawardena stated: “Even photographs that have been taken more than a century ago show that it is in the same state. So there is no justification for this.

“The Mount Lavinia Bay was not intended to be filled because that was a world-famous landmark that was in existence for many years. There was no justification to fill up the Mount Lavinia Bay which was a prime bathing spot for many people, and it was a very picturesque spot as well, Jagath Gunawardena shared with Colombo Gazette. “It doesn't require sand filling. He also stated that when he had attended the initial meetings where the Ratmalana-Angulana project had been mooted and discussed in December 2018, which was long after the Kalutara Calido Beach project was approved, there was no talk of filling Mount Beach.

“When it was first discussed in December 2018, that was pertaining to the Mount Lavinia headlands towards Angulana. Mount Lavinia Beach was not mentioned, he shared. Rainforest Protectors of Sri Lanka Convenor Wijesingha raised concerns on the incompleteness off the project. “The current work doesn't seem to be complete to me, and there are a lot of other lapses in terms of the approval process. There are irregularities by the MEPA (Marine Environmental Protection Authority) and the CCD, he told Colombo Gazette.

Ideally, submerged breakwaters and groynes should have been installed to ensure the sand remains at the shore. “The project and how it is being carried out so far doesn't seem sustainable as they have now followed due processes. It is being done in an ad hoc and unorganised manner. “We do not see any breakwaters or groynes; they are only pumping and dumping. If the erosion is as bad as they are claiming, then the sand will get washed off and negatively impact the reef and ecosystems in the area, shared Wijesingha.

In its letter to the CCD, the CEJ had also raised concerns that the beach nourishment project in Mount Lavinia was being done without concerning its implications to the environment. Make every cent count According to a study by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), “coastal erosion and accretion are natural processes; however, they have become anomalous and widespread in the coastal zone of Asia and other countries in the Indian Ocean owing to combinations of various natural forces, population growth, and unmanaged economic development along the coast, within river catchments and offshore. It also mentioned Sri Lanka as one of the countries affected.

The study also states coastal erosion in Sri Lanka dates back to the 1920s (Swan 1974; 1984) and has progressively continued over the years due to the eradication of mangroves as a result of encroachment, the sourcing of firewood, and clearing of coastal areas for construction, amongst

other things. By 2006, approximately \$ 30 million had been spent on breakwaters and other construction to combat coastal erosion on the southern and western coasts of Sri Lanka, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

While coastal erosion isn't new to Sri Lanka and will be something we have to endure in the long term, it warrants an equally stubborn solution. Evaluating best practices from around the world and seeking expert opinions for our projects, while accurately and holistically analysing the impacts of these projects on the environment and our people are the need of the hour. Especially since our hard-earned taxpayer rupees are being spent on these activities to restore our coastlines, shouldn't we be responsible in making every cent count? “Since these projects are costing people and the environment, we, as the public, have to question, engage, know, stand up for your communities, people, and economies, concluded Wijesingha.

Sri Lanka: Disguised role of women in blue economic growth

<https://island.lk/propelling-blue-craft/>

"Small, developing island states like Sri Lanka are gradually moving from a Green Economy Focus to Blue Economy Focus, aiming at exploiting ocean resources for employment creation, earning incomes, strengthening the economy and improving the wellbeing of the people. During 20-22 June 2012, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) held in Rio de Janeiro, coastal states requested an extension of the ?Green Economy to encompass the Blue Sector, due to their small resource base which was limiting further expansion of their economies.

Today, many coastal states are placing high emphasis on Blue Economic growth, which is defined by the World Bank as “all economic activities, related to oceans, seas and coasts, which cover a wide range of interlinked established and emerging sectors”. On top of the traditional ocean activities such as fisheries, tourism and maritime transport, Blue Economy entails emerging industries including renewable energy, aquaculture, seabed extractive activities and marine biotechnology and bioprospecting.

Although it is popularly believed that Blue Economic Development is new to Sri Lanka, the origins of Blue Economic Growth can be traced back to the late 1950's when the country introduced motorised craft and new fishing gear; the “Blue Revolution”. During the pre-Blue Revolution era, fishing was mainly carried out by artisanal craft operating in near shore areas to a lesser extent, and by beachseines (madel) which was the major technique of fishing. The seine nets were laid in nearshore waters and hauled from the beach. During the immediate post-war period, nearly 90% of the fish catch came from beachseines.

Most of the fishing activities were mainly confined to inshore waters, to a distance of about 3 km from the coast. In the late 1950s, the whole fisheries sector was subject to a revolutionary change

that came about as a three-pronged strategy: a. introduction of motorised craft (offshore craft with inboard engine and small fiberglass boats with outboard motor); b. motorisation of traditional craft (by fixing an outboard motor to the aft or side of artisanal craft) and c. introduction of new fishing gear (nylon nets and hooked lines and new fishing methods). The Blue economic growth process (in fisheries).

Generally known as the Blue Revolution, the technological change in fisheries in the 1960s and 1970s led to a movement of fishing loci away from the coast and fishers started exploiting the offshore waters. Fish catches increased to significantly high levels and fishing incomes were on the rise unremittingly. The dream of fishers was to acquire an offshore craft. This trend continued into the 1980s, by the end of which the offshore craft was further improved by the boatyards of the country to construct the present day multi day craft with inbuilt ice compartment, water tank, cabin for the crew, GPS, etc. These craft started to venture into deeper areas of Sri Lanka's Exclusive Economic Zone; EEZ (which extend to 200 nautical miles from the coast) and even beyond.

In searching for better resources, some of these fishers who were fishing illegally in the waters of other countries were arrested and detained in prisons of foreign countries for long periods of time. Today, more than 1,200 of these craft fish in high seas targeting tuna and other large fish species, for export, while others (about 4,300 crafts) filch upto the edge of the EEZ. These crafts are engaged in lengthy fishing trips of one to several weeks of duration. Changing role of women in the fisheries sector: A major characteristic of Sri Lanka's blue growth in respect of fisheries is that the new technology did not compete with the traditional/artisanal technology, displacing the fishers operating such non-motorised vessels. In fact, the new motorised craft enabled the fishers to move away from the coast into deeper waters which were yet to be exploited.

About 55,000 of Sri Lanka's fishing fleet of 60,000 vessels still engage in one day fishing trips up to a maximum distance of 24 nautical miles (edge of the Contiguous Zone). The rest consists of nearly 5,000 multiday crafts. Obviously, Sri Lanka's Blue Economic Growth (in respect of fisheries) has principally caused an expansion of the coastal fleet, especially the small fiberglass boat with outboard motor operating in near shore waters, and deep sea fishing which commenced in early 1990s is gathering momentum recording a high rate of increase in multi day crafts since the beginning of this millenium.

The new fishing technology also demanded that fishers spend more and more time in fishing-related activities such as net mending, gear preparation, craft repair and engine repair work, search for purchased inputs, etc. All this meant a heavy burden on women in taking care of household and social onuses. Interestingly, women willingly take up these challenges because the fishing incomes are several fold high and they enjoy a better living standard than their fellow fishers who still operate artisanal crafts in nearshore waters.

Needless to highlight that, the issue with fishing incomes is more about their fluctuations than about the absolute value, and along with uncertainties of the duration of fishing trips (uncertainty of the boats returning on a particular day), the women are confronted with a high risk of falling into financial crises when incomes fall short of subsistence and when the breadwinner is absent for long periods of time. Thus, many women fisher folk are engaged in earning supplementary incomes from various activities such as rope making, fish drying, selling prepared food items, sewing and selling garments, etc. They are also involved in various other risk insurance mechanisms such as revolving credit schemes like 'seettu' and spending on activities that would strengthen inter-family ties.

Women also resort to intra-family adjustment strategies when they are confronted with income shortfalls. Here household resources are distributed in favour of the male members in the household (who are the breadwinners) and the burden of consumption shortfalls are mostly borne by the female members in the household (tightening of the belt by only the female members). Due to the absence of husbands in taking care of household affairs, the women are burdened with additional responsibilities such as attending to children's education, taking them to private classes, maintaining and improving their discipline, dealing with public officials, meeting social obligations, participating in community affairs, etc. In the daily routine chart of a housewife in the deep sea sector, there is hardly any space for her own pleasures.

While feeling that they are being taxed heavily by men who are away on long fishing trips, the majority of women want their husbands to continue with motorised fishing and offshore fishing due to two major reasons. First, motorised fishing earns high average incomes. Second, women enjoy a high freedom of choice when the husband's are absent from home- they seem to enjoy taking part in community and social affairs. Since men are absent from homes for long periods of time, almost all major decisions at home are made by women and almost all social and community obligations are met by women.

Some of the fisheries cooperatives in the south of the country are mainly run by women. Intra-household gender relations too have changed in favour of women. With women's engagement in income generating activities and their important contribution towards community and social development activities, their 'fall back position' (bargaining position) has improved. Women fisherfolk are compelled to be alert and knowledgeable about all what is happening around them, while the men are left to fight the ocean.

However, previous studies carried out by the author revealed two specific problems confronted by women in the deep sea fisheries sector. Long absence of fathers from home has made life more difficult for mothers in maintaining discipline among boys. The second problem is the arrest of multi day boat fishermen for poaching and detained in foreign countries for very long periods. The affected families, especially the mothers, may have to undergo tremendous hardships during such periods and other than the members of the fishing community, apparently no other regular source of help is available to them.

Fish Processing and gender One of the traditional household activities of women fisher folk in Sri Lanka has been processing of fish into dried fish, Maldive fish and salted fish, of which the two former are practiced more commonly. Dried fish processing and small-scale trading form the major employment activity in coastal villages for women fisher folk in earning supplementary incomes. In fact, for many fishing villages, where dried fish processing is widely practised, it has become a way of life for the women, indicating its high social value within the fishing communities as a means of smoothening inter-temporal fluctuations of daily fishing incomes; income smoothening.

Although women employment in fishing communities is not a common phenomenon in the Buddhist communities in the south, they are involved to a great extent in fish marketing and other beach based activities in other parts of the country, as in the case of the western coastal region of the country. The advantage of women engagement in household level fish processing activities is that it minimises the possibility of any negligence of household chores, while assisting the household to make the ends meet.

Whilst recognising the responsibilities and burdens which women shoulder in navigating the 'blue craft', it needs to be highlighted that women are systematically denied the resources, information and freedom of action they need to fulfill these responsibilities. In fact, the role of women has often been undermined in fisheries, which is a male dominant industry. Their access to credit, information and training opportunities is weak, and very little efforts have been made to improve women's access to such financial, physical and human capital.

Moreover, engagement in fish drying at the household level may not have been the choice of employment by women, but they are forced to do it because it is an activity that their men would approve of (because they stay at home). Regrettably, unregulated expansion of the growth process is now causing a concentration of the fish processing trade in the hands of private commercial enterprises, in which women and men work as labourers; the resource owners converted to labourers, where women are paid less than men for the same task performed.

Sri Lankan women are quite educated with a literacy rate above 92%, and as effective agents in propelling the blue craft and coping with diverse vulnerabilities in fisheries. What is required is to empower women, so that they will enjoy decision making power on their own, have access to information and resources for taking proper decisions, have a range of options from which to make choices, have positive thinking on the ability to make changes involved in the growth process, etc.

By managing the household, taking care of children and aging parents, meeting social obligations, earning supplementary incomes to smooth consumption, women definitely play multiple roles in the process of Blue Economic Growth. Empowering Women: Evidently, two factors have been primarily responsible for reaping benefits (high fishing incomes, high foreign exchange earnings from exports, strengthening the economy and improving the wellbeing of the

people) from the process of Blue Economic Growth in the sphere of fisheries. The Blue Revolution that took place in the 1960s and 1970s, made an exceptional contribution towards the expansion of the offshore sector and the use of modern fishing methods.

Equally important has been the role of women in propelling this growth process by undertaking increasingly more and more household and social responsibilities and managing diverse fishing-related risks by earning supplementary incomes. For them to perform these new roles in the future, they need to be educated, trained and empowered. It will help women to gain control over their own lives. It fosters power in them, for use in meeting the wellbeing aspirations of them and their community. Women empowerment is also one of the Millennium Development Goals of the UN (MDG 3), and is also included in Sustainable Development Goals, under gender equality (SDG 5).

Article 7.2 of FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries states, “All parties should recognize the role women often play in the post-harvest subsector and support improvements to facilitate women’s participation in such work. States should ensure that amenities and services appropriate for women are available as required in order to enable women to retain and enhance their livelihoods in the post-harvest subsector”. Evidence from country wide consultations held in 2018-2019 (by author and his team) points to a number of measures that need to be adopted to ensure that women continue to propel the Blue Craft to secure sustainable Blue Economic Growth, while meeting their wellbeing aspirations.

These include, building awareness among members of fishing communities (especially men) about the importance of women employment for family welfare (aiming at attitudinal changes); introducing technological innovation in fish processing and, train and build capacities of women to undertake them; organising women into groups (cooperatives / savings groups) aiming at increasing their bargaining power vis-à-vis outsiders, especially merchants; building market links to sell their produce and to receive a fair price; providing credit to fisher women entrepreneurs or their organisations at concessionary rates of interest; removing wage discrepancies, where men are paid a higher wage than women for the same task, and ensuring fair representation of women (about 25%) in community institutions (such as fisheries cooperatives. “If you educate and train a man you uplift a person, but if you educate and train a woman you uplift a family.” (An African proverb).

Sri Lanka: End silo approach to marine research, scientist urges

<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/210221/news/end-silo-approach-to-marine-research-scientist-urges-433244.html>

"It is to Sri Lanka’s credit that there are so many bodies engaged in ocean science research but it is vital that data is pooled so that the country can learn how to use marine resources without destroying them, a leading scientist said. Professor Charitha Pattiaratchi’s call comes at the start

of the United Nations' Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-31), aimed at raising awareness of the challenges and opportunities provided by the oceans.

Among the many government agencies involved in marine research are the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), Department of Fisheries Resources, Department of Coast Conservation, the navy and coast guards, as well as the Department of Meteorology and the Disaster Management Centre, which collect data on specific aspects of oceans. Then there are the universities conducting oceanic research, with the Ocean University and University of Ruhuna in the lead.

Added to this are non-governmental organisations and private research bodies studying ocean sciences. "It is important to share data and to have proper coordination of the different responsibilities in order to achieve better results in the area of ocean science" said Dr. Pattiaratchi, Professor of Coastal Oceanography of the University of Western Australia's Ocean's Institute. "Sri Lanka also has an International Centre of Excellence on the Marine Environment sponsored by the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). This has been dormant for many years and the ocean decade could be a good starting point to reactivate it," Prof. Pattiaratchi pointed out.

Research is critical for Sri Lanka's fishing industry. Lack of scientific data has led many fish species to the brink of extinction due to overfishing, marine biologist Daniel Fernando, co-founder of Blue Resources Trust, told the Sunday Times. Mr. Fernando recommends that the government increase monitoring of the fishing industry and work closely with NGOs in research. NARA said it wants to increase research activity in the Ocean Decade. It said it continues to collect data on fish stocks in Sri Lankan waters, building on the survey initiated by the Norwegian research vessel, Dr Fridtjof Nansen in 2018.

NARA's research vessel, Samudrika, has been conducting marine research around Sri Lanka since 2012, the head of NARA's Marine Biological Resources Division, Dr. Sisira Haputhantri, said. The Chairman of the National Science Foundation, Prof. Ranjith Senaratne, points out that while the country has about 200 degree courses, only a handful of these relate to oceanic science. "Only about six courses (less than 3 per cent) deal with fisheries and ocean sciences.

This is despite the fact that Sri Lanka has an Exclusive Economic Zone (maritime area) eight times its landmass," Prof. Senaratne, a former vice chairman of the University Grants Commission, said. "Given the fact that Sri Lanka's future prosperity lies in the ocean, Sri Lankan universities should offer more courses related to fisheries, marine science, marine engineering, ocean resource engineering, port management., sea sports and maritime recreation, nautical science, fibreglass technology and boat-building and so on.

"We need to harness the biological, chemical and physical marine resources of the country which hitherto remain almost untouched and untapped," Prof. Senaratne said. Prof. Pattiaratchi said that while the populations of Australia and Sri Lanka are similar in numbers, there were about

1,000 times more scientists working on ocean research. “Lack of interest in studying ocean sciences could also be cultural,” he pointed out, noting that in Sri Lanka, most people aspire to become doctors and engineers, with very few taking up ocean sciences.

“Sri Lankans have very limited interaction with the sea. We do not have a culture of using the sea for recreation work such as swimming, surfing or diving so, there is a lack of interaction with the ocean and a lack of new blood wanting to become ocean explorers,” said Dr. Pattiaratchi, adding that he had been determined from the age of 14 to become a marine scientist.

Sri Lanka: Equity, justice, dignity and peace for fishermen?

<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/210404/news/equity-justice-dignity-and-peace-for-sri-lankan-fishermen-438980.html>

"An Indian Government statement read out ahead of the recent vote on the resolution on Sri Lanka at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva said: “India’s approach to the question of human rights in Sri Lanka is guided by two fundamental considerations. One is our support to the Tamils of Sri Lanka for equity, justice, dignity and peace. The other is in the ensuring the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

While an Indian diplomat was making his speech to the UNHRC in Geneva, hundreds of Tamil Nadu trawlers were once again streaming across the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) to fish illegally in Sri Lankan waters; demonstrating scant regard for the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. Anarasa: The dignity and peace that Sri Lankan Tamil fishermen have worked tirelessly to achieve in their lives since the end of the civil conflict were shattered overnight, by Tamil owned trawlers. And justice? Nine trawlers were arrested in the days that followed, after protests by fishermen and the seafood industry.

But almost immediately the nine vessels and 54 crewmembers were released without charge; allegedly at the request of the Government of India. Are Sri Lanka’s small scale, fishing communities on the north coast, not entitled to the right to freedom from bias or favouritism, too? Must the dice always fall in favour of Tamil Nadu’s semi-industrial trawl net fisheries employing a few thousand labourers as against Northern Sri Lanka’s 29,000 small-scale fishermen whose only source of livelihood is the hugely productive, highly lucrative and thankfully renewable marine resources on either side of the IMBL in the Palk Bay?

Unsurprisingly sans a meaningful legal deterrent, Tamil Nadu trawlers continued to fish illegally in Sri Lankan waters throughout last week. Fifty or so trawlers operated within 500 metres of the shore off the islands of Delft, Alanaithivu and Eluvaithivu, according to Eluvaithivu Fishermen’s Cooperative Society president T. Stanislawas. Rameshwaram boat owners had the cheek to call Jaffna District Federation of Fishermen’s Cooperative Societies’ Unions president A. Anarasa

last week to tell him to warn Jaffna fishermen that hundreds of Rameshwaram trawlers were coming.

This surprising development happened because Jaffna (and Mannar) fishermen have come to accept that Tamil Nadu trawlers may cross the IMBL every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday evenings. This is the so-called ‘three day/four day rule’. The ‘rule’ is a consequence of trawler owners refusing to accept — and the State Government’s inability to implement — a Tamil Nadu state law prohibiting trawling within 2.5 km of the shore – that is in the fishing grounds of small scale Tamil Nadu fishermen.

A Sri Lankan Navy officer inspecting an Indian trawler loaded with fish caught in Sri Lanka's waters. Instead an ‘agreement’ was reached between trawler owners and small scale fishermen to permit trawlers to operate anywhere they like for three days a week and small scale fishermen to fish in their traditional fishing grounds on the other four. Last week, the ‘three day/four day rule’ applied only in Tamil Nadu. In Sri Lankan waters Tamil Nadu trawlers felt emboldened to fish anywhere they liked for six days of the week, which they duly did without fear of arrest or legal consequences.

According to Anarasa, hundreds of Jaffna fishermen lost thousands of rupees worth of nets over the last two weeks. Last month alone, fishermen and fisher societies in Kayts, Delft and Karainagar lost millions of rupees worth of income due to the sudden upsurge in illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing by Tamil Nadu trawlers. Who is going to compensate these fishermen for their losses, he asked? Who will buy our fishermen new nets to replace those destroyed by the trawlers? Fishermen on the islands off the coast of Jaffna are now fearful about setting their nets, he said.

How can fishermen risk going out to fish, if Tamil Nadu boats continue to trawl with impunity in the fishing grounds of small scale fishermen in Sri Lanka, just like they do in Tamil Nadu? The trawlers will continue to come until April 15, he said. This is when the Indian Government officially closes coastal fisheries for 85 days to allow fish stock on the Indian side of the Palk Bay to recover. A group of Indian fishermen who were released after they were arrested for poaching in Sri Lankan waters.

The issue of persistent IUU fishing by Tamil Nadu trawlers in Sri Lankan waters is often couched in language that calls for ‘a humanitarian response’: The semantics of equity, justice, dignity and peace that Indian diplomat in Geneva last week. Northern fishermen and fisher leaders like Stanislaws and Anarasa are not asking anything different. They call for: Equity for small scale fishermen; the right to fish freely in their traditional fishing grounds without bias or favoritism; Justice through the rule of law; the implementation of a meaningful legal deterrent under the Fisheries (Regulation of Foreign Fishing Boats) (Amendment) Act No. 1 of 2018;

Dignity for small scale fishing communities; rebuilding livelihoods shattered by civil conflict, creating a future for their families based on the sustainable harvest of the Palk Bay’s rich marine

resources. And peace Small scale fishermen on both sides of the Palk Bay want to live and fish peacefully. The ultimate responsibility for delivering equity, justice, dignity and peace for small scale fishermen on both sides of the Palk Bay and respect for Sri Lanka's territorial integrity lies not in Jaffna or in Colombo, but in Chennai and New Delhi.

Sri Lanka: Export earnings fall nearly 42 percent in March 2020

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/Apr30_1588228844CH.php

"Sri Lanka's merchandize export earnings fell by 41.9 percent in March 2020 as the spread of COVID-19 in the country disrupted the production of merchandise, the Export Development Board (EDB) said. According to the monthly exports statistics, the year-on-year export earnings fell to US\$ 646 million from US\$ 1.112 billion recorded in March 2019. Apparel sector being the largest contributor has shown a 41 percent decline during the month of March 2020 compared to the same month in the previous year.

Some of the other sectors that have recorded a significant decline during the same period include Tea (-22%), Rubber Products (-15.7%), Coconut products (-14.2%), Spices (-36.5%), fruits & vegetable products (-17.4%), fish & fisheries products (-29%) etc. However analysis at disaggregate level on Coconut Milk Powder, Defatted Coconut, certain Coconut Kernel Products, Coconut Shell Charcoal, Essential Oils, Oleoresins, Ginger, Lemons, Melons & Papayas, Onions, Sweet Potatoes, Processed Food, Rice, Green Gram, Lentils, Organic Chemicals, Electrical Transformers, Boat Building, Petroleum Products etc. show a positive growth during March 2020 compared to March 2019.

Export Development Board (EDB) Chairman Prabhash Subasinghe noted that even though there is a decline in exports during the month of March 2020, such a decline is expected due to the global economic and trading environment. "However the EDB is taking every effort to assist the exporters to resume operations and we firmly believe that exports will be back on track in the near future, he added.

With the release of March 2020 data, the country's foreign exchange earnings show an overall decline of 19 percent during January-March 2020 in comparison to the same period in 2019 reaching US\$ 3.382 billion from US\$ 4.176 billion respectively, recording a 32 percent achievement against the annual revised target of US\$ 10.750 billion for the year 2020. Merchandise export earnings have recorded US\$ 2.577 billion during Jan- March 2020, compared to 3.116 billion last year.

Estimates in the services exports of ICT/ BPM, Construction, Financial services, Logistics and Wellness Tourism sectors show an overall revenue of US\$ 805 million during the period compared to US\$ 1.060 billion last year. When looking at the disaggregate level of products, even though some of the major sectors show a decline in earnings, certain other sectors show a

positive growth during the period under consideration. The following graph shows some sectors with negative growth, the EDB said.

Sri Lanka: Export income from fisheries for 2021, to become highest in history

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2021/12/21/export-income-from-fisheries-for-2021-to-become-highest-in-history/>

"The export income of Sri Lanka's Fisheries Exports for 2021 is on target to become the highest in history. According to the statistics made available by the end of November 2021, the export income of Fisheries Exports was US \$ 287 Million, and the Balance of Trade was at US \$ 171 Million, said State Minister Kanchana Wijeskera.

According to the State Minister, the top gainer was the Prawn Industry which showed a 181% growth. Notably, Canned Fish imports have also dropped by 68%. According to the Ministry of Fisheries Sri Lanka exported 24,229 MT of fish and fishery products from January to November 2021 valued at US \$ 287 Million. At the same time, Sri Lanka also imported 52,246 fish and fishery products valued at US \$ 116 Million.

Sri Lanka: Familiar disruption, uncertain future

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/familiar-disruption-uncertain-future/article31545652.ece>

"This is not the first time that their livelihoods are being disrupted or destroyed. From the nearly three decade-long civil war until 2009, to the invasive Indian trawlers that reigned their seas soon after, to conflicts with locals operating powerful mechanised boats, to migrant fisherfolk competing for their catch Sri Lanka's northern fisherfolk have seen it all. After struggling through the post-war decade, to cope with the aftermath of the devastating war, and against the Indian trawlers' destructive fishing in Sri Lanka's waters which prompted Sri Lanka to introduce tougher laws things were just beginning to look up.

And then the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic hit them. On March 10, Sri Lanka reported its first local case of COVID-19, when a tour guide tested positive. Ten days later the government imposed a nationwide curfew, forbidding travel from one district to another. As of Saturday evening, Sri Lanka had reported 824 cases, 240 recoveries and nine deaths. Despite the stringent curfew, the Sri Lankan government allowed fisherfolk to continue fishing. "We were very relieved they never stopped us from going to sea, said Annalingam Annarasa, a fisher leader in Kayts island, off Jaffna peninsula.

"But even that didn't eventually help us, he said. COVID-19 not only pulled the shutters down on all major markets they relied on to sell their fish, but also severely affected exports and domestic

pricing. Sea food exports fetched Sri Lanka over \$250 million in the last few years and ensured a steady demand for fish production in the north. With the adverse impact on the export market, where northern fisherfolk usually sold their expensive fish varieties, crab and exotic prawns, fisherfolk are having to sell their catch for a fourth or a fifth of the actual price in the domestic market.

“Normally, crab would go for about LKR 1,000-1,200 per kg in the export trade market, but now we are selling it for LKR 200 locally. Prawn sold for LKR 1,850 is now being sold for LKR 850. Our fishermen have no incentive to get into the deep sea because with this sort of pricing, we can't even recover the cost incurred on fuel for our boats, explained Mr. Annarasa, who heads the Federation of Fisher Cooperative Societies for Jaffna district. The losses are severe. On an average a fisherman who earlier sold 15 kg of fish for LKR 1,000 per kg, would make a profit of about LKR 8,000 a day.

But now, the same fish is being sold for some LKR 5,000, resulting in losses day after day. Further, middlemen buying fish to be sold in other parts of the country made more money than the fishermen, according to small-scale fishers in Jaffna. Tricky balance “A tricky balance between lives and livelihoods. That is how Mullaitivu-based fisher leader Thirugnanatheepan Anthony Alfred described the current challenge.

“We can't expect everything to go on as usual, these are very peculiar circumstances, he said. While the main markets are shut, some fisher cooperative societies have taken permission from local authorities to auction their catch at a common venue. “Of course, we strictly enforce health safety measures like physical distancing. We don't allow people to crowd around the stall. These are tough times and we have to find ways to sustain our livelihood in whatever way possible, said K. Rajachandran, a fisher leader in Karainagar, Jaffna.

The district reported seven cases. The impact of COVID-19 might have been less severe, had the fisheries sector been given some attention in the post-war years, according to Mr. Annarasa. “All governments make promises, but nothing gets done. If different governments had invested in the fisheries sector, helping us modernise fishing, we could have increased production over the years and secured livelihoods.

Not all fisherfolk qualify for government assistance or loans, he added. “If you ask me, I will say fisherfolk are like daily wage labourers now. We earn something to eat and survive that day. That is all. We can't think much about the future. Some are also questioning Sri Lanka's fisheries policy that has been oriented more towards exports, based on low-volume, high-margin catches by the fishermen, of crab or costly fish that most locals can't afford.

Fisher leaders also point to the irony of the island nation importing seafood, worth nearly \$200 million in 2018, for local consumption. “Whether it is UN agencies or our local authorities, their projects are all oriented towards exports. Now, our own food has become a question mark, a

leader said.

Sri Lanka: Farmers and fishermen in distress; unable to support livelihood

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2020/04/05/farmers-and-fishermen-in-distress-unable-to-support-livelihood/>

"The people of Lahugala in Ampara earn a living by farming. However, they have been severely inconvenienced due to wild elephants. Area residents say that the elephants attack homes in which paddy reaped during the harvesting season had been stored. The latest attack had taken place last evening (April 4). The area residents complain that they find it difficult to even find food due to this troublesome situation.

The Sadamaeliya village in Thambuettagama has also been affected due to the threat posed by wild elephants. Banana and coconut trees were among the cultivations that had been destroyed. Area residents said that elephants emerging from the Kuda Gal Vihara reserve have caused such destruction. Residents say that it is quite difficult to stay at home during the curfew as a result of this situation.

Meanwhile, the fishermen in Chilaw have decided to temporarily refrain from going out to sea until further notice. Chairman of the Chilaw District Fisheries Organization, Roshan Thushara Fernando said: "All fishermen in Chilaw have decided to temporarily abandon this job. As of now people from different areas are coming to the Chilaw fish market. We have made this decision collectively to support the government. In keeping with this decision, around 10,000 fishermen across 15 villages between Karukapane and Iranawila in Chilaw refrained from going out to sea.

Meanwhile the Chairman of the Wattakkalliya Rural Fishermen Association, Sudesh Fernando said; "It is now in a state where if one patient is reported, they shut down the entire village. Before it goes any further, we must think. We have been doing this job a long time and are patriotic citizens of this country. Therefore we make a request of the fishermen in this country, to support the efforts of the authorities and to stay protected at home. We ask that they stop engaging in fishing until further notified.

Meanwhile, fishermen in Matara have been inconvenienced as a result of the difficulties in transporting fish. They say that this situation had arisen since permission has not been granted to use the expressway to transport fish. Finding food has become a problem for animals as much as it has become an issue for human beings. Local clergy and youth came forward to help feed animals in the 18 bend area of Mahiyangana.

Usually, these animals are fed by tourists in the countless vehicles that pass one of Sri Lanka's more popular tourist attractions. This effort is supported by the Dehigella Sri Poorwarama Raja

Mahaviharaya in Mahiyangana, it's Chief Incumbent, the Ven, Ambale Rathana Thero and youth in the area. Meanwhile, animals near the Gal Viharaya in Polonnaruwa were also given food today. The initiative was taken by a group of youth in Kuruppu junction in Polonnaruwa.

Sri Lanka: Financial assistance from NSB for the development of aquaculture

<https://island.lk/financial-assistance-from-nsb-for-the-development-of-sri-lanka-aquaculture/>

"National Savings Bank (NSB), in collaboration with one of its fully owned subsidiary, Sri Lanka Savings Bank(SLSB), has planned to introduce a special loan scheme to offer credit facilities under a lower interest rate with a view to accelerating the development of shrimp farming industry in Sri Lanka. Shrimp farming industry in Sri Lanka, which came into being around 30 years ago, could be identified as a higher value generating sector among the industries based on aquaculture in the country.

With the objective of achieving a sustainable development in shrimp farming industry in the country, Sri Lanka Aquaculture Development Alliance has been established 15 years back and the permanent members of this organization will be able to obtain loan facilities within a value range of Rs. one Million to Rs. 100 Million under this loan scheme.

This Alliance comprises of 18 farmers' societies, breeding center societies, seafood societies and shrimp feed societies in Puttlam District, in which the shrimp farming industry is mainly centralized. The Alliance operates the shrimp farming industry, in coordination with the National Aquaculture Development Authority of Sri Lanka, the main state sponsored organization mandated for the task of development of the aquaculture and inland fisheries sector in Sri Lanka and other government institutions.

Further, the membership of this alliance represents the entire shrimp farming industry of the country. According to the Alliance, even if the species of prawns with a steady growth and free of diseases are introduced, farmers undergo many difficulties in obtaining financial facilities required to duly process and maintain the farms as per the conditions and requirements to be met when rearing such species.

Therefore, the Alliance firmly believes that that the proposed loan scheme by National Savings Bank and Sri Lanka Savings Bank would ensure a progressive opportunity for the individuals engaged in this sector to expand their businesses. With the introduction of the said loan scheme, NSB expects to back the national course of expanding the shrimp farming industry by incorporating high tech methodologies and equipment and thereby generating more employment opportunities, which has become a necessity in the face of the high demand for prawns in the world market and the requirement of further diversifying the exports in Sri Lanka instead of depending on the traditional export sectors such as Tea, Rubber, Coconut and Garments.

NSB thus contributes to realize the Government's vision of increasing the exports of the country while reducing the imports to promote local industries and production as stipulated by “Saubhagye Dekma (Vision of Prosperity). The Chairperson of NSB, Mrs. Keasila Jayawardena, the Chairman of Sri Lanka Aquaculture Development Alliance, Mr. Sarath Kithsiri and several other officials of the Alliance, some of the Deputy General Managers of NSB and some officers of SLSB were present at the initial discussions held in this regard recently.

Sri Lanka: Fish exports could bring rapid development to the country

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2020/02/02/business/%E2%80%98lankans-need-patronise-local-products-and-services%E2%80%99>

"Today, we feature Shiran Fernando CEO/ Director of the Tess Group of Companies, the largest canned fish producer and exporter in Sri Lanka. He is also the President of the Canned Fish Manufacturers' Association and works hard to provide economic benefits to society, particularly the fishing community while positively contributing to the national development agenda of the Government. He promotes local products and is of the view that all Sri Lankans need to encourage local industries in terms of patronising products and services and recognising their contribution for a better Sri Lanka.

The fisheries sector is one of the industries which can help develop the country and people quickly and yet sustain its position. As Sri Lanka owns a sea area 10 times the size of its land area, the resources available are vast. The fishing industry could bring rapid development to the country by generating foreign exchange through exporting and providing much needed nutrition to the population and keeping the nation healthy by averting the high rate of anemia prevalent among them today.

It is important to note that one in every three people is suffering from anemia and this is common among many children. Fish could be an ideal source to obtain the required nutrition. Sri Lanka is surrounded by the sea. We need to have a well focused strategy to gain maximum advantage of this resource which could be our key economic driver in time to come if necessary and proper planning is in place. As a country we import US \$ 64 million worth of canned fish and this action needs careful evaluation and re-thinking.

We could save valuable foreign exchange and generate employment if the required governmental support is given. It is a matter of prioritising our national agenda to protect and nurture local industries which could contribute greatly to the economy. There are over 600,000 fishermen and a 1.5 million strong fishing community in the country. Their living standards could be uplifted by providing the necessary environment to continue their livelihood.

The Government needs to seriously look at facilities given to the canned fish importers which are detrimental to the local producers. For example, the Government reduced the import duty on

canned fish from Rs. 102 to Rs. 52 and this was a big blow to the local canned fish manufacturers who were well set to meet the local needs. There are four canned fish manufacturing factories and one factory has closed down due to intense competition from cheap imports mainly from China.

This is an opportune time for the Government to consider curtailing imports from China as incidents such as the Corona virus too will have an impact on these types of imports. Most of these products are of inferior quality and Sri Lanka has become an easy dumping ground for these imports. The nutrition level of this product is also questionable as they have a long shelf life. On the contrary, the local products are canned within a day and they are more fresh and nutritious. The Canned Fish Manufacturers Association, the voice of the local industry urges the Government to re-introduce the same import tax structure to enable the industry to make a come back and be a key economic driver of the country.

“We have the capacity to meet the entire local requirement provided we are given the Government backing. On average 150,000 cans of fish are consumed daily. We value the measures taken to purchase local canned fish for government institutions and this practice needs to be continued. The local canned fish industry uses 100 per cent locally sourced products, from fish to can and label and it's economic value is more, he said. The Government needs to intervene in a situation where the local catch is not sufficient to meet the demand and it needs to take action to import the required quantity till the shortage is over.

This will be a short time practice and the authorities should have proper control over this as otherwise it will negatively impact the fishery industry. On the nutrition side, the UN says that nutrition level in people is low. The way to increase nutrition is through protein consumption. Fish is an ideal form of protein. Therefore, if necessary measures are taken to encourage fishermen to increase the catch and the excess to be given to the three canned factories, the country will have a reasonably priced source of protein.

This will help address a social issue as well as create more economic activities that will have far reaching benefits to society. The government must focus attention on this industry. This will not only save foreign exchange and provide much needed nutrition to the people, but will generate employment while uplifting the living standards of the fishing community which is a neglected social segment at present.

The Tess Group of Companies which has four subsidiaries, Tess (Pvt) Ltd, Tess Agro, Tropic Fishery and Tropic Frozen Foods Ltd has ventured in to diverse activities. The Tess company is the first EU registered factory in Sri Lanka. It also operates a cold chain and has the only long line vessel fleet in the country. “We actively contribute to the national economy. We expect the Government to support us to sustain our efforts and to continue our ethical business, he said.

Sri Lanka: Fish exports to have unprecedented future demand

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/05/11/finance/218280/lanka%E2%80%99s-fish-exports-have-unprecedented-future-demand>

"Sri Lanka's fish exports will face an unprecedented global demand, following the world predicted to opt for fish and sea foods over meats following the COVID 19 pandemic outbreak, a frontline fish exporter told Daily News Finance yesterday. The Chairman of H and M Western Private Ltd Mahendra De Vaz whose company exports around 100 Tonnes of all varieties of edible fish monthly, prior to the outbreak of COVID 19, said that with the outbreak of pandemic, the monthly export volumes had dipped to around 30-40 Tonnes per month.

However, he said that there was unlimited prospects for the exports to increase while there were so many deterrents which were in the way of the development of the industry. Sri Lanka, on the overall, has over 40 companies which were exporting fresh and frozen fish and some of the varieties that were in hot demand were: Yellow Fin Tuna, Sword Fish, Sea Crabs, Prawns, Fresh Water Fish, Cuttlefish (Quid), and most varieties of Reef Fish such as Garoupa and others.

He said that some of the local companies were exporting over 100 Tonnes a months while some of the smaller companies were exporting a mere 40-50 Tonnes a month. Some of the export markets that Sri Lanka exports fish and sea food are: USA, UK and the Continent, especially Spain and Italy along with Ukraine. One of them, he said was the prohibitive freight rates which were levied by airlines such as Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines, Qatar Airways, Emirates, Turkish Airlines and our own Sri Lankan Airlines.

Quoting some examples, he said that prior to the COVID 19, outbreak the freight rates which were US \$ 3.50 per kilo of fish to the US, had risen to US\$ 7 as of now, Germany from US \$ 3.40 per kilo to US \$ 4.80 per kilo, UK and Japan from US \$ 2.90 per kilo to US \$ 4. He also said that the national carrier should also come to code sharing arrangements with other major airlines such as American Airlines and others so that Sri Lanka's sea food exports could reach those markets and other new and hitherto unexplored markets as well.

He said that Sri Lanka needed to it develop its technology like Vietnam and Thailand and make it macro scale which will also assist the local fishing industry to add value here itself where they could go into canning as well. One of the principal deterrents to making the industry big time international is the lack of usage of large scale trawlers like in Thailand and Vietnam where they go into international waters. There should also be training of quality standards and processing as well, he said.

Sri Lanka: Fisherfolk against tourist boats in Madhu River

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/03/13/fisherfolk-against-tourist-boats-in-madhu-river/>

"Fishermen involved in the traditional fishing industry along the Madhu River allege that they have been severely affected by the use of kerosene by boats that are involved in the Madhu River tourism industry. The fishermen halted their boats at the Galmangoda port at Balapitiya this morning and staged a protest in this regard.

Boats which are engaged in tourism at the Madhu river have begun using kerosene as fuel due to the high price of petrol. The fishermen say that due use of kerosene by tourist vessels, the fish which they harvest with great difficulty has become unsustainable and inedible due to traces of kerosene. They further request the authorities to immediately intervene and secure the sources of income of about 300 families engaged in traditional fishing activities along the Madhu River.

Sri Lanka: Fisherfolk seek relief

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2020/11/08/business/fisherfolk-see-relief>

"The authorities should either allow fishermen to sell their catch for at least a few hours a day to enable them to make a living or provide food and other necessities to the fisher community which is on the brink of starvation due to the lockdown, said fishery trade union representatives last week. They said there is no point in allowing them to fish when there is no way to sell. People are reluctant to consume fish due to the fear that has been created by the pandemic.

"Fisher families have been affected since the outbreak of the virus early this year and to-date all our pleas for a viable solution has fallen on deaf ears, All Ceylon Fisher-folk Trade Union President Aruna Roshantha Fernando said. Fishery community heads call on the Government to come up with a plan either to open the fish markets in quarantine areas or to ensure the delivery of food and other essentials. "The authorities should understand the plight of all those who lead a hand to mouth existence.

We have no savings such as monthly wage earners who could withstand such situations for sometime, Fernando said, adding that even before the lockdown the prices of fish had dropped drastically from around Rs. 1,500 a kilo to around Rs. 700. Fisher-folk associations said that they have to face the situation while fuel prices are still the same. They said a price reduction in line with global prices will give them some respite.

"We cannot understand why the Government cannot reduce oil prices when global crude prices have dropped sharply. This is the time they should be concerned about the affected people to help them keep the wolf from the door, Fernando said. Fisher communities by no means undermine the precautions taken to curtail the spread of the virus.

However, their plea is to ensure they could put food on table while priority is being given to healthcare. Fisher-folk across the country have been in an appalling state for over seven months

due to frequent interruptions to their occupation depriving them of a steady income to keep the home fires burning. Fishermen are confined to their homes and prefer to be like that until the green light is given to open markets.

Associations have been harping on the same string for measures to eliminate the exploitation by middlemen and those in the supply chain. The fisheries sector comprises over 300,000 direct and over one million indirect beneficiaries contributing around 1.5 percent to the country's GDP. Meanwhile fisheries trade union representatives call on the authorities to amend the laws pertaining to the fisheries sector to address the exploitation of the country's marine resources by foreign fishing vessels.

Sri Lanka: Fisheries Act to be amended to suit modern times – Minister

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2021/10/04/local/260983/fisheries-act-be-amended-suit-modern-times-minister>

"The Fisheries Ministry issuing a statement said that as per the request of the European Commission, the Fisheries Ministry has prepared the new amendments on the instructions of the Minister, as the European Commission states have pointed out that the prevailing Sri Lankan Fisheries Act is old and needs to be amended to suit new international laws. "Sri Lanka is one of the largest fish exporters to the European Commission.

In order to obtain the GSP concession, certain amendments in the prevailing Act were requested by the relevant countries. Accordingly, the legal divisions of the relevant countries have pointed out the prevailing issues and have called for amendments", the statement said. The Ministry further said that the amendments to the Act were done on the instructions of Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda.

A discussion on the Fisheries Act was held last Saturday at the Fisheries Ministry of Fisheries under Minister Douglas Devananda and State Minister Kanchana Wijesekera. Shortcomings of the Fisheries Act, which is currently in force and the extent to which our fishermen would be punished if they violated these rules were discussed at the meeting.

The Minister instructed Ministry Secretary Indu Ratnayake, Director-General Susantha Kahawatta and Ministry Legal Officers to take action to rectify the shortcomings, introduce new Amendments and introduce the Bill in Parliament as soon as possible. It was decided to send it to the USA as well. Minister Douglas Devananda said the European Commission states will consider extending the concessions and relief.

Sri Lanka: Fisheries bodies to present industry predicament soon

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2021/04/25/business/fisheries-bodies-present-industry-predicament-soon>

"A meeting comprising all fisheries association heads and representatives to raise concerns and present the state into which the fisheries industry has fallen into will be held shortly, All Ceylon Fisheries Association President Aruna Roshantha told the Sunday Observer Business during a media visit to view the state of the Negombo lagoon last week. He said there is no use in funding artificial prawn farming when the entire freshwater fisheries industry is in jeopardy.

"People of this country have consumed freshwater fish which is far more nutritious than the prawns from farms. Measures should be taken to develop the local fisheries industry looking into the plight of the fisherfolk who have fallen from the frying pan to the fire," Roshantha said. Local fisheries associations have been irked by moves to grant a licence to Indian fishermen to enter Lankan waters which will give them the green light to carry out bottom-trawling.

"At this rate the local fisheries industry will die a natural death very soon as fishermen have lost hope which is the worst thing that could happen to someone," Fernando said. Heads of Fisheries Associations have been insisting that there should be a proper national plan to develop the industry. "How could there be a proper plan when people who are clueless about fishing are manning the desk and holding key positions in the Government.

There has to be people with practical knowledge of the industry to steer it. If they lack expertise they should see the support of those who are knowledgeable," Fernando said. The need to protect marine life and the ecology was stressed during the visit which was an eye-opener to the environmental destruction to the Negombo lagoon which has been a ground for discharging factory sewage and other effluents.

Lagoons and all freshwater resources should be protected first before farming," Fernando said, adding that at the rate marine resources are being exploited and destroyed within the country and outside and the absence of a consistent national policy to protect the industry fisher-folk will have to bid farewell to fishing soon, according to fisheries associations. The National Fisheries Association convening a media briefing recently called on the authorities to launch speedy action to put a halt to foreign vessels encroaching on our waters and exploiting resources.

The Association said it was aware of moves by Sri Lanka to enter into a program with Indian authorities to allow Indian fishermen to fish in Sri Lankan waters. The association noted that encroaching Lankan waters by foreign vessels has been a practice for centuries but the use of sea-bed destroying technology and exploiting our resources is alarming.

Bottom trawling, which was made an offence through the amendment of the Aquatic Resources Act in 2014, causes severe destruction to the ocean floor resulting in the depletion of aquatic resources. A maximum prison term of two years and a maximum fine of Rs. 50,000 was imposed on bottom trawling.

However, what agitates the fisheries community is banning bottom-trawling by local fishermen while giving the green light to foreign vessels to exploit the country's marine resources. The fisheries sector comprises over 300,000 direct and over one million indirect beneficiaries contributing around 1.5 percent to the GDP.

Sri Lanka: Fisheries sector records historic performance in 2021

<https://www.ft.lk/front-page/Fisheries-sector-records-historic-performance-in-2021/44-732755>

"Amidst the numerous pandemic-induced challenges, a silver lining for Sri Lanka was the record-breaking performance delivered by the fisheries industry in the year 2021. Exports exceeded forecasts to deliver many firsts: achieving the highest export value in history at \$ 318 million as against \$ 215 million in 2020, the largest balance of fish trade in history at \$ 192 million compared to \$ 23 million in 2020, lowest import value and quantity in over a decade of \$ 126 million and 56,176 MT (\$ 191 Million and 85,809 MT in 2020), the highest production of shrimp farming in history, which almost doubled from the previous 14,415 MT; an increase of 162% in shrimp export value, an increase of 74% in exports value of ornamental fishery to \$ 21 million; and more than doubled domestic canned fish production.

Domestic production increased from 90,000 cans per day in December 2020 to 220,000 cans per day in December 2021 as against the domestic requirement of 275,000 cans per day.

A decrease of 76.2% in imports of canned fish was also recorded as compared to 2019. The fish and fisheries sector plays an important role in Sri Lanka's social and economic life. The sector contributes about 2.7% to the country's GDP. The lifting of the ban on Sri Lankan fish exports to the European Union (EU) in 2016 and the restoration of the GSP+ concession in 2017 has given a significant boost to the fish and seafood exports industry. The sector generates close to 2.4 million direct and indirect jobs.

Commenting on the break-out performance Seafood Exporters Association of Sri Lanka President and Taprobane Seafoods Ltd., Director Dilan Fernando said : "I am so proud to state that the fisheries exports sector delivered a superlative performance despite massive challenges faced due to a COVID-19 cluster within the industry stakeholders, lockdowns, rise in freight costs, shutdown in export markets, the XPressPearl maritime disaster and floods in the Puttalam District.

"The resilience and courage of all the exporters can be witnessed in how they surmounted these odds to record such high export numbers. One of the pillars of this performance has been that all the stakeholders in the industry and the authorities had a common vision to ensure the fisheries remained unaffected to the greatest extent." Shrimp farming in Puttalam increased from 6,000 Mt to 14,000 Mt in 2020, which was a doubling of production, of which Vannamei accounted for

90%. In June 2021, the Government banned wild broodstock for post-larvae as disease and outbreaks were rampant.

However, SPF broodstock is now being imported and is disease-free as it is created in a disease-free environment. From here on, growing them and ensuring their health is in the hands of the farmer. The ornamental fish sector has also done well. With more people at home due to the pandemic, this industry has seen growth.

The Government is also moving more into private and public partnerships. Rekawa and Batticaloa are good examples, where the Government is calling for tenders to farm unutilised land for farming. Over 5,000 acres in Batticaloa and Hambantota are being considered for expression of interest, which adds even more farming land to expand fisheries.

With this in mind, the Government is also offering shrimp farmers a low-interest loan to support them to scale up their businesses. They are supporting the industry to convert mud ponds to HDPE lining to increase growth cycles from two to three cycles while doubling the harvest. Farmers can opt for up to 5 M per pond and go up to 20 ponds per farmer with a payment period of two years.

The Seafood Exporters Association of Sri Lanka (SEASL) was established in 1998 to represent and promote the interests of companies engaged in the export of seafood products from Sri Lanka. It provides a common platform for the leading seafood export companies in Sri Lanka to discuss concerns and constraints affecting seafood exports per se, as well as issues affecting the fisheries industry in Sri Lanka. “As an industry, we operate on the belief that the private sector, producers, and the government sector must work in collaboration to drive the Sri Lankan shrimp sector and bring about a real change in the country and communities.

“Thus, we are supporting exporters by improving technology and research to promote an industry-wide transition to shrimp production systems that are more environmentally sustainable and economically viable,” stated Fernando further. He goes on to say, “The progress and growth shown by the fisheries industry were possible because of the support of the Cabinet and State Ministers and their wise policy decisions. The Minister and the officials from his ministry have worked tirelessly through the worst of the pandemic to implement many improvements in the industry. We are extremely grateful for their support.”

The SEASL is also a forum for engagement between Sri Lankan seafood exporters and the international seafood food community. Its mission is to ensure the long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the seafood export sector in Sri Lanka.

The sector has seen significant growth with key buyers from the USA, Japan, Italy, France,

Netherlands, and Hong Kong. With the opening of the Northern and Eastern areas of the island nation, 65% of the oceanic area is now free for fishing.

Under the Government's Fisheries Sector development strategy, a modern and technically improved Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) is being established, this will be able to prevent national fishing vessels from drifting to other countries' territorial waters. ..."

Sri Lanka: Fishermen dry fish in Negombo

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2020/10/18/business/fishermen-dry-fish-negombo>

"Sri Lanka imports a substantial quantity of dried fish and sprats annually to cater to the domestic demand despite being an exporter of fish. The global pandemic put a spoke on the growth of the fisheries sector which makes a salient contribution to the economy. Here fishermen dry fish in Negombo.

Sri Lanka: Fishermen feeling the impact of ship disaster

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/fishermen-feeling-the-impact-of-sri-lanka-ship-disaster/2096072>

"Sri Lanka"s fishermen are already feeling the impact of an unfolding environmental disaster caused by the slow sinking of a fire-ravaged cargo ship that had been loaded with chemicals. Fishing remained banned Friday along about 80 kilometres (50 miles) of coastline, as debris from the Singapore-flagged MV X-Press Pearl including tons of plastic pellets and burned fiberglass continued to wash ashore. Authorities were also on guard for the possible leak of oil and chemicals from the ship, which started sinking off the country's main port on Wednesday, a day after a fire that raged on the vessel for 12 days was extinguished.

A lone fisherman, Kinson Jayalath, was defying the ban Friday on Kepumgoda beach. He said he was trying to catch food for his family but was growing frustrated by the lack of fish in an area where he said there had been plenty just a week ago. In a nearby village home to many people who depend on the fishing industry, Ajith Nelson said even before the restrictions were announced fishermen were having their nets ruined by huge chunks of cotton like material that became entangled in them.

While fishing is still allowed in deeper waters, sales of seafood have plummeted because consumers fear chemical contamination, said Herman Kumara of the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement. As the the ship started to sink, crews tried to tow it into deeper waters away from the port but failed after the ship's stern became submerged and rested on the seabed 21 meters (70 feet) below the surface.

The ship was continuing to take on water Friday. Shumel Yoskovitz, the chief executive of the ship's operators X-Press Feeders, apologised for disaster Friday in an interview with Channel News Asia. "I'd like to express my deep regret and apology to the Sri Lankan people for the harm this incident has caused both to the livelihood and environment of Sri Lanka, Yoskovitz said. The fire erupted on May 20 when the ship was anchored about 9.5 nautical miles (18 kilometres) northwest of Colombo and waiting to enter the port.

X-Press Feeders have said the fire destroyed most of the ship's cargo, which included 25 tons of nitric acid and other chemicals. It has said salvage experts were remaining with the vessel to monitor its condition and any pollution. Colombo port Harbor Master Nirmal Silva said tons of oil in the ship's fuel tanks may also have burned out with the fire, but authorities were prepared to deal with an oil spill. Both the navy and coast guard have been preparing for a spill with assistance from neighboring India.

India has sent three ships to help, including one specifically equipped to deal with marine pollution. Sri Lankan police are probing the fire, and a court in Colombo on Tuesday banned the captain, the engineer and the assistant engineer from leaving the country. The government has said it will take legal action against the owners of the ship to claim compensation. Kumara's fishing group along with other activist groups on Friday petitioned the Supreme Court to call on authorities to assess the long-term damage to the environment and marine life, possible hazardousness of eating fish and the health impacts.

The petition called on the owners of the ship, their local agent and the state to pay compensation to those affected. The petitioners told court that they obtained the list of the goods carried onboard the ship through a right to information law and the cargo included nitric acid, caustic soda, sodium methylate, plastic, lubricant oil, quick lime, sodium methoxide, high density polyethylene, low density polyethylene, methanol, bright yellow sulphur, urea, and cosmetics. Silva said that the ship captain had not concealed any information on the goods onboard nor was there was any breach of rules.

Sri Lanka: Fishermen launch flotilla protesting Indian poaching

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/17/sri-lankan-flotilla-protests-against-indian-poaching>

"Sri Lankan fishermen have launched a flotilla of boats to demand that the government do more to protect the island nation's prawn-rich northern waters from poaching by Indian fishers. Boats flying black flags and carrying opposition legislators travelled 100km (60 miles) from the northeastern fishing town of Mullaittivu to Sri Lanka's northernmost tip, Point Pedro, on Sunday. "We have come in boats to protest bottom trawling by Indian fishermen," M A Sumanthiran, a legislator for the main Tamil opposition party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), told reporters in Point Pedro.

Bottom trawling – which was banned from Sri Lankan waters in 2017 – involves dragging heavy nets across the seafloor to catch a large volume of fish, causing severe damage to the marine ecosystem. The TNA said it was protesting Sri Lankan authorities' failure to stop poaching by Indian fishers and protect the impoverished local fishing communities. There was no immediate comment from the government. Al Jazeera's Minelle Fernandez, reporting from the capital Colombo, said the fishing community has been complaining for years.

“At the root of it is livelihood. It's about Sri Lankan fishermen struggling to make ends meet, and what they say is mass-scale poaching by Indian fishing boats that come into Sri Lankan waters and take valuable fish stocks away with them,” Fernandez said. Fernandez said protesters are asking the government to implement more strongly the laws passed in 2017 and ensure that all offenders are held accountable.

Tensions between neighbours India and Sri Lanka are separated by the narrow Palk Strait, a rich fishing ground known for jumbo prawns, and poaching has led to tensions between the South Asian neighbours. Sri Lankan fishermen were not allowed to venture out during much of the island's decades-long Tamil separatist war that ended in May 2009, allowing Indians a free run in the area.

But there have been increasing tensions over poaching since the end of the war. Sri Lanka has regularly detained large numbers of Indian fishers and seized their boats, but there has been no let-up in poaching, according to locals. An Indian fisherman was allegedly killed by Sri Lankan forces in March 2017.

Sri Lanka: Fishermen seek financial support to tide over crisis

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2021/06/06/business/fishermen-seek-financial-support-tide-over-crisis>

"The fisher community which has fallen from the frying pan into the fire due to the blow from a double whammy of the global pandemic and now the ship catching fire in Lankan waters urgently call for assistance from the authorities to keep the home fires burning. The fisher-families whose only source of income has been taken away urge the government to provide a daily allowance at least till they get over the crises that has brought their life to a complete standstill. “We are in a precarious state today.

We just raised our heads after a tumultuous time of two years when tragedy struck us again with the vessel catching fire,” said fisher-folk in Negombo who are currently in a hapless state. Fisher-families said granting Rs. 5,000 to tide over a long period is not a viable solution as one has to put food on the table daily and fulfill other daily needs. “Providing a pittance when our trade has been completely bungled cannot be accepted. There has to be a favourable solution

such as a daily allowance to fisher-families that would enable at least to feed the children,” said All-Ceylon Fisher-Folks Trade Union President Aruna Fernando.

Fishermen said, “Earlier we were unable to go out to sell. Now people are not buying because fear has been created without any scientific proof that it’s dangerous to consume fish due to the contamination of water with hazardous substances. “The authorities must undertake a comprehensive study and make claims that are scientifically verifiable without creating panic which has adverse ramifications to the country,’ Fernando said adding that to panic seeing some fish or shore is not scientific as it is a common site during the monsoons to have fish washed ashore.

“Fishery associations have been urging the government to formulate a national policy that is implementable in consultation with fisheries associations who know the industry,” Fernando said. The Government with the assistance of the forces launched a major cleanup operation last week following the container ship laden with chemicals caught fire inundating the western coast with microplastic pollution and potentially hazardous waste.

Eco-activists and environmentalists said the second vessel to catch fire in Lankan waters in recent times, would lead to the worst catastrophic ecological disaster in the country and of the potential threat to marine life and the fishing industry. MS X-Press Pearl, a Singapore-registered ship was sailing from India’s Gujarat to Colombo when a fire broke out onboard on May 20 around nine nautical miles off the Sri Lankan coast.

Experts said there was a possibility for about 350 metric tons of oil to leak into the ocean resulting in widespread ecological damage to marine life. Sri Lankan authorities have launched criminal and civil probes into how the fire started. The Marine Environment and Protection Authority (MEPA) stated plastic waste had caused “the worst environmental disaster we have seen in our lifetime.” MEPA added the damage from the ship was still being calculated.

Sri Lanka: Fishermen stage protest against rising cost of living & fuel prices

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/03/20/fishermen-stage-protest-against-rising-cost-of-living-fuel-prices/>

"The All Ceylon Fisheries Federation (ACFF) staged a protest at Kudawella Junction in Hambantota today (20) alleging that the fuel crisis and the rising cost of living has a severe impact on the fishing community.

Ajith Nishantha, the Convener of the National Center for Multi-Day Craft Owners stated that boats remain fully anchored at harbors today as there is no way for people to do their job without fuel.

He said that if 5,000 liters of fuel is spent for one multi-day vessel, an additional cost of Rs. 275,000 has to be borne by them. News 1st correspondents said that the protestors were blocking one lane of the Matara-Kataragama main road for about an hour."

Sri Lanka: Fishermen unable to sell their catch amid lockdown

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/sri-lanka-fishermen-unable-sell-catch-lockdown-200326103418599.html>

"Four hundred tonnes of freshly caught fish is set to be thrown away in Sri Lanka because of the coronavirus lockdown. Fishermen in Sri Lanka are struggling to sell their catch as the government introduces tough measures to halt the spread of the new coronavirus. Four hundred tonnes of fish could be thrown away, and more fish-laden boats are expected to return to port soon. Al Jazeera's Minelle Fernandez reports from Dikkowita, Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka: Fishermen warned as strong winds lash sea areas

<https://menafn.com/1100755365/Sri-Lanka-Fishermen-warned-as-strong-winds-lash-sea-areas;>

"Fishermen have been warned as strong winds continued to lash sea areas with wind speeds increasing upto 70 kmph. The Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources warned small and one-day fishing vessels to stay away from fishing till 1200 hours tomorrow (Monday).

The Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources said that wind speeds across the deep and shallow sea areas around the island could rise up to 70 kmph according to a warning notification issued by the Department of Meteorology.

Meanwhile, the Department of Meteorology warned that the sea areas around the island can be rough to very rough during this period. Fishermen have been informed that it is dangerous to venture into the sea areas during the given period and naval communities have also been requested to be vigilant.

Sri Lanka: Fishers report drastic decline of an elusive ray

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2021/12/21/in-sri-lanka-fishers-report-dramatic-decline-of-an-elusive-ray>

"In the waters off Sri Lanka, the number of sawfish, a rare and globally threatened group of marine rays, has declined so much that the animal is now considered "functionally extinct." That finding, from a study by Pew marine fellow Rima Jabado in the August 2021 issue of the journal

Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems, has spurred lawmakers to explore measures to protect the remaining sawfish in the country.

Jabado and her colleagues at Blue Resources Trust, a nongovernmental organization in Sri Lanka, interviewed more than 300 fishers and fish traders to investigate the distribution, species diversity, and health of Sri Lanka's sawfish populations. Named for their sawlike snouts, sawfish are a type of ray whose skeleton is made primarily of cartilage. And like many shark and ray species, these animals are targeted for their fins, which can fetch high prices in the marine wildlife trade.

“Our goal was to gather information on the status of sawfish in Sri Lanka by interviewing fishers across coastal communities, because they are most likely to have firsthand knowledge of these rare species,” said Jabado, who was awarded a Pew marine fellowship in 2019 for her research on the exploitation of guitar fishes and wedge fishes. “Observing declines in rare or elusive species can be challenging, in part because even when populations are healthy, they are encountered so infrequently in the wild.”

Once abundant in many parts of the world, all five of the living species of sawfish are now classified as either Endangered or Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. These species, which are among the largest fishes in the sea, mature slowly and have few offspring, making them particularly susceptible to exploitation by humans. Once reduced, sawfish populations can take decades to rebuild. Sawfish species have been recorded in Sri Lanka for more than a century, but no studies to assess their status in the country have been conducted until now.

Research in other Indian Ocean countries found drastic population declines in recent decades, probably the result of targeted fishing, accidental entanglement in fishing gear—known as bycatch—and habitat loss from dredging, pollution, and coastal development. Documenting decades of decline To address this knowledge gap, Jabado and her colleagues conducted interviews at 21 sites around Sri Lanka's coastline, asking fishers for information about the frequency and seasonality of sawfish sightings, the types of fishing gear used, and the value of sawfish meat or fins.

Respondents were also asked about local names for individual sawfish species and their perceptions of the animals' cultural significance. “We found strong evidence for declining Sri Lankan sawfish populations, with knowledge of sawfishes increasing with the age of study participants,” Jabado said. No respondents ages 20-29 could identify sawfishes from illustrations or reported seeing them in the wild. Conversely, all respondents ages 70-79 could identify and had seen the animals.

The median year in which sawfishes were last observed by respondents was 1992, indicating that population declines extend back several decades. The team also found that language provided historical insights about the distribution of sawfish species. Although the researchers could

confirm the presence of only one species from photographs and dried specimens, study respondents from northern Sri Lanka provided local names for two different types of sawfish—a finding consistent with older checklists indicating two sawfish species in the area.

The study authors attribute sawfish declines in Sri Lanka to a combination of factors, chiefly fishing, which intensified suddenly in the 1950s in concert with rapidly expanding fisheries and peaked in the 1980s. The researchers also cite expansion of the aquaculture industry, which can degrade or destroy mangrove forests and pollute lagoons and estuaries—all key habitat and nursery grounds for sawfish. Aquaculture production in Sri Lanka expanded in the 1970s and peaked in 1998, coinciding with the estimated period of sawfish declines.

Connecting policy with science In a strong example of research informing environmental management, Jabado and the team from Blue Resources Trust presented evidence from the study to policymakers in the Sri Lankan Ministry of Fisheries and worked with them to implement listings for local wedgefish and giant guitarfish species under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, including development of non detriment findings (NDFs). NDFs are an assessment of whether international trade in a given species is likely to negatively affect its survival.

In the case of wedge fish and giant guitarfish, a negative NDF would amount to a ban on the export of meat or fins from Sri Lanka. “Collaborative studies such as this help highlight the realities of our shark and ray populations in Sri Lanka,” said Daniel Fernando, founder of Blue Resources Trust. “And armed with this information, we can guide policymakers to implement management that will reduce pressures on threatened sharks and rays.”

In collaboration with Blue Resources Trust, Jabado organized several workshops in Sri Lanka to train more than 60 fisheries officials to identify guitarfish and wedgefish fins—the other two groups of species at the center of her Pew fellowship project—and is working with decision-makers to recommend a ban on sawfish fishing in the country. Because so few sawfish are left, the regulations are unlikely to have a significant impact on fishers.

“I welcome the engagement of decision-makers on this issue to give the remaining sawfishes, wedgefishes, and guitarfishes a better chance at survival,” Jabado said. “The lessons we learn from protecting this species group will also be useful for guiding future science-based management of sharks and rays.”

Sri Lanka: Fishing activities from Panadura to Negombo temporarily banned

<http://www.adaderana.lk/news/74333/fishing-activities-from-panadura-to-negombo-temporarily-banned>

"Fishing activities in sea areas extending from Panadura to Kochchikade in Negombo via Colombo have been banned temporarily, the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources announced today (June 02). The salvage company has informed that the fire-wrecked cargo vessel MV X-Press Pearl is sinking at its current position.

Hence, fishing vessels are at risk of colliding with debris of the distressed ship including parts of burnt containers, the Director-General of the Fisheries Department noted. Thereby, the fishing communities in the aforementioned area are urged to refrain from engaging in fishing activities until further notice.

Meanwhile, State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekara said fishing vessels have been banned from entering from the Negombo Lagoon for the time being. He stressed that emergency preventing measures are being taken to protect the lagoon and surrounding areas to contain the damage from any debris or in case of an oil leak.

A short while ago, Sri Lanka Navy said towing MV X-Press Pearl away from Sri Lankan waters was halted temporarily as one side of the ship has hit the seabed. The Navy said it remains alert for possible oil spill from the ship. Towing operations began this morning after a naval team joined the salvor team on board to drag the Singapore-registered container ship away from Sri Lanka capital.

Sri Lanka: Fishing and naval communities warned of rapidly developing cyclonic storm in Bay of Bengal

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21A/May23_1621745846CH.php

"Sri Lanka's Meteorology Department today warned the Naval and fishing communities not to venture in to the sea around the island as a cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal is strengthening. The Weather forecast for sea areas around the island during next 24 hours issued at 05.30 a.m. on 23 May said the low-pressure area located in East Central Bay of Bengal is likely to intensify into a depression around 23rd.

The system is very likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm by 24th and further into a severe cyclonic storm during subsequent 24 hours. It is very likely to move north-northwest wards and reach near west Bengal coasts around 26th May, the Meteorology Department said. The Department advised the naval and fishing communities not to venture into the East Central Bay of Bengal and adjoining area from 22 May, and sea areas around the island from 23 May, until further notice.

The sea area extending from Chilaw to Kankasanthurai via Mannar and the sea area extending from Galle to Pottuvil via Hambanthota can be rough at times. The other sea area can be fairly rough. Wind speed can be increased up to 55-60 kmph in the sea area extending from Chilaw to

Trincomalee via Puttalam, Mannar and Kankasanthurai and in the sea area extending from Galle to Pottuvil via Hambantota. Wind speed can be increased up to 50 kmph in the other sea areas.

Sri Lanka: Fishing and Naval Communities warned to be alert

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/10/11/local/261605/fishing-and-naval-communities-warned-be-alert>

"The Natural Hazards Early Warning Centre of National Meteorological Department has issued an advisory of rough sea and strong winds. According to the advisory, "Wind speed can be increased up to 70 kmph in the sea area off south and southeast of Sri Lanka and deep sea areas of southwest Bay of Bengal. These sea area will be very rough at times. These sea areas may experience surges due to the effect of swell waves, having (2.5-3.0)m height." Naval and fishing communities are requested to be vigilant in this regard.

Sri Lanka: Fishing and tourism sectors drown in new crisis

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Environment/Sri-Lanka-fishing-and-tourism-sectors-drown-in-new-crisis>

"Sri Lanka's west coast fishermen and women, who have been battered by the pandemic and lockdowns for more than a year now, can no longer look forward to the bountiful catches that the annual rainy season promises. Their customers, said Aruna Roshantha, president of the All Ceylon Fisher Folk Trade Union, are too scared to eat seafood. The fear stems from a catastrophe that began to unfold on May 20, when a ship laden with 1,486 containers and 25 tons of nitric acid caught fire some 18 km northwest of Colombo.

The Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl was also carrying other hazardous chemicals and materials, including nurdles, preproduction pellets used to make plastic products. Now dead fish, sea turtles and dolphins are washing ashore, and grizzly photographs are making the rounds on social media. People "are scared," Roshantha said. "So even if we catch fish, "there is no one to buy fish." Tourist spots and Sri Lanka's exporters -- two other sectors that have taken severe blows from the pandemic -- are also feeling the repercussions.

The area is a popular destination among local and foreign tourists who travel there to indulge in fresh jumbo prawns, crab, lobster, tuna and seer. Singaporeans might also be affected as Sri Lankan seafood stars in the city's famous chilly crab dish. Roshantha said the disaster could not have come at a worse time -- at the beginning of the rainy season, which creates conditions that allow fishermen and women to bring in bigger hauls. "During this particular period," he said, "fishermen can earn anything between 5,000 rupees and 100,000 rupees (\$25 to \$500) a day."

As compensation, Roshantha went on, "the government is offering us 5,000 rupees a month, which is an insult to us. We want something that's justifiable from the government." More than 10,000 fishermen and women from Colombo to Negombo, which lies to the north of the capital, have lost their incomes due to the spill. Others, Roshantha said, have been compelled to sell a kilo of fish at around 200 Sri Lankan rupees (\$1), down from around 650 rupees before the disaster. Niroshan Selvarajah, who runs JJ Fresh Maalu, a fish stall, said there is little demand for fish and sales have plunged by about 45%. "

"No one wants to buy," he said. "They are scared." Dilan Fernando, president of the Seafood Exporters Association of Sri Lanka, said some shipments have been canceled since the catastrophe, though a portion of these buyers withdrew their cancellations after being assured of safety. Several other buyers from Europe and Israel have informed Sri Lankan companies not to export seafood until the government provides the required safety clearance. According to Fernando, pre-COVID seafood exports contributed an annual \$350 million or so to the economy. In 2020, the figure slipped to \$300 million. "

"The government must immediately step up and issue a statement saying the fish is safe for consumption," he said. "But for that to happen they have to first carry out the necessary testing." The fisheries industry last year produced 429,150 tons of fish, down from 506,070 tons in pre-pandemic 2019, according to the National Aquaculture Development Authority. It contributes around 2.7% to the country's GDP, providing direct and indirect employment to over 500,000 people. The catastrophe is also expected to impact tourism. West coast hoteliers are concerned that it will prevent them from riding a post-COVID recovery when more tourists are allowed back into the country.

Kimberley Adams, director of Camelot Beach Hotel Negombo, said the pellet and chemical spill will negatively impact Negombo Beach. "I look at the beach almost every other day," she said, "and there are heaps of those plastic pellets and clumps of burnt pellets strewn all over. The very first day it happened, the beach was pretty much a white beach" due to all the plastic. Negombo Beach is known for its amber sand. Adams believes the impact on Sri Lanka's west coast hotels will mainly come from a hesitation among international travelers. "

"I think the locals will be more understanding of the situation," she said, adding that "international travelers specifically come for our beaches, and the last thing they will want to see is a beach filled with plastic." Sri Lanka's tourism earnings in 2020 plunged to \$957 million, a tumble of more than 73% from \$3.6 billion the previous year, according to a report by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka. The decline in the number of tourists was also dramatic -- 507,704 arrived in 2020, about a quarter of the 1.9 million who showed up in 2019.

From January to May this year, Sri Lanka welcomed a mere 15,000 or so arrivals. Sanath Ukwatte, president of the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka, is not ready to sound the alarm. He noted that other destinations have emerged from similar disasters, pointing out the

turquoise waters of the Indian Ocean island nation of Mauritius last August were victimized by an oil spill. "Of course they had a temporary setback," he said, "but it was cleaned up.

Even here, the armed forces are doing a brilliant job in clearing the beaches. I am certain that when it's peak season again, it will be back to normal." Sailors and other troops began the cleanup mission on May 27. Others impacted by the spill are not as sanguine. Last week, angry environmentalists and fishermen went to the Supreme Court to file a case against the government and shipping company for failing to prevent what they say is the "worst marine disaster" ever in Sri Lanka.

Petitioners are also demanding to know who gave clearance for the vessel to enter Sri Lankan waters amid reports that Qatar and India had refused the ship after learning of a chemical leak. They are demanding an order directing the attorney general to prosecute all state officials who have willfully failed to perform their statutory and regulatory duties; 13 have been cited as respondents, including Ports and Shipping Minister Rohitha Abeygunawardena, State Minister Nalaka Godahewa and Environment Minister Mahinda Amaraweera.

In addition, they want compensation from the ship's owner and its local agents for the environmental damage to the marine and coastal ecosystems as well as compensation for fishermen who have lost their livelihoods due to the disaster. Roshantha says that when the government receives compensation from the shipping company, two-thirds must be distributed to the fishing community affected by the catastrophe.

Sri Lanka: Fishing communities battle the elements — and unrelenting debt

https://globalpressjournal.com/asia/sri_lanka/fishing-communities-battle-elements-unrelenting-debt/

"On Moonrampiddy beach, under the shade of coconut trees, Puthumairasa Juris Loratta sits in her family's boat, picking the remains of the day's catch out of fishing nets. Her husband, Kanikkairasa Puthumairasa, returns from selling the big fish at the local market, and together they select suitable small fish for drying. For the two of them, both 42, this daily routine is unrelenting. Like many residents of this fishing community on Sri Lanka's northwest coast, the couple is saddled with sky-high debts, which they have been struggling to repay for years.

Their efforts were further undermined in December when a tropical cyclone slammed into the country, damaging boats, nets and other equipment — and forcing them to borrow even more money to cover the cost of repairs. It's a never-ending cycle that keeps fishers impoverished and indebted to local business people. And as extreme weather, including increasingly intense storms, becomes more frequent, the burdens on families like Puthumairasa and Juris Loratta's stand only to grow. "We have borrowed loans from four places," says Puthumairasa. "When we are about to pay back the debts, the net will get damaged."

It has been five years since the couple initially borrowed 600,000 Sri Lankan rupees (about \$3,069) from a local market known as a “vaadi” to set up their fishing business. Vaadis are common sources of loans in Sri Lanka — particularly for people like Juris Loratta and Puthumairasa, who were once successful fishers, but lost all their property during Sri Lanka’s decades-long civil war, which ended in 2009. But these agreements typically do not favor the borrowers.

It is an unwritten law, for example, that fishers who borrow money from a vaadi must sell their seafood only at that vaadi, according to Anthonipillai George, a senior program coordinator at ZOA, an international relief organization that is working with fishers in Sri Lanka to establish a fair-market system. Fishers who fail to repay these loans risk damaging their standing in the local community, cutting them off from additional funds they might need to keep their businesses afloat.

Furthermore, vaadi owners typically purchase the seafood at significantly below-market prices, which causes fishers to lose as much as 5,000 rupees (\$26) a day, Anthonipillai says. Such losses make it extremely difficult for fishers to pay off their loans. A worker’s median monthly salary in Sri Lanka is around 23,260 rupees (\$118), according to 2016 data from the Department of Census and Statistics. The government considers these loans to be private arrangements, and government officials say they are not authorized to comment on the situation.

Kandasamy Yogendran, 44, another local fisherman, says it has taken him 10 years to pay off his loan. He blamed the vaadi owners for preventing fishers from making a fair living, pointing out that seafood in Jaffna, the capital of Sri Lanka’s Northern Province, approximately 118 kilometers (73 miles) north of Mannar, sells for much more than what fishers are paid locally. “In Jaffna, crab costs 1,700 rupees (\$8.69),” he says. “Here it is 800 rupees (\$4).” As their expenses piled up, Juris Loratta and Puthumairasa took more loans from banks and the Village Maritime Organization.

Including the money they obtained from the vaadi, their loans eventually totaled more than 1.4 million rupees (\$7,160). “Not a cent has come home this week,” says Juris Loratta. “Whatever we earn goes to the debts.” Ponnampalam Arunthavarasa, 31, who owns a seafood export business and runs a local vaadi, says the agreements he makes with fishers are fair. “We lend 400,000 to 500,000 rupees (\$2,046 to \$2,557) per fisherman, based on trust,” he says. Arunthavarasa didn’t provide the loan to Juris Loratta and Puthumairasa, but he says it isn’t possible to offer money to fishers if he can’t make a profit from the arrangements. “Banks also charge interest rates, right?” he says.

Arunthavarasa says he is suffering financially as well. The storm in December destroyed the entrance to his vaadi, and he must pay to have it repaired. But the failure of fishers to repay their loans, he says, has drained his resources. “From a young age, we worked in the sea and came to a good position,” he says. “We lent our capital in the name of faith; now that capital is also gone.”

Climate change is likely to continue affecting Sri Lanka's communities in unpredictable ways. A quarter of the country's population lives within 1 kilometer (0.6 miles) of the coast, making people vulnerable to sea-level rise.

And while the frequency of cyclones in Sri Lanka declined over the 20th century, the intensity of the storms has increased in recent decades. Even smaller storms like the one in December can be devastating for Sri Lankans who are already struggling. And while the threat of intense cyclones may loom on the horizon, debt is an ever-present fact of life for many, according to Emiliyanuspillai Denny Calistus, a Catholic priest who presides over religious services in Moonrampiddy. "Debt is a barrier even to live a normal human life," he says. "We are accustomed to borrowing. You can live only if you borrow. Borrowing from one loan to pay off the other. It will never end."

Sri Lanka: Fishing community affected by MV X-Press Pearl fire to receive Rs. 5000 allowance until compensation paid

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21A/Jun13_1623558935CH.php

"A special discussion was held Saturday (12) at the Negombo Town Hall under the patronage of Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda to resolve the problems of the fishing community affected by the MV X-Press Pearl fire and to inform them about the decisions taken by the government in this regard. Kanchana Wijesekera, State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish & Prawn Farming, Fishery Harbor Development, Multi day Fishing Activities and Fish Exports and Nimal Lanza State Minister of Rural Roads and Other Infrastructure also participated in the discussion.

Representatives of Fisheries Associations from Palliyawatta, Wattala to Porathota, Negombo and representatives of Negombo Lagoon Fisheries Associations also participated in the meeting. The fishing community was told that there is no problem in fishing in areas other than the restricted area and the restricted areas will be released in part by part in the future. It was also revealed that there is no hindrance to the fishing activities in the Negombo Lagoon from today. The National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) and the Atomic Energy Authority have confirmed that no oil or chemical has been leaked from the ship.

The area is currently designated as a no-go zone, as the debris from the ship could cause damage to fishermen, fishing vessels and equipment. Coastal and ocean clean-up operations are being carried out to ensure that there is no problem for fishing. It was also revealed that measures will be taken to clean the Negombo Lagoon and the Hamilton Canal. Expressing his views, Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda said the President and the Prime Minister have instructed to take all necessary measures to uplift the fishing community affected by the fire-ravaged cargo ship.

Compensation will be paid in the future for the damage caused to the fishing community due to their inability to return to their fishing activities. Until then, the relevant District Secretaries have been instructed to pay the allowance of Rs. 5,000 as a living allowance from today. Also, a decision to set a fixed price for fishing gear and equipment will be taken in consultation with the relevant businessmen after the Covid epidemic is over. Addressing the gathering, State Minister Kanchana Wijesekera People should not be unduly apprehensive about eating fish as it has not yet been scientifically proven to be unsuitable for consumption.

He said the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General's Department will seek compensation for the damage caused by the ship. "If there is a problem selling the fish, the Fisheries Corporation will directly intervene to buy them. The Peliyagoda fish market as well as 22 fishing harbors have been prepared for this purpose. As of yesterday, nearly 2,000 kilograms of fish had been purchased from the Peliyagoda fish market and nearly 9,000 kilograms from other places.

Retail sales will not be allowed due to existing travel restrictions but wholesale and mobile sales are not banned." State Minister Wijesekera said nearly 23 sectors associated with the fishing industry have been affected by the shipwreck so far. The losses of income in those sectors have been calculated and presented as a preliminary stage for the compensation program. The Government will take all necessary steps to provide relief to the fishing community, he assured. State Minister Nimal Lanza said the discussion on the problems faced by the fishing community due to the X-Press Pearl was successful.

"Many problems of the fishing community were solved. Although fish consumption is done by people near the coast, people in the middle of the country have reduced their consumption of fish. The Ministry of Fisheries has given a clear answer that eating fish is not a problem at present. Therefore, people should not have an undue fear of eating fish," he said.

"We will take necessary decisions in the future in consultation with the President and the Prime Minister to provide relief to the fishing community by resolving the problems faced by the fishing community due to the increase in diesel and kerosene prices since midnight yesterday," Lanza said.

"We stand for the provision of relief to the fishing community in Negombo and other areas. Damage from ships, natural disasters and floods, as well as the impact of rising world oil prices, pose a major problem for those who contribute to the country's production and economic processes.

Therefore, I request the Ministry of Fisheries to formulate a methodology in consultation with the President and the Prime Minister. Assistance will be provided to take necessary action for that." Mayor of Negombo Dayan Lanza, Secretary to the Ministry of Fisheries Indu Fernando, Director General of the Fisheries Department Susantha Kahawatta, Divisional Secretary of Negombo and others were also present at the occasion.

Sri Lanka: Fishing community excluded from relief package

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/01/06/fishing-community-excluded-from-relief-package/>

"Fishermen allege that the fishing community was excluded from the relief package provided by the Government. The National Organizer of the All Ceylon Fisheries Federation, Ratna Gamage stated that the fishing industry has completely collapsed, while the economy remains to be in shambles.

Speaking further, Gamage pointed out that the Government has neglected the fishing industry at a time when the industry which provided fish to the entire national economy is at a bad state and at a time when the general public of the country is requesting the cost of living to be decreased. Pointing out that the fishing community is not demanding the Rs. 5,000 allowance, Gamage said that the fishermen have to spend an additional Rs. 50,000 – 85,000 per month on a multi-day fishing vessel.

Sri Lanka: Fishing in northern and eastern seas is extremely dangerous, Met Department warns as one fisherman dies

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20B/Nov26_1606333771CH.php

"The Meteorological Department says that the severe Tropical Cyclone Nivar will make landfall on the Tamil Nadu coast while strong winds could develop in the Northern and Eastern seas over the next 24 hours.

According to the Meteorological Department forecast, the Severe Cyclonic Storm NIVAR over southwest Bay of Bengal is located 213 km to the north-east of Kankasanthurai coast at 08.30hrs Wednesday (25) and is very likely to intensify into a very Severe Cyclonic Storm during next 06 hours and expected to move closer to the Northern coast of Sri Lanka and cross Tamil-Nadu coast, India during mid night of Wednesday (25). The sea areas extending from Puttalam to Batticaloa via Mannar, Kankasanthurai and Trincomalee will be very rough or high at times.

Naval and fishing communities are advised not to venture these sea areas. The sea areas extending from Puttalam to Hambanthota via Colombo will be fairly rough at times. Naval and fishing communities are requested to be vigilant in this regard. Meanwhile, a vessel that set sail from the Trincomalee Thrikadawur fishery harbor this morning despite government warnings has met with an accident.

It is reported that a 45 year old fisherman residing in the Hardaswatta area in Trincomalee has died. Four fishermen on board the vessel had gone to sea and the vessel had capsized due to rough seas. The other three fishermen who sustained minor injuries have been admitted to the Trincomalee General Hospital.

Sri Lanka: Fishing industry hit hard by dire economic situation

<https://theprint.in/world/fishing-industry-hit-hard-by-dire-economic-situation-in-sri-lanka/903157/>

"Sri Lanka's fishing industry is facing the brunt of a burgeoning economic crisis that the island country is embroiled in with fishermen facing acute fuel shortages for their boats unable to head out to sea.

According to a report, fishing is a major livelihood for Northern Tamils and the fuel shortage in the crisis-hit country has paralysed the industry.

Local media reported that the fishermen in the northern part of the country who typically fish on alternate days are unable to venture into the seas even once in a week. A country boat requires 30 litres of kerosene for a day's fishing whereas now they are able to just about manage only 20 litres once in a week.

The deep economic crisis in the country continues to worsen with the Forex reserves plummeting to USD 500 million. Apart from that, the scarcity of ice bars used to preserve fish and the unavailability of transportation to take the catch to Colombo and other places for sale have crippled the livelihoods of the fishermen.

The fishermen in Analaitivu, Nainativu, and other areas of the Jaffna district are the most affected as they are even not able to come to Jaffna to purchase kerosene.

With Sri Lanka has been going through a severe economic crisis, India is providing a financial package to Colombo so that it can meet some of the more immediate needs and help stabilise its domestic economy.

Emergency rule was declared in the island nation after anti-government protests turned violent. Sri Lanka has been going through a severe economic crisis caused in some measure by a shortage of foreign exchange resulting in lengthy power cuts, price spirals and a shortage of essential items."

Sri Lanka: Fishing industry: Lifeblood of the coastal regions

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/03/10/features/213879/fishing-industry-lifeblood-coastal-regions>

"Fish is an essential food item in our daily life. Generally it is difficult to eat our meals, especially lunch without a good fish curry. We go to our nearest fish vendor, fish stall, public market or supermarket to purchase our fish. People who reside in coastal areas are fortunate

enough to buy newly caught fresh fish from the nearby beaches. Some men who sell fish, carry two baskets hanging on a long wooden pole. It is identified as a pingo. There are several kinds of fish in the market. Sprats, Karalla, Handella, Keeramin, Salaya, Soodaya, Silindo, Bolla are some of the fish of the small varieties. Some of the medium size fish are Mulletts, Moralla, Habarali, Piyamassa, Hurullo and Kumbalawo, Lena Paraw, Sura Paraw.

Koppara, Thalapath, Shark, Seer fish and Ray fish are some of the big fish, which are in high demand among fish consuming general public of Sri Lanka. China, India, Indonesia, Peru, USA, Chile, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Russia are considered as the top fish producing countries of the world. Incidentally canned fish or tinned fish is also popular. Popular canned fish producing countries are Chile, Thailand, China, Taiwan, Philippines, Vietnam, Ecuador, Canada, India, United States, Norway, and Malaysia. It is interesting to note that canned fish from Chile is considered as the best variety.

Techniques and devices: Fish is caught by several techniques. Hand-gathering, Spear fishing, Netting, Angling, Line fishing and Trapping are some of them. Ordinary fishermen use various kinds of nets to catch fish. Stilt fishing is popular in some parts of Sri Lanka, especially in down South areas such as Unawatuna, Hikkaduwa, Ahangama, Mirissa, Koggala and Kaththaluwa. Traditional fishermen use small boats, catamarans and pedal boats to catch fish. Inboard multi-day boats (IMUL), Inboard single-day boats (IDAY), Out-boat engine fiberglass reinforced plastic boats (OFRP), Motorized traditional boats (MTRB), Non-traditional boats (NTRB), inland fishing crafts, ordinary fishing vessels and beach seine crafts are used in commercial fishing.

Trawler vessels are used to catch a wide range of fish and in almost every country across the globe. They are generally used for small scale fisheries, but they can also go for deep sea fishing. Fishing trawlers are classified as Outrigger trawlers, Beam trawlers, Otter trawlers, Pair trawlers, Side trawlers, Stern trawlers, Freezer trawlers and Wet fish trawlers. The biggest fish factory vessel in the world is able to process 547,000 tons of fish per annum and it was built in Japan. It is well known as 'Damanzaihao'.

Fishing timings: Fishing during night time is more profitable, especially early in the evening and very early in the morning. Weather, seasons, tides, times, Sun, Moon play a pivotal role in catching fish. During rainy weather fishermen generally avoid going to the sea because of heavy rain, high-speed winds, thunder and lightning. Fish curry is prepared in so many cuisines. Kirata, Mirisata, Ambul thiyal are some of the most popular ways to prepare a delicious fish curry. Devilled fish is a wonderful delicacy. Various short-eats such as rolls, cutlets, patties, samosas, fish-rotties, and fish-buns are made with fish.

During seasons fishermen catch fish in large quantities. Fresh fish tend to spoil soon. They preserve these excess fish by traditional methods such as salting, smoking and drying. Drying fish is a most popular method to preserve fish from ancient times. Mannar is famous for quality

dried fish. Curing 'Jaadi' is a unique art and it has to be done with much care. The fish has to be free of water. Salt and 'Goraka' have to be placed in layers and upon which the fish is kept in a pot for 2 or 3 weeks.

Incidentally Dodanduwa in the South is well known for this Jaadi fish delicacy. Maldivian fish is a boiled, smoked and sun dried fish and they are mostly from Maldives Islands. Among the dry fish sprats and katta take the lead and they are usually tempered with various vegetables or onions and are great rice pullers. Art of buying fish: Buying good fresh fish is an art of its own. Some unscrupulous, crafty fish vendors easily hoodwink innocent customers by selling stale, old, iced fish. Fresh fish have bright, clear cum bulging eyes, pink or red gills, firm, shiny plus moist flesh and a mild scent. The flesh of the fish should be bouncy on touching it. The skin should not look dull and should have a natural metallic glow.

The surface of the skin must be tight and the scales must be tightly attached. Cracked skin or loose scales may be signs of rotting. Usually salt water fish smell briny and fresh water fish smell like a clean pond. Idioms, Phrasal verbs and words with the word fish or with various kinds of fish names is a fascinating subject. The best examples are Holy Mackerel, Like a stunned Mullet, Green around the gills, A red Herring, To have the memory of a Gold fish, A small Fry, Packed in like a Sardines and to Carp about something.

Fishing villages: During leisure times one of my friends used to say, let us sing some songs based on sea, fish and fishermen. To my amazement I found many songs based on the above theme. Sada Sulan Hamanne by Wally Bastians, Walla Sibina Ralle by Mohideen Beig, Muhudu Ralla by Clarence Wijewardena and The Golden Chimes, Maalu Welendaa by Jay Brothers, Gana Andure by Milton Mallwarachchi with Clarence and The Super Golden Chimes, Maha Muhudu Vimane by Shelton Perera, Maha Sayure Diya Gambare by Malkanthi Nandasiri, Maha Sayure Gamburu Diye by Shelton Muthunamage with Sun Flowers, Oruwe Nagala by Nelson Vaas and Sun Flowers, Nona Meegamu Mamalu Vishaka Samarawickrama and Sri Lankians, Oru Kandath Dirala by Sohan Weerasinghe and the X'periments, and many more.

Ambalangoda, Beruwala, Chilaw, Dodanduwa, Dickowita North, Dickowita South, Galle, Hambantota, Hikkaduwa, Kalpitiya, Kirinda, Kudawella, Mirissa, Negombo, Nilwella, Panadura, Puranawella, Suduwella, Tangalle, Trincomalee and Valachchenai are some of the fishery harbours of Sri Lanka. Along the 1770 km long coast of Sri Lanka, there are 969 fishing villages. There is one person in most of the households, for whom fish is an essential food item. That person is not a stranger, it is the furred friend of many, the beloved cat. Other than the domestic cats, raccoons, skunks, otters, bears and several species of wild cats, including ocelots, fishing cats and servals eat fish.

Fish is a delicacy for birds like kingfishers, storks, cranes, cormorants, penguins, terns, aningas, osprey, bald eagles, gulls, gannets, terns, pelicans and puffins. Fishing in the big vast ocean in anticipation of a bountiful catch, upon rolling waves big and small, during the pitch dark night is

a life threatening experience risking one's own life. If the fishermen get enough or plenty of fish in their nets and the catch is good and rich, their hearts are full of joy and satisfaction and they praise God with thankful hearts.

They sail away from the shore upon the waves of the sea, utilizing the strength of their hands, throw their nets close and afar and catch a load of fish in order to maintain their family. Only the courageous venture into the ocean. Fishing may be a risky job but it provides a livelihood to so many people all over the globe. Once fishermen set out to sea on a fishing venture it is not sure whether they return or not. Inclement weather in the form of rough seas, heavy rain, high-speed winds, thunder, lightning, storms, tornados, hurricanes, typhoons and gales put the fishermen in perilous situation.

Poaching by foreign fishermen in Sri Lankan waters too pose a big threat to local fishermen's livelihood. In one way fishing is a dangerous job. Therefore fisher folk need a good insurance coverage. Many fishing villages of the island are not developed and are in a backward state. They should be developed with good housing schemes coupled with better water, electricity, sanitation, medical and educational facilities.

The biggest problem in world fishing is Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing which has the potential to wipe out entire species of fish. There is a network of huge freezer ships which can stay at sea for months on end, fishing 24/7. The future of the industry will be bleak if this is not tackled by the International Community.

Sri Lanka: Fuel hikes crippling fisheries sector – Fisher trade unions

<https://www.sundayobserver.lk/2022/01/02/business/fuel-hikes-crippling-fisheries-sector-fisher-trade-unions>

"The fisher community sees the recent sudden fuel price revision as a move that would cripple the sector and pave the way for foreign entities to grab land along the coastal belt and establish their businesses in Sri Lanka. "We consider the continuous price revisions of fuel and even other essential commodities as a move to destabilise the fisheries sector enabling global companies to expand their territories making use of the port city to exploit the marine resources of the country," said All-Ceylon Fisher-Folks Trade Union President Aruna Fernando.

Fisher society representatives said plans afoot to expand the number of fishery harbours in the country needing 35-40 feet draft to facilitate foreign companies to carry out businesses in the country using the cheap labour of the fisher community. All trade unions of the fisher community will meet this month to map out our plan of action and communicate them to the authorities, a fisheries sector trade union leader said adding that if the lawmakers turn a deaf ear to our grievances the community would resort to tougher action.

“We have been battered for nearly two years with a meagre income due to the pandemic which has shattered the hopes of the community for a better living,” Aruna Fernando said. The fisheries sector was one of the worst affected sectors due to adverse speculation about chemical contamination on marine life owing to two shipwrecks within a short span in the past two years followed by the global pandemic creating Covid clusters from the Peliyagoda market.

A case had been filed against the damage done to marine life from the vessel that caught fire. MS ‘X-Press Pearl’, a Singapore-registered ship was sailing from India’s Gujarat to Colombo when a fire broke out onboard on May 20 around nine nautical miles off the Sri Lankan coast. The fisher community has been calling on lawmakers to formulate a national policy for the fisheries sector which has been a major need to develop the sector.

“We have been clamouring for a national policy to streamline and upgrade the sector which has enormous potential to promote and expand nautical tourism which is a dynamic and lucrative industry globally. “The need to use new technology for precision and risk mitigation has been a long-felt need for the fisheries sector. Law makers talk high about the country being surrounded by the seas and marine resources but have done pretty little to support the sector especially during tough times.

“We need experts who know the nitty gritty of the sector rather than who make decisions in air-conditioned rooms not knowing anything about the sector,” Fernando said, adding that fisherfolk have no one to look up to for help when crisis hits them. He said offering pittance during a crisis is an insult on the sector which is a vital cog of the economy. The government granted Rs. 5,000 during the height of the pandemic for those in the sector to tide over the crisis.

Sri Lanka: Galle fishery community warned

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/11/05/local/232964/galle-fishery-community-warned>

"The members of the Galle fishery community who are being quarantined are requested not to visit fishery harbours or boat anchorages until the respective medical test reports are issued, Galle District Regional Epidemiologist Dr. Venura K. Singakkara warned. "

"If they do not follow the medical guidance issued by the health authorities, the consequences of such obstinate conduct will be seriously destructive to both the society and the corresponding individuals,"" Dr. Singakkara cautioned. It is reported that eight fishery industrialists have visited fishery harbours during their self-quarantine period before the confirmation of their health status following the PCR medical tests carried out on them. Subsequently, when the PCR medical reports of those persons were out they were found to be infected with the virus.

The penalties of the said negligent behaviour would be shown within about two weeks to come, Dr. Venura indicated. About 2,600 persons connected to the fishery industry in the Galle district

were subjected to PCR medical tests out of which 2,217 examination reports have already been obtained.

Three hundred and sixty two reports are yet to be received. Out of the reports already received, 13 persons were tested positive. On Tuesday, 262 persons from the Dodanduwa and Hikkaduwa fishery communities underwent PCR tests while PCR tests were administered on 74 persons of Gonapinuwala. ""The Chairman of Hikkaduwa Urban Council requested to temporarily stop the sale of fish at the Dodanduwa Fishery Harbour to which we agreed upon.

We have planned to carry out 2,000 PCR tests during the forthcoming two weeks in the Rathgama, Balapitiya, Induruwa, Hikkaduwa and Ambalangoda areas. We hope that we could bring the COVID-19 outbreak under control in the Galle district,"" Dr. Singakkara further said.

Sri Lanka: Gets boost to serve \$ 15 b Chinese seafood market

<https://www.ft.lk/front-page/SL-gets-boost-to-serve-15-b-Chinese-seafood-market/44-720072>

"Sri Lanka is bracing to re-enter the \$ 15 billion Chinese seafood market following a resolution of issues connected to mandatory health certification. The General Administration Customs of China (GACC) recently approved the amended health certificate, thereby enabling the import of fisheries and aquatic products from Sri Lanka from 1 July. With the involvement of the Export Development Board (EDB) Department of Fisheries and the Sri Lanka Embassy in China, the certificate was upgraded to meet the quarantine requirements of the GACC – Import and Export Food Safety Bureau.

Seafood and aquaculture export products are required to obtain necessary clearance from the relevant authorities of the importing country. "China is a lucrative market for seafood and aquaculture products such as frozen fish, crabs, prawns, lobsters and sea cucumbers. This arrangement will strengthen Sri Lanka's seafood export market share in China," EDB Chairman Suresh de Mel told the Daily FT.

He said the amended health certificate would facilitate existing Sri Lankan companies to continue exports and new exporters to enter the lucrative Chinese market. China is a key player in global seafood trade and represents one of the largest producers, consumers, importers, and exporters of seafood in the world. China's consumption has steadily grown and shifted toward an increasing quantity of high-value marine species.

"There is a significant increase in our seafood exports to China, particularly shellfish. With the Chinese consumption pattern, there is more demand for Sri Lankan crabs, shrimp and prawns and lobster than tuna and swordfish, which are generally exported in larger quantity to other markets.

The key reason for this is their food culture and preference,” de Mel said. Sri Lanka exported 1.3 million kilograms of seafood worth \$ 1 billion to China last year and graduated from 14th rank in 2019 to 10th seafood export destination in 2020. China’s seafood imports reached 4.3 million tons worth \$ 15.44 billion in 2019 – a 30% increase over 2018 due to rising meat prices, strong domestic demand, and continued value-added processing for the export market.

China’s requirements for seafood imports are expected to rise to as high as 18 million tons by 2030. Rising affluence among urban consumers, increased consumption of seafood, and a shift towards more wild-caught and marine species are among factors that make China a high potential export market.

Sri Lanka: Good Governance Govt. spent Rs.11,918 mn for tinned fish imports in 2019 – Bandula

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2020/09/24/local/229625/good-governance-govt-spent-rs11918-mn-tinned-fish-imports-2019-bandula>

"A sum of Rs.11,918 million was spent to import tinned fish in 2019 under Good Governance Government when the country is surrounded by the sea. The Mahinda Rajapaksa government spent only Rs.515 million spent for the same purpose, said Trade Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardena in Parliament yesterday.

He said further that the with the reduction of custom duties on the import of tinned fish during the UNP led previous government tenure the import and intern the out flow of foreign currency soared. He added the as a result the tinned fish manufacturing company commenced during the Mahinda Rajapaksa government tenure was made to closure.

He made this observation in response to an Oral Question raised by Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) MP Hesha Withanage. Minister Dr. Gunawardena said that according to the information of Sri Lanka Customs, 28 companies have imported canned fish which did not fit for human consumption in recent times. He added that the said canned fish stocks had been turned away.

Withanage said that there were claims the Government decided to reduce canned fish prices as stocks which were not suitable for human consumption were circulating in the country. The Minister said that substandard canned fish stocks came in due to the former Government's decision to reduce custom duties on canned fish imports.

However, the substandard tinned fish consignments were turned away. He added that the government took measures to reduce the price of the tinned fish to cushion the people's difficulties during the COVID 19 pandemic period and the complaint is baseless.

Minister Dr. Gunawardena added however that if there is any complaint of the standard of any product, he would direct it to the Consumer Affairs Authority for quick remedial action. The

Minister told Parliament that the attention of the House should be drawn to the imports of tinned fish despite the country being surrounded by the sea. He added that allowing the excess imports of tinned fish for petty gains would have negative repercussions on the country's economy.

Sri Lanka: Government dismisses allegations against Port City bill

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2021/04/17/govt-dismisses-allegations-against-port-city-bill/>

"The government has dismissed allegations levelled against the Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill, co-cabinet spokesperson Keheliya Rambukwella said. "The Attorney General has officially informed us that the bill falls in line with the country's constitution," Rambukwella noted.

He pointed out that the Port City is a mechanism to attract investments as a solution, to deal with issues concerning foreign currency revenue and the depreciation of the rupee. State Minister Ajith Nivard Cabraal identified Port City as a project that would create 83,000 jobs and serve as a turning point for the country's progress.

"They say that the police will have no control over this. If an offence even such as pickpocketing takes place in Port City, it is our police that will carry out investigations," state minister.

Sri Lanka: Government will implement sustainable development policy for fisheries sector – Min. Douglas Devananda

<https://www.nation.lk/online/govt-will-implement-sustainable-development-policy-for-fisheries-sector-min-douglas-devananda-7127.html>

"The government intends to formulate a fisheries policy in the near future, said Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda. He said this in parliament yesterday in response to a question raised by MP Charles Nirmalanathan during the questions for oral answers round. Minister Devananda noted that the matter would be discussed with the relevant stakeholders and formulate the fisheries policy and have it presented to parliament.

He said this policy would address many of the issues faced by the fisheries sector and the government intends to provide sustainable solutions to them. He said that around 45,000 persons are engaged in the fishing industry from the Northern Province including Mannar, Killinochchi, Mulaithivu and Jaffna Districts and it sustains the livelihood of around 200,000 families.

The Minister said that due to the encroachment of Indian fishing vessels into Sri Lankan territorial waters, the local fishermen have been greatly affected and they are facing a situation where they find it difficult to engage in their fishing activities. However, he assured that the government would take measures to implement a proper mechanism to prevent the Indian fishing

vessels from illegally entering Sri Lankan waters.

Sri Lanka: Govt is now ready to halt import of dry fish

<https://srilankamirror.com/news/24059-govt-is-now-ready-to-halt-import-of-dry-fish>

"Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda said steps will be taken to halt importing dry fish to Sri Lanka. The Minister made these remarks when he met the local dry fish producers at his ministry. Devananda has said steps will be taken to provide technical know-how and machinery to the local producers in order to increase the local production. He has said by halting the dry fish import, the government would also be able to save much valued foreign currency.

Sri Lanka: Govt to build largest fishing harbour in Matara

<https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/govt-to-build-largest-fishing-harbour-in-matara/ar-BB1dSWxD>

"The construction of Sri Lanka's largest Fishing harbour with an investment of Rs 9 billion in Gandara, Devinuwara in the Matara district has commenced, Kanchana Wijesekara, State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish and Prawn Farming, Fishery Harbour Development, Multi-Day Fishing and Fish Exports told media on the sidelines of a factory inspection tour of Sri Lanka's canned fish manufacturers TESS Group in Peliyagoda last week.

The State Minister said it would have a natural depth of about nine meters which could accommodate larger vessels and they would spend close to Rs 7 billion in government funds and another Rs 2 billion for necessary acquisitions of land for the project. The total cost on part of the government will add up to Rs 9 billion. Wijesekera said they planned to open the harbour in December 2023 and are right on track to finish work in time. He said they have also started two anchorages in Mawella and Rakawa which will be completed in 15 months.

Wijesekara said they would also start operations this year to build the largest fisheries harbour after Gandara in Point Pedro which would be done with ADB funding of Rs 14 billion which would also have a component for agro-culture. This will bring opportunities for seaweeds, sea cucumber, oyster farming, mussels and all kinds of value-added products that could go direct to the export market. The minister also expressed optimism that fish export revenue that dipped by Rs 14 billion in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic would normalize in 2021.

Wijesekara said COVID-19 hurt Lankan fish exports because most of the year the European markets were shut down and even now most of the European nations were closed and restaurants were not operative. As a result, the country's fish exports took a huge hit he said. Sri Lanka had Rs 53 billion revenue from fish exports in 2019 but in 2020 it had come down to Rs 39 billion. This represents about a Rs 14 billion drop in exports.

However, in 2019 the country's fish imports stood at Rs 37 billion, but it has only come down to Rs 35 billion in 2020. He said out of the Rs 35 billion the country has spent Rs 12 billion on the import of dried sprats. To address this issue the government in the last three months has increased the taxes on these items with taxes for food fish increased from Rs 52 to Rs 200, dried fish from Rs 50 to Rs 127 and Maldives fish from Rs 100 to Rs 300 Wijesekera said one of the most positive aspects was that the country's fish production numbers had increased last year and it has gone into mostly local consumption.

As a result, the country has managed to reduce canned fish imports by about 20 % and most of the local fish production has gone into local cans. He said although previously local canned fish manufacturers too depended somewhat on fish imports, during the last few months almost 90 percent has been processed with local fish production. He said the country needs to manage its resources well and there was a big harvest coming in with them curtailing illegal fishing.

This is one area that had to be still worked out was the Indian trawlers. If that is properly managed the domestic harvest would be enough to support the domestic requirement as well as also to reach the export market. The minister said that the government policy has also changed to benefit the local production. Although it was not possible to stop imports, it was important to find ways to manage that and that's why they increased taxes on imports.

In the future when the country's domestic requirement is fulfilled by the local canneries the taxes on imported cans can be increased further because it is not required to import fish into the country. A Cabinet Paper has been submitted to take over the Oluvil Harbour in the Ampara District with its processing plants, storage facilities and cool room with a 2,200 MT capacity to be used as a fisheries harbour.

Sri Lanka: Govt to discuss Indian fishermen with HC

<http://www.themorning.lk/gosl-to-discuss-indian-fishermen-with-hc/>

"Sri Lankan authorities are looking to initiate a dialogue with the Indian High Commissioner regarding the Indo-Sri Lanka fisheries-related conflict, The Morning learnt. Speaking to The Morning, Ministry of Fisheries Secretary R.M.I. Rathnayake said that the discussion with the Indian High Commissioner will be held over the coming weeks.

"The three-member committee appointed by Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda to make recommendations on the issue of the Indian fishermen trespassing in local waters would give recommendations as context for this discussion," said Rathnayake. According to Rathnayake, the progress concerning issues faced by Sri Lankan fisher folk and finding a permanent solution to stop the illegal fishing activities of Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters will be the key issues taken up at the discussion table.

“Both Devananda and the State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish and Prawn Farming, Fishery Harbour Development, Multi-Day Fishing Activities, and Fish Exports Kanchana Wijesekera are preparing for the discussion where they would focus on maintaining healthy Indo-Sri Lanka relations,” she added.

A three-member committee was appointed to probe the issue concerning Indian fishermen trawling in Sri Lanka’s maritime boundary by Fisheries Minister Devananda. It consists of senior officials from the ministry and the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, as well as representatives of fisheries unions.

When questioned about the progress regarding the committee’s recommendations to provide a permanent solution to prevent Indian fishermen from entering Sri Lanka’s maritime boundary, Rathnayake said that she is unable to reveal any facts since it is an internal committee to discuss related matters. The Morning contacted the Indian High Commission regarding the proposed meeting but a commission spokesperson refused to comment on the matter.

Sri Lanka: Govt. mulls Marine Disaster Preparedness System

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/07/10/local/253604/govt-mulls-marine-disaster-preparedness-system>

"The Government is presently seeking advice from the United Nations’ Permanent Representative on establishing a Marine Disaster Preparedness System for Sri Lanka which will empower the country with preparedness for marine disasters such as the MV X-Press Pearl tragedy, Justice Minister Ali Sabry, PC said. Minister Sabry made this observation in reply to a question asked by the Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa on the present situation of the X-Press Pearl investigation and compensation in Parliament yesterday (09).

The Minister also said that the compensation of US\$ 40 million which the Government recently received was not a full compensation and that it was requested as an interim compensation by July 01 as per the instructions of the Attorney General. Justice Minister Sabry also said that the Government is working with international organisations to obtain technical assistance to do the full calculations with regard to the compensation to be demanded for the tragedy.

“Due to the lack of experience in Sri Lanka in this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is seeking the assistance of various countries such as the United States, Australia and Singapore,” Minister Ali Sabry pointed out. The Justice Minister also said that the Ministry of Fisheries has made arrangements to distribute the interim compensation received for the fishermen through a special methodology.

“The fishing communities in Gampaha, Kalutara and Colombo will be given priority when compensation is distributed and as per a special request from His Eminence the Cardinal,

community representatives will be added to the Committee that is overseeing the compensation process,” Minister Sabry added. The said compensation payments are due to begin next week, Minister Sabry noted.

A separate committee consisting of the President’s Counsel and several attorneys has been appointed to study all matters pertaining to getting all evidence in line to be produced to get further compensation from the ship’s company and its insurance dealers. “This Committee is working to provide technically proven, scientifically proven information or else we shall not be able to fully recover the compensation that the country deserves,” Minister Sabry said.

Sri Lanka: Grapples with the problem of its fishers plundering waters abroad

<https://news.mongabay.com/2022/04/sri-lanka-grapples-with-the-problem-of-its-fishers-plundering-waters-abroad/>

"Mahalingam Kanapathi set off from his hometown of Beruwala in southwestern Sri Lanka in May 2021. Less than a month later, and nearly 3,000 kilometers (1,900 miles) away, the fishing boat he captained was seized by the coast guard of Seychelles.

Kanapathi was charged and tried for illegal fishing in Seychelles waters. He was convicted and ordered to pay a fine of 2.5 million Seychelles rupees, or about \$174,000. Unable to do so, he was sentenced to two years in jail.

Kanapathi’s case is part of an increasingly common pattern of Sri Lankan fishermen, often from Beruwala, engaging in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the waters of other countries and territories in the Indian Ocean. IUU fishing, as it’s known, is thought to account for about 20% of the world’s total fish catch, undermining efforts for sustainable fishing.

While the massive, distant-water industrial fleets like those of China and South Korea have come to epitomize IUU fishing, in Sri Lanka the practice largely the domain of traditional fishers. These fishers have from historical times engaged in what’s known as “island job,” or dupath rassawa in the Sinhala language — fishing in the shallow coastal waters off small islands. And the abundance of such islands throughout the western Indian Ocean — from the British-administered Diego Garcia to Seychelles, Mauritius and the Maldives, to the Myanmar and Bangladesh islets in the Bay of Bengal — gives the fishermen plenty of choice, says Anthony Thomas, a fisherman.

“We know that it is illegal to fish in these foreign waters without a permit, but we can easily catch more fish than by fishing in Sri Lankan waters, so we often do this as the yield is worth the risk,” says Thomas, who, like Kanapathi, is also from Beruwala, and who has also experienced being caught and jailed for illegal fishing in Seychelles. In Thomas’s case, though, he spent only

a few weeks in custody. “Our boat and the gear were confiscated, but the owner of the boat paid the fine and then Seychelles repatriated us,” Thomas tells Mongabay.

Fishing in troubled waters

He says he knows other fishermen who go out every year to fish in other countries’ waters. The threat of a fine and a short stint in jail hasn’t managed to deter the practice, prompting authorities in some of these jurisdictions, including Seychelles, to start imposing stiffer penalties. The court in Seychelles that sentenced Kanapathi, for instance, said previous sentencing patterns “have not been sending the right signal back to their home state,” allowing foreign fishers to continue treating Seychelles waters as “an El Dorado for illegal fishing.”

Diego Garcia, part of the British Indian Ocean Territory, sits inside the Chagos Marine Protected Area, one of the largest marine reserves in the world. It’s a rich fisheries habitat that draws Sri Lankan vessels for illegal fishing: between 2010 and 2020, 91 of the 120 vessels seized there for illegal fishing were flying the Sri Lankan flag, according to official data from Diego Garcia. Most of them were from Beruwala, and their target was sharks. There were more than 14,300 arrests in connection with illegal shark fishing in the area during that same period, according to a 2021 study.

“The study’s results also highlighted the grim reality that we have overfished the sharks in our waters, so the fishermen have to keep on going out to foreign waters,” said Asha de Vos, a marine biologist who co-authored the study.

Series of arrests

According to Sri Lanka’s Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR), 121 multi-day fishing boats flying the country’s flag were seized in foreign waters from 2019 to 2021. Of these, 31 were seized in the Maldives, 19 in Diego Garcia, 10 in Seychelles, four in Bangladesh, and three in Myanmar. Fifty-four vessels were apprehended in Indian waters.

The latest reported case occurred last November, when authorities in Myanmar seized a Sri Lankan vessel carrying seven fishermen. One of them was a 60-year-old with multiple ailments, and another was the father of a 5-month-old baby. In most of these cases, the fishermen tend to be the sole earners in their families, and their arrest has massive repercussions back home.

“When we continue to fish, we often have closer contact with other boats, so if we found any approaching boat, we receive alerts,” Thomas says of the informal network that helps the fishermen evade arrest. “There are times when we abandon our gear and move to evade the coast guard.” But often they see the fishing effort as worth the risk, so the tradition continues even though they know it’s illegal, Thomas says.

EU ban on fish imports

In 2014, the European Union cited IUU fishing practices as the main reason for imposing a ban on imports of fish from Sri Lanka. This had a crippling effect on the island's seafood industry and associated livelihoods. The EU lifted the ban in 2016 after the Sri Lankan government initiated steps to curb IUU fishing, including imposing a vessel monitoring system (VMS) on multi-day boats that sail beyond Sri Lankan waters.

Sri Lanka has about 4,200 registered multi-day fishing boats, of which around 1,500 operate in international waters and all fitted with VMS equipment for easy vessel tracking. These high-seas vessels are all licensed to fish in international waters, but not in the waters of other jurisdictions — typically defined as within 200 nautical miles (370 km) of those countries' coast. To get around the ban on IUU fishing in Sri Lankan waters, these vessels engage in IUU fishing in international waters, says Kalyani Hewapathirana, director of fishing operations at the DFAR.

She says her office's focus is to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, whether inside Sri Lankan waters or outside. To that end, the country in 2011 ratified the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization's agreement on port state measures (PSM), which went into force in 2016. Under the agreement, signatory countries must prevent vessels engaged in IUU fishing from using their ports or landing their catches.

The Sri Lankan government has also prepared and implemented a national plan of action, in line with the FAO's international plan of action, to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing, Hewapathirana tells Mongabay. Sri Lankan officials are also collaborating with their counterparts in Australia and taking steps to introduce VMS across the wider multi-day boat fleet, she says. This means that Sri Lankan vessels in breach of international maritime law will have their license suspended. The VMS team also monitors cases of departing boats that stop transmitting signals — a practice that's often associated with vessels attempting to engage in IUU fishing undetected."

Sri Lanka: Hirunika says Mount Lavinia beach enrichment will hit fishers

<https://economynext.com/hirunika-says-mount-lavinia-beach-enrichment-will-hit-fishers-70610/>

"Former MP Hirunika Premachandra is raising questions about the attempt by government agencies to enrich the beach at Mount Lavinia saying it will impact the local fishermen adversely. The "poor fishermen of the area will be hit as the fishing grounds will now be covered in mud, said Premachandra who is nursing the area as her constituency for the upcoming Parliamentary General elections representing the Samagi Jana Balavegaya.

She also questioned the adaptability of the technique of enrichment which she said was used in the Netherlands. “The climatic changes in Sri Lanka are very different from the Netherlands, she said. “Even so, who would start such a project during the Southwest Monsoon season, she asked. Speaking to reporters this morning, she said that the Coast Conservation Department had started this project breaking the Civil law of the country at a time when the country was on lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The civil law of the country should be the same for everyone from top to bottom, she said. Moreover, she said that they had also broken the environmental laws by starting the project without an environmental assessment and without the consent of the people living in the area. The former MP questioned the real reason to start such a project thinking only about the loss of Rs 200,000 per hour when everything else in the country was being put on hold and the country's economy and economy of the rest of world has taken a fall.

She also added that the reason for the public servants such the Director-General of Coast Conservation Department to talk only about the loss Rs 200,000 per hour to a company in Denmark shows that they are speaking in line with the party politics.

Sri Lanka: Hundreds of fishermen and women protested against the government’s move

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2021-11/sri-lanka-church-ranjith-protest-govt-muthurajawela-wetlands.html>

"In an official Gazette notification on October 07 by the government of Sri, the Western Province’s Urban Development Authority (UDA) has decided to take over a part of the land of the Muthurajawela wetlands, situated some 30 km north of the capital Colombo, near the western coastal city of Negombo. Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, Archbishop of Colombo, on Saturday filed a petition with the Sri Lankan Supreme Court against the appropriation, saying the project would affect the livelihoods of the people and various religious sites in the area.

On Sunday, the Archdiocese of Colombo, under whose jurisdiction comes Negombo and the marshlands, released brochures and leaflets explaining to the faithful about the possible damages the government’s move could cause. Negombo protests: On Tuesday, priests and nuns joined a street demonstration in Negombo in which hundreds of fishermen and women protested against the government’s move. They also demanded justice for the families of the victims of the 2019 Easter Sunday terrorist bomb attacks.

“The acquisition of the lands will be a great disaster for the people,” said Father Jayantha Nimal, parish priest of St. Nicholas Church in Bopitiya. Addressing the demonstrators, he urged authorities not to deprive the people of their right to live freely. “We ask the government to listen to the voice of the people,” he said, adding the acquisition of land around the wetlands will cause great damage to the environment as well as the fishing community.

Father Ranjith Terry, the parish priest of St. Mary's Church at Pitipana in Negombo, urged people to remain united in the fight for justice. Romel Fernando, who participated in the demonstrations, said the government wanted to undermine the activities of the priests and rights activist. Human rights activist Brito Fernando said: "We took to the streets to tell the government that we would not remain silent while our lands and sea are being taken away."

The Sri Lankan government's move and the protests come as the crucial COP26 United Nations climate talks in Glasgow, Scotland, are trying to decide on a final agreement to rein in global warming by slashing greenhouse gases. Card. Ranjith's objection Among the several respondents mentioned in Cardinal Ranjith's writ petition are Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, State Minister of Urban Development Nalaka Godahewa, Environment Minister Mahinda Amaraweera, the UDA and the Environment department. Cardinal Ranjith said that Catholics across the island nation were appalled by the Gazette notification which would also mean the acquiring of coastal Catholic churches by the UDA.

According to him, the acquisition of the part of Muthurajawela "would severely affect the livelihoods of the people living in the area." "There are a number of religious sites", and "religious activities would also be adversely affected," AsiaNews reported the cardinal as saying. Known for its unique and highly diverse ecosystem, the Muthurajawela marshlands are listed as one of the 12 priority wetlands in Sri Lanka. Besides hosting over 190 species of flora and 200 species of fauna, the area is a major local and tourist attraction, which also supports the local economy.

Activists protest: Kavinda Jayawardena, a Catholic lawmaker from the Jaela Gampaha district, and fishermen from the Negombo area have challenged the UDA's land acquisition, saying it is "a violation of the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Constitution." The government has said that it wants to protect Muthurajawela, but it is actually planning to build a power plant that would serve the city of Colombo.

Environmentalist Dinusha Nanayakkara spoke to AsiaNews about the rich flora and fauna of the wetland, adding it is also a stopping a reproducing ground for flocks of migratory birds. Most importantly, the benefits of the wetland are not limited to the environment but also to the economy and local communities.

Nanayakkara notes that according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, flood control by the wetlands saves the Sri Lankan government an equivalent of US\$ 2.4 million with an additional economic benefit of US\$ 3.6 million. The environmentalist lamented that in recent years, Muthurajawela has been facing progressive degradation with animal remains from slaughterhouses and wastewaters from illegal liquor production dumped into its streams. It has also fallen prey to illegal buildings.

Sri Lanka: Increases duty charged on Maldivian fish products

<https://avas.mv/en/91058>

"The duty charged on Maldivian fish products imported to Sri Lanka has been increased. Sri Lanka's Fisheries Ministry said the government decided to increase the duty imposed on fish products imported to the country in order to safeguard the country's fishing sector. In this regard, the duty fees imposed on imported raw and dried fish products as well as the Maldives' product, 'Maldivian Fish' have been increased effective from October 27, said the ministry.

A duty fee of Sri Lankan Rupees 302 will be charged as duty fees for a single kilogram of fish products that are being imported. The Fisheries Minister of Maldives, Zaha Waheed has previously stated that a hike in duty fees on Maldivian products by Sri Lanka would not significantly impact the Maldives.

While the Maldives focuses to market its products in markets which have high demand for the products at good rates, the products do not fetch a very significant price in Sri Lanka, said the minister.

Sri Lanka: Insists no decision to allow Indians to catch fish

<https://colombogazette.com/2021/11/08/sri-lanka-insists-no-decision-to-allow-indians-to-catch-fish/>

"State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera told Parliament today that India has been informed not to allow Indian fishermen to poach in Sri Lankan waters. Responding to a question raised in Parliament, Wijesekera said that based on advise from the health authorities the Navy had, in the recent past, turned back most Indians found poaching in Sri Lankan waters instead of arresting them and bringing them ashore.

He said the decision was taken as the Delta virus was found to be spreading in India. The State Minister also said that old buses and train carriages have been placed at sea in some areas in the North to prevent bottom trawling by Indian fishermen. Wijesekera said that all possible steps will be taken to stop bottom trawling by Indians in Sri Lankan waters.

Sri Lanka: Investing in a blue economy: Natural wealth, resilience, and sustainable growth

<https://www.ft.lk/columns/Investing-in-a-blue-economy-Sri-Lanka-s-natural-wealth-resilience-and-sustainable-growth/4-722311>

"Sri Lanka has territorial waters of 21,500 km² and an exclusive economic zone of 517,000 km², almost eight times the country's land area. This coastal and marine environment harbours a variety of natural resources and ecosystems, such as coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangrove forests, lagoons, beaches, salt marshes, or estuaries. Coastal communities often depend on a few key

livelihoods, such as fisheries or tourism, and are vulnerable to climate- or market-related shocks that can push them into poverty.

Coastal and marine ecosystems shield the coastline, provide products and regulatory services, and help to mitigate climate change. On the one hand, it is of great importance to preserve them and their wealth of biodiversity for current and future generations. On the other hand, there is also a need to enhance the livelihoods of coastal communities and diversify the coastal economy. Sri Lanka's potential for a blue economy A sustainable blue economy offers a way to combine both conservation and development.

“Blue economy” serves as an umbrella term for a number of economic activities that promote inclusive growth and environmental sustainability, such as ocean-based renewable energy, fisheries, aquaculture, mariculture, maritime transport, tourism, or waste management. UNESCO defines a blue economy as “the decoupling of socioeconomic development through oceans-related sectors and activities from environmental and ecosystems degradation.” For Sri Lanka, there is a variety of feasible, low-cost or cost-efficient options and opportunities to build a blue economy.

This potential is already acknowledged in the national policy framework, ‘Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour,’ which commits to “sustainable ocean resource management for a blue-green economy.” A blue economy also aligns directly with the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, both of which start in 2021. Furthermore, Sri Lanka is part of the Commonwealth Blue Charter and a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, which has a blue economy priority focus area.

Building a blue economy It is possible to enhance livelihoods and boost economic growth in Sri Lanka's coastal belt without harming the environment. The fisheries sector, for example, could be optimized and expanded in many ways. Currently, 50-60% of the overall harvest is discarded every year as trash fish, fishery waste, crab shells, or shrimp and shellfish waste, with fishers dumping it into lagoons, estuaries, or the ocean.

This waste could be collected and turned into value-added products, for example animal feed, fertilizer, fish oil, fish leather, collagen, gelatine, chitin, chitosan, and natural calcium. Other opportunities to enhance sustainable coastal livelihoods include seaweed farming, which offers considerable co-benefits in climate change mitigation and pollution clean-up; captive breeding and mariculture to replenish fish populations; conservation and use of coastal ecosystems such as mangroves; or scaling up sustainable nature tourism and ecotourism.

Awareness creation, capacity-building, provision of expertise and technology, integrated coastal zone management, circular economy, control of land-based waste and pollution, and an enabling legal framework are also crucial elements for the transformation toward a blue economy. As a tropical island nation, Sri Lanka is surrounded by natural wealth and resources.

However, the country is also threatened by the impacts of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and marine pollution. Strengthening the blue economy and exploring new avenues for coastal livelihoods and sustainable development could offer a solution with powerful co-benefits and synergies for people, the environment, and economic growth.

Sri Lanka: Island status has made it a rich hub for seafood of different varieties and an extensive network of seafood exporters

<https://www.nation.lk/online/sri-lanka-s-fish-not-on-aussie-shores-13454.html>

"Sri Lanka's island status has made it a rich hub for seafood of different varieties and an extensive network of seafood exporters. Thus, the seafood product sector has emerged as a quality exporter of a wide variety of fish, with the most popular of them being tuna. According to the Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB) website, the country is currently home to 24 seafood exporters, whose top five exports consist of tuna (in fresh, chilled, and frozen forms), shrimps and prawns, crabs and lobsters, shark fins, and fish maws.

These exporters have penetrated several international markets including the likes of the US, Italy, France, the Netherlands and Hong Kong. Sri Lanka also hosts 32 EU-approved seafood processing plants which successfully comply with the stringent regulations imposed by importing countries and adhere to the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP), Friend of Sea, and other food security environment-friendly requirements. Due to this, the country's seafood exports have been able to garner substantial revenue over the years, with EDB reports showing that the export performance of the sector was \$ 265 million in 2018 and \$ 262 million in 2019.

EDB Chairman Prabhash Subasinghe reported that Sri Lanka's seafood exports are seeing strong demand and higher prices even during the global pandemic in April 2020 during an online forum organised by Advocata Institute, a Colombo-based think tank. During this forum, he explained that the country was exporting to top markets like Italy, even though those markets were under lockdown. He attributed this to the Government declaring seafood as an essential service soon after the initial nationwide curfew was imposed.

Despite this, Sri Lankan seafood exporters seem to be dropping the ball when it comes to other markets like Australia, according to Seafood Importers' Association of Australasia (SIAA) Executive Officer Mark Boulter. During a webinar on "Market Enhancement for Sri Lankan Products and Services in Australia, held on 7 October, he stated that Sri Lanka has a huge potential to tap the Australian seafood importers market. Australia is a big market for Sri Lankan seafood exporters, even being among the top 10 in 2011, according to the EDB website. However, Sri Lanka is not among Australia's top 10 importers.

In his presentation, Boulter showed that in 2019, Australia imported 214,000 tonnes of seafood, with 150,000 tonnes of it being from Thailand, China, Vietnam, and New Zealand, the country's top four importer markets, respectively. "Imported seafood is the largest sector of our seafood industry and it represents up to 65% of Australian seafood consumption. Our seafood imports come up to about \$ 1.9 to 2 billion per annum, and as of now, these four nations gain a bulk of it, tying up the Australian seafood trade. Compared to this, his presentation revealed that according to Australian trade data, Sri Lanka only accounted for 81 tonnes.

With a population of 25 million people where around 15 kg of seafood is consumed per person each year, Australia generates about \$ 5 billion in revenue from end-of-point sales of imported seafood. The main imported categories of seafood include canned and frozen, out of which the top three are 82,686 tonnes of canned fish like tuna, 52,822 tonnes of whitefish, and 31,734 tonnes of prawns. Boulter pointed out that since tuna is Sri Lanka's top seafood export, and one of Australia's top seafood imports, there is a massive opportunity for local exporters to tap into the Australian market, particularly in the frozen seafood category.

"If I had to pick some species which I think would provide Sri Lankan exporters a great opportunity, I would say any whitefish species like barramundi, and blue swimmer crabs. He explained that there were several hurdles local exporters should familiarise themselves with before commencing business with Australia. These included government regulatory requirements such as biosecurity which set the grounds for what can and cannot be brought to Australia and under what format they should be brought in, food safety assessments to inspect the products against food standard codes, weights and measures, and labelling/naming of the products.

Boulter stated that other requirements include market requirements with regards to specifications and sustainability/social welfare. During the webinar, Consulate General of Sri Lanka in Sydney, Australia Consul (Commercial) M.M. Abdul Raheem agreed with Boulter's statement on the potential of Sri Lankan seafood exports. He gave a comprehensive overview on how easy trading with Australia really is. In his presentation, Raheem showed that Australia is an open market with minimal restrictions on imports of goods and services.

This is due to their trade policy being based on trade openness, economic growth, and improved living standards, with emphasis on improving international competitiveness and market access overseas. The country also places a high level of dependence on imports of a number of products, which include seafood. Moreover, Raheem stated that customs tariff rates in Australia vary from 0 to 5%, with an average duty rate of 4.6%.

However, some goods such as food items and electronic products do not attract customs duty. "These reasons add to the huge potential of the local seafood exporters to tap into the vast Australian market which is currently being dominated by other countries in the region like Thailand and Vietnam, Raheem noted.

Sri Lanka: Islands in Peril – The controversial northern energy projects

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2021/02/22/islands-in-peril-the-controversial-northern-energy-projects/>

"The Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) decided to implement hybrid power plants initially in three selected islands off the Jaffna Peninsula, namely Analaitivu, Delft, and Nainativu, and the lands allocated for this purpose have already been marked. The energy sources to be tapped for this purpose are wind and solar resources, according to the Asian Development Bank and the Sri Lankan cabinet decided in mid-January 2021 to offer a Chinese company to develop power projects in three islands in the North with USD 12 million facility from Asian Development Bank.

The energy project's local partner, the Ceylon Electricity Board, had entered into a joint venture with MS/Sinosar-Etechwin of China. The award to the Chinese company was recommended by the Cabinet-Appointed Standing Committee on Procurement. India has expressed its "strong" concern about the location of three Chinese renewal energy projects in Sri Lanka's Northern Province barely 48 km from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu. International competitive bids were called to install hybrid renewable energy systems in the three islands utilizing accessible energy resources to improve the efficiency of the prevailing energy network, said Sri Lanka's Minister of Power Dullas Alahapperuwa on Sunday (21).

However, a recent visit by News 1st to these three islands revealed, the islanders were not even aware of such projects which to commence in their own backyard. The Island of Delft Delft is the second largest island in Sri Lanka, located 10 km off the mainland of the Jaffna Peninsula. The island is approximately 8 km long and 6 km wide with an approximate land area of 47 km². The population in Delft is 4,502 comprising of 1,328 families.

Tourism in the island is growing due to different attractions such as Dutch & Portuguese history, its temples, and wild horses. The main livelihood of the people is fisheries, while people also engage in agriculture and livestock. The Island of Nagadeepa or Nainathivu Nainativu is one of the islands in the Velanai Divisional Secretariat with a total population of 2,861 from 874 families. Nainativu is located about 2 km off the mainland (Kurikattuwan) of Jaffna Peninsula and the total land area of the island is 5.6 km².

The main livelihood of the people in Nainativu is fishery and the present employment level is around 42%. The Island of Annalaithivu Analaitivu is a small island located about 5 km off the mainland of the Jaffna Peninsula. The island is approximately 4 kilometers (km) long with an approximate land area of 6 square kilometers (km²). The total population in Analaitivu is 1,804 comprising of 516 families (2015). The main livelihoods of the people in the island are fishery and agriculture.

News 1st's visit to Delft, Nagadeepa & Annalaithivu On the 16th of February 2021, in order to clearly understand the situation in Delft, News 1st visited the island and uncovered that a 12-acre

plot of land has been allocated for the project. Residents of the Thirulingampuram village located close to the proposed site for the proposed project said that they are unaware of this project. However, many of the residents there are of the view that conducting this project with a Chinese company would cause many adverse effects on their livelihood.

People living in Nagadeepa and Annalaithivu also shared the same sentiments about the proposed projects on the islands. The islanders claim the arrival of Chinese Companies to their backyard could bring multiple issues including to their livelihoods. Some locals who spoke to News 1st on the condition of anonymity said they would prefer a project that would not pose any threat to their lives and farms, adding the proposed projects could also pose a threat to the rich culture and heritage on the islands.

The Indian envoy in Colombo has raised his government's concerns and offered to develop the project with a similar grant from India. India's protest against awarding the projects to China was on the grounds that such a move would raise security concerns for it, it was widely reported. It was also reported that Sri Lanka asked India to submit competitive proposals and added that its companies could bid for other projects in the Northern Province. But India's concern was strategic and its security against Chinese snooping.

Sri Lankan authorities however say that India should not cite "security" as a reason for blocking Sri Lanka's projects beyond reasonable limits as doing so infringes Sri Lanka's sovereignty. Islands will not be given to foreign nations – Minister Islands in the north of the country will not be released to any country, affirmed Minister of Power Dullas Alahapperuma on Monday (22).

He said several islands in the north, including Annalaithivu and Nagadeepa are provided with electricity using generators for a limited period during the day. Therefore, it was decided to provide electricity using Solar and Wind Energy for the islanders by calling for international tenders for the project, he said.

The project is to cost 12 Million US Dollars given by the Asian Development Bank as a loan, and following the tender process, the Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka approached the government with a similar proposal. The Government is yet to decide on the matter, he said adding the decision will be made for the benefit of the people.

Sri Lanka: Jaffna fishers to be involved as stakeholders

<https://www.themorning.lk/jaffna-fishers-to-be-involved-as-stakeholders/>

"The Fisheries Ministry will be implementing a programme where local fisheries communities are involved in harvesting sea cucumber in Poovarasampatti in Kilinochchi, following concerns raised by Northern fishermen about a Chinese joint venture (JV) company that has allegedly

taken over many acres of sea land to harvest sea cucumber at Poovarasampatti, thereby severely inhibiting the livelihood of fishermen.

Fisheries Ministry Media Secretary N.S. Edirisinghe told The Morning that Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda would be inspecting the Poovarasampatti sea cucumber nursery soon, after which the Ministry would be implementing a programme that would involve the locals in the venture as an income generating scheme for them. “This same company operates a sea cucumber hatchery at Ariyalai, a few kilometres away from Kavutharimunai, for which the United National Front-led Government had granted permission.

Permission has only been obtained for the Ariyalai Hatchery. They have now sought legal permission to operate a sea cucumber harvest farm at Poovarasampatti,” said Edirisinghe. National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA) Chairman Jayantha Wijeratne had confirmed to The Sunday Morning on 4 July that the Authority has only given permission for a hatchery, and not for a farm. He also noted that the Authority would conduct an investigation into whether the project was approved by the Authority, and if so, whether the project is adhering to the approved conditions.

Local fishermen have previously alleged that the said company poses an unfair competition to them, as it operates on a large scale using modern technology. Sea cucumber is primarily used as a luxury seafood item and as an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicines. In Sri Lanka, sea cucumber fishery currently occurs in Kalpitiya, the Puttalam Islands, Trincomalee, Pottuvil, and Kalmunai. Although the harvesting of sea cucumber is banned in India, license holders are allowed to operate in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka: Kankesanthurai port to be developed

<https://www.eurasiareview.com/06022020-sri-lanka-kankesanthurai-port-to-be-developed/>

"Sri Lanka's Co-Cabinet Spokesperson, Plantation Industries and Export Agriculture Minister Dr. Ramesh Pathirana said that the Government has decided to implement an accelerated development project to upgrade the Kankesanthurai (KKS) Harbour as a main commercial port.

Speaking at the weekly Cabinet briefing at the Government Information Department Auditorium the minister added that accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the proposal submitted by Ports and Shipping Minister Johnston Fernando to acquire 50 acres of land adjoining the Kankesanthurai harbour for the Sri Lanka Port Authority.

Minister Pathirana further said that the cabinet approval has been granted to acquire 15 acres of public land and 35 acres of privately-owned land for this purpose. Privately-owned land will be acquired by paying compensation under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act. “With the development of this port people in the North would be able to easily distribute their farming,

livestock and fisheries products island wide, said the Minister.

Sri Lanka: Largest fish processing plant abandoned for years

<http://www.slguardian.org/2020/11/sri-lanka-largest-fish-processing-plant.html>

"With the emergence of the second cluster of the second wave of COVID-19 from Peliyagoda, the pandemic spread across the island causing the economy to go backwards. Curfew was imposed in several police areas including the Western Province to control the spread of the virus. People began to avoid eating fish as the number of patients reported from the Peliyagoda cluster increased.

Fishermen faced extreme difficulties being unable to sell their fish caught during the initial stage of the Peliyagoda cluster. There was an unexpected price reduction of fish. Fishermen couldn't sell their fish even at a lower price due to the opinion people held that the COVID-19 virus existed on fish. Even though the Government and health authorities stated that consuming fish wouldn't pass on the virus to humans, people were still reluctant to consume fish. Therefore, fishermen had to sell their stocks at a much lower price. Some decided to make dried fish. Some threw the catch back into the sea.

Ceylon Fisheries Corporation has agreed to buy a portion of the fish stocks. Thus, Ceylon Fisheries Corporation has bought more than 80,000 kilos of fish. Ceylon Fisheries Corporation Chairman Major General Lalith Daulagala said that the fish bought under that arrangement was stored in freezers with the help of the private sector. He also said that those fish stocks would be given to Samurdhi beneficiary families in the future.

Seven ships, which recently entered the Beruwala Harbour, carried 63640 kilos of fish. 60000 kilos of that stock were sold to fisherfolk in Negombo to make dried fish. The lack of storage facilities in the Fisheries Corporation to store fish during an emergency, like during the pandemic, is unfortunate. If there had been any facilities all the stocks could have been well preserved. However due to the lack of such facilities a huge loss had to be borne. It is shocking that officers have forgotten the fact that the Government has a fish processing plant at which as much as 500 tons of fish could be stored at a given time.

This was built in 2013 near Oluvil Fisheries Harbour simultaneously with the construction of Oluvil Port. The fish processing plant hasn't been in operation ever since. At present the plant has become home to bats. Even if the Oluvil Fish Processing Plant, which was built at the cost of 120 million Rupees, has been closed without being used, the premium for a loan obtained for its construction is still being repaid.

This fish processing plant, which includes modern facilities, is so far the biggest such facility in Sri Lanka. It is shocking to hear that this hasn't been in operation until at present. Since this plant

is under the supervision of the Ports Authority it is safe from thieves. Since these machines are no longer used they will soon become ineffective. This plant was built with the purpose of storing fish stocks from Oluvil coast and exporting them.

Since Oluvil Port has been constructed without conducting a proper feasibility study it is faced with the issue of sand filling. Therefore both the port and the processing plant, on which billions of rupees have been spent, have turned out to be white elephants. This fish processing plant is operated in two stages; the primary stage and the secondary stage. During the first stage freezers are kept in a temperature of 5 Centigrade. That temperature allows for preparation.

In its second stage the fish is stored in a temperature of -60 Centigrade. Fish frozen in that manner can be stored for one year. It has a storage facility with a capacity of storing 500 tons of fish at any given time. The other facility allows for storage of 500 tons of fish per year. A separate transformer, oil tanks and power generators are installed for its operation. Computer network systems are in place to aid all the functions.

All the freezers at the plant are operated using the computer network. They operate at a temperature between -20 and -10. There are a few freezers with an area of 20 square metres. One freezer can hold up to 35 tons of fish. ""It is shocking that officers have forgotten the fact that the Government has a fish processing plant at which as much as 500 tons of fish could be stored at a given time"" The attention of the authorities should be drawn towards the plight of the largest and the only fish processing plant with the latest technology in Sri Lanka.

When processing fish varieties such as tuna, storage facilities can be arranged at a temperature as low as -5 centigrade. There is an accommodation facility within the plant including all the facilities to house 500 workers at a given time. Clothes, shoes and gloves which were purchased for those workers are still piled inside storage rooms. Fish trays are made of stainless steel. If this plant is operated it can provide 2500 employment opportunities. The authorities should consider transferring this processing plant, which is currently in the hands of the Ports Authority, to the Fisheries Corporation and make use of it. If not this will not be used until it decays.

All Island Fisheries Association Chairman Keerthi Weerasinghe said that if the port is not operated due to the issue of sand filling its operations can be initiated after placing a barricade 100 metres away from the entrance point to the port. If this fisheries harbour and the processing plant are operated fish could be provided to the whole country without a shortage, he declared. Commenting on the Oluvil Fish Processing Plant not being used for storage, Sri Lanka Ports Authority Chairman Gen. Daya Ratnayake said that 500 metric tons of fish could be stored in the plant.

Additionally, the Ports Authority has facilities to store 30 metric tons of fish under the 'blast freezer' method, he said. Storing fish in the plant had not been possible due to work in the Oluvil Harbour being hampered by sand filling. But fish could be transported to the plant by land, Gen. Ratnayake noted. At the outset of the COVID-19 outbreak the Fisheries Corporation had

requested from the Ports Authority to renovate the Oluvil Fish Processing Plant at a cost of Rs 2 million, he said.

But despite this, the Fisheries Ministry hasn't stored any fish there. Even now the Ports Authority, as requested by the Fisheries Ministry, has prepared to hand the plant over to the Fisheries Corporation for use. But the Fisheries Corporation has not yet used it as a storage facility, the Chairman said. He added that he hoped the Fisheries Corporation would go ahead and use the storage facility as planned.

Sri Lanka: Largest fishing harbor to open to the public in November

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21B/Oct02_1633151976CH.php

"The Ministry of Fisheries says the Wennappuwa Wellamankara fishing harbor, which is being constructed as the largest fishing harbor in Sri Lanka, is expected to be opened to the public next month. The construction of this harbor, which is the largest project in the Sri Lankan fisheries sector, will cost nearly Rs. 2.5 billion.

Larger than the Dikowita fishing harbor, which is currently considered to be the largest fishing harbor in Sri Lanka, Wennappuwa fishing harbor can accommodate up to 800 large fishing boats as well as multi-day fishing vessels at a time. The fishing harbor with a large breakwater comprises all the facilities of and fishing harbor, as well as harbor managers and staff hostels, restaurants, and a Coast Guard unit.

With the opening of the Wennappuwa Wellamankara Fisheries Harbor, opening of a new shopping complex in the area will open up incomes to the people of the area and as this fishing harbor is a beautiful fishing harbor, it is planned to develop this area as a tourist city in the future. The construction of this harbor is being carried out under the direct supervision of the Minister of Fisheries, Douglas Devananda.

Sri Lanka: Life 'very hard' for fishermen in financial squall

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-04-18/life-very-hard-for-sri-lanka-fishermen-in-financial-squall>

"After three weeks at sea, Anton Fernando tallies his sales of tuna and other fish on a dock in Negombo, a fishing town in Sri Lanka, where the country's financial crisis darkens already murky waters.

The math does not look good for Fernando and his crew of four among the dozen gently bobbing trawlers. Each takes home 40,000 Sri Lankan rupees (\$130) from their gruelling expedition.

"This will not be enough to cover their household expenses," Fernando, 44, told Reuters,

holding up a notebook scribbled with numbers. "Even before we go home, we know this isn't enough to cover electricity and water bills, tuition fees and food."

The island nation of 22 million people off the southern tip of India is battling its worst financial crisis since independence in 1948, as COVID-19, mismanaged government finances and ill-timed tax cuts sap dwindling foreign reserves. Last week the central bank said it was suspending repayment on some of its foreign debt pending a restructure.

In the commercial capital Colombo, protesters crowd the streets demanding the ouster of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa as people deal with skyrocketing prices, prolonged power cuts and shortages of medicine, fuel and other items.

In Negombo, the fisherman struggle to stay afloat. Fishing makes up just 1.3% of the Southeast Asian nation's economy, but it employs one-tenth of its people and helps feed far more. The island exports tuna, swordfish, crabs, lobsters and prawns to a dozen countries including the United States, Britain, China and Japan, accounting for 8% of its agricultural exports.

Sri Lanka's fisheries and finance ministries did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment on measures taken to help the fishing industry. Some fishermen say they have cut back on food, others have stopped repaying loans. All of those who spoke to Reuters say they constantly scrounge for fuel for their boats and their homes.

Focus is to live today

In Negombo, a tight-knit fishing community 40 km (25 miles) from Colombo, workers pull fish from docked boats, weigh them and pile them into a handful of refrigerated trucks. Each trip for Fernando's colourful St. Anne 2 trawler requires at least 1,000 litres (260 gallons) of diesel and several hundred kilograms of ice.

"We have to stand in line for hours to get fuel and even then we are not sure if we will get enough. Ice, bait, nets, everything we need has increased in price," he said. "Many boats have stopped going out to sea entirely because of the fuel issue." Two fishermen with small boats said they siphon petrol from friends' and neighbours' motorcycles because fuel stations refuse to fill their jerry cans.

Finance Minister Ali Sabry told Reuters this month the government's first priority was to restore essentials such as fuel. He said some of the aid the government is seeking from lenders like the International Monetary Fund would go to the country's economically vulnerable populations.

"Fishermen don't know how they will get fuel or how they will manage high food costs," said

Herman Kumara, head of the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement that represents some 9,000 fisherman. "Their only focus is to live today." The crisis has grounded at least half the area's trawler fleet, he said, predicting "a life-and-death situation here over the next three to six months".

Mary Dilani said she makes 1,500 rupees a day drying fish at a nearby beach, while her husband G.K. Chaminda, who borrowed 100,000 rupees three years ago for a small rowing boat and now struggles to repay the loan, makes 2,000 rupees. "We cannot afford cooking gas anymore," she said in their small, two-room house by a plastic-strewn beach in Negombo's Sea Street neighbourhood, where they live with their two daughters and granddaughter. "

"I have switched to a kerosene stove but sometimes we cannot find kerosene." The family's biggest worry is finding 4,000 rupees for textbooks for a daughter about to start the new school year. "Life has become very hard," Dilani said.

Sri Lanka: Livelihood of Northern fisherfolk hit

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2021/07/04/news/livelihood-northern-fisherfolk-hit>

"The livelihood of the Northern fisherfolk has been affected to a great extent due to the increase in poaching by Indian fishing vessels in the Northern waters of the country following the end of the fish breeding season, said Head of the Northern Fishers' Association, N. Varnakulasingam. The Association released a statement yesterday calling on President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa to adopt proper measures to keep away Indian fishermen.

According to the statement, the Indian fishermen crossing the International Maritime Border Line (IMBL) pose a big threat to the fisherfolk in the North by not only fishing extensively but also destroying the biodiversity in the seas in the North by using their high-powered fishing trawlers. A large number of Indian fishing vessels had been spotted in the Northern territorial waters in the past few weeks. Some Indian vessels have even come up to Delft and other islets in the Northern waters despite the sea patrols carried out by the Navy, according to Northern fisherfolk.

Several Associations representing the Northern fisherfolk have said it was the Northern fisherfolk who suffered immensely during the three-decade battle against terrorism in the North and the East. With the end of terrorism ten years ago, they are gradually building their livelihoods and they see the Indian fishermen in the Northern waters as a huge threat to them. Indian fishing trawlers have even damaged the fishing nets of the fisherfolk and hundreds of fishermen have been affected due to the Indian trawlers.

According to Navy sources, Indian fishing vessels wouldn't have come into Sri Lankan waters in the past few months due to the breeding period of marine life. But now they must be entering Sri

Lankan waters as the breeding period is over and the Navy will intensify patrolling. Varnakulasingam has sent his statement on the threat posed by the Indian fishermen to the Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda as well.

Sri Lanka: Looks to export fisheries and aquatic products to China

<https://colombogazette.com/2021/06/19/sri-lanka-looks-to-export-fisheries-and-aquatic-products-to-china/>

"The Embassy said that the Health Certificate for importing fisheries products to China has been approved by the General Administration Customs of China (GACC). It will enable the approved fisheries and aquatic products to enter this lucrative market, and even encourage Sri Lankan businesses to expand their production.

The renewed Health Certificate must be presented to the Chinese Customs with their products from the 1 July 2021 by the fisheries product exporters from Sri Lanka to China. All processed Fisheries products exporters are required to use this updated version instead of the old certificate.

The Embassy said that 120 copies of the new certificate must be provided urgently as samples to the GACC. The Embassy of Sri Lanka in Beijing says it will assist in this regard. The Commercial Section of the Embassy has been working closely with the General Administration Customs of China (GACC) to assist Sri Lankan fish exports to access the booming Chinese market.

Sri Lanka: Make best use of infrastructure facilities, PM tells fisher community

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/12/08/local/235486/make-best-use-infrastructure-facilities-pm-tells-fisher-community>

"Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa requested the fisher community to make use of the infrastructure provided by the Government productively to help Sri Lanka reach self-sufficiency in fish and related products. The Prime Minister made this request addressing the fisher community of Gandara after initiating the construction work of the Gandara Fisheries Harbour on Sunday. The facility, a long overdue necessity and an unfulfilled election promise by successive governments will cost over nine billion rupees and is scheduled to be commissioned within three years. "

"We expect to see at least 300 to 400 multi-day fishing craft among the other smaller vessels anchored at the facility after its completion", Premier Rajapaksa envisioned and called upon the community to ensure sufficient returns on the investment. The Prime Minister reiterated that the Yahapalanaya government vindictively shelved almost all the fisheries sector development projects and other development projects initiated by his government between 2005 and 2015 and

reminded those present that the Yahapalanaya regime even went to the extreme of using the Mattala International Airport as a silo to store paddy. "

"We have done away with the tax imposed on the fisheries sector by the Yahapalanaya government to encourage investment", he added. The PM said that the thinking behind President Gotabaya Rajapaksa appointing a Jaffna parliamentarian Douglas Devananda as the Minister of Fisheries and Matara district MP Kanchana Wijesekera as the State Minister of Fisheries was to ensure that the fisheries sector from North to South would be benefited equally. State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera said that 12 of the 22 Fisheries Harbours in the country were initiated and completed under the leadership of the present Prime Minister who was a former Minister of Fisheries.

Wijesekera said that the government intended to build more fisheries harbours in the Northern and Eastern Provinces as at present there were only two there. He also indicated that the Kalametiya fisheries would be commissioned early next year. Ministers G. L. Peiris, Dullas Alahapperuma, Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena, Matara District MPs Weerasumana Weerasinghe, Nipuna Ranawaka, Karunasena Kodituwakku, Government officials and stakeholders attended at the ceremony.

Sri Lanka: Marine resources at risk: Sumanthiran

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2021/04/14/sls-marine-resources-at-risk-sumanthiran/>

"Sri Lanka's marine resources are at risk by issuing permits allowing Indian fishermen to enter Sri Lankan waters, parliamentarian M.A. Sumanthiran has said. "If 50 people are allowed to do this 500 people will take advantage of this," Sumanthiran, a Tamil National Alliance MP noted.

Rathna Gamage, the National Organizer of the All-Island General Fisheries Federation, pointed out that it was the Sirasa media network that exposed the illegal bottom trawling method of Indian fishermen. "Now we would like to ask the Government not to cover the truth," he said.

Gamage insisted that the government cannot drag its feet by claiming that the issue will be resolved in a diplomatic matter by holding talks with the Indian Prime Minister. "We as the All Island General Fisheries Federation request the Government to stand on their feet and involve in this matter so that pride of our country will be protected," he said.

Sri Lanka: Massive drop in Indian trawlers

<https://www.nation.lk/online/massive-drop-in-indian-trawlers-38106.html>

"Sri Lanka's northern fishermen have reported a massive decrease in the number of Indian trawlers spotted in the island's territorial waters amidst increased surveillance by the Navy, with

daily sightings dropping from approximately 500 to 10. Speaking to The Morning yesterday (29), District Fishermen's Co-op Society Chairman M. Johnson highlighted that the increased surveillance was a result of a protest campaign by northern fishermen.

“Around 500 Indian trawlers were laying nets daily on our seas, depriving the local people of their catch. However, this has reduced after the protests we conducted, which forced the Government to take action against these trawlers, and now we only see about 10 trawlers per day.” The Government utilised the Navy to increase patrolling and surveillance in Sri Lankan waters around Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Mannar, and Trincomalee.

However, this is believed to be unsustainable in the long run. When contacted, Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda told The Morning that the Indian and Sri Lankan authorities are all set to hold discussions today (30) to find a permanent solution to this issue. “The joint working group on fisheries will conduct a virtual meeting to discuss the matter and resolve the dispute between fishermen of both countries,” Devananda said.

According to the statistics of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, the total fish production in Sri Lanka in 2019 was 505,830 MT, down from 531,310 MT in 2017. Johnson said that trawlers are a source of destruction to Sri Lankan seas because of their capacity to damage wide areas of the seafloor. “Indian trawlers have left our fishermen with depleted fish stocks and destroyed the sea bottom, dislodging all sediments of corals.”

Mechanised trawlers are one of the prominent reasons for the depletion of the Indian marine ecosystem, according to a study conducted by the US Food and Agriculture Organisation of (FAO) in 2006. The United Nations (UN) General Secretary has stated that 95% of damage to seamount ecosystems worldwide is caused by deep-sea bottom trawling.

Indian trawlers began crossing the maritime border in the 1980s while Sri Lanka descended into a destructive civil war between the Government and the militant Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). However, the fisheries conflict only heated up following the end of the war, when these seas became less dangerous and more accessible to fishermen.

Sri Lanka: Mechanism to purchase fish products implemented

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/Apr12_1586669156CH.php

"The government has devised a mechanism to purchase fish products that are brought to the fisheries harbors. At a recent government group meeting, it was decided that a mechanism would be implemented to purchase the fishermen's fish harvest in order to prevent inconvenience to the fishing community and consumers.

The Fishermen say the program will bring many benefits to the consumers as well as to themselves. Fish purchases at Beruwela Fisheries Harbor are also being implemented

successfully. Fishermen say there is a fair price for fish product due to the arrival of wholesale traders.

Arrangements have been made to transport the fish surplus to the Peliyagoda wholesale fish market and to the Hikkaduwa Fisheries Harbor if there is a surplus of fish. The purchasing program is successful at Mirissa Fisheries Harbor also, according to the fishermen. Fish harvests have been successfully purchased also at Hambantota, Kudawella and Tangalle fisheries harbors.

Sri Lanka: MEPA highlights illegal fishing activities in restricted areas

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/09/13/local/259198/mepa-highlights-illegal-fishing-activities-restricted-areas>

"The Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) today highlighted the on-going illegal fishing activities being carried out by fishermen at Hendala, Wattala, Dikowita and Kepungoda areas when the Fisheries Department and many other marine environment protection authorities has prohibited such activities following the MV X-Press Pearl container ship disaster.

The Singapore registered X-press pearl container ship caught fire off the Colombo Harbour on May 20 this year and many containers inside the ship were immediately removed to prevent the fire from spreading. According to the Fisheries Department the Environmental Ministry and several other authorised institutions including the Maritime Pollution Prevention Authority, National Aquatic and Research Authority (NARA) are conducting investigations into the environmental disaster.

MEPA Chairman Dharshani Lahandapura said the decision to restrict fishing activities in this affected ocean area was taken by the MEPA considering the risk of chemical substances, garbage and other damaged objects polluting the ocean bed. The MEPA Chairman says that chemicals which mixed with sea water in the disaster area could cause a threat to human life.

She said in addition people who are engaged in fishing in this restricted area should also be very careful since this situation could be detrimental to their health, hence the reason to ban fishing until a clear assurance is given.

State Minister Kanchana Wijesekara said some people are still engaged in fishing ignoring the instructions given by the Fisheries Department to refrain from fishing in this restricted ocean area. He said even the Ministry had advised the Sri Lanka Navy to conduct search operations using special vessels.

Wijesekara further said a large number of fishermen who have been prohibited from fishing in this area following the Government announcement will be paid compensation for the loss of income to their livelihood.

Sri Lanka: Monitors oil spill from burning vessel

<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202105/1224638.shtml>

"Sri Lankan authorities said on Wednesday it is monitoring an oil spill from a burning foreign vessel near the Port of Colombo, warning that the oil spill may waft towards the Negombo lagoon in the west coast of the country. Till Wednesday noon, rescue teams from the Sri Lanka Navy and the Indian Navy were involved in joint efforts to douse the flames onboard the container ship ""X-PRESS PEARL"" registered under the flag of Singapore, which was carrying 1,486 containers with 25 tons of Nitric Acid and several other chemicals and cosmetics from the port of Hazira, India on May 15.

Sri Lankan State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera said that by Tuesday evening signs of oil spills were found in the ocean near the burning vessel and the fisheries Department, the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), the navy, the coast guard and other authorities were all working to contain the oil spill and minimize the damage to the marine environment. Wijesekera said debris and cargo from the ship had been spotted along the beach in Negombo by local fishermen in the area and a cargo container had also been spotted early Wednesday in the same area.

The latest video footage released by the Navy showed that the vessel is still engulfed by flames and rescue teams were trying to douse the fire. Wijesekera further said that on the instructions of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, a team of experts is working to contain and clean the oil spill and debris from the ship. The Sri Lanka Air Force said Bell 212 helicopters had dropped 425 kgs of dry chemical powder on Wednesday morning to help extinguish the fire.

The 25 crew members onboard the vessel were all rescued by the Sri Lanka Navy on Tuesday, and two injured Indian nationals among the rescued had been sent to a hospital for treatment, according to the Navy. The crew members of the ship are Philippine, Chinese, Indian, and Russian nationals. On Wednesday, health authorities said one of the Indian crew members had tested positive for COVID-19.

The vessel sent out a distress call while being close to the Colombo Port on May 20. After it caught fire, the Sri Lankan Navy immediately dispatched vessels to bring the fire under control. On Tuesday, the MEPA said that the floating toxic or poisonous materials or packages from the burning ship may reach the shores of Colombo, Negombo and nearby areas and warned people to stay away from beaches. To douse the fire on the burning vessel, the Indian government on Tuesday deployed Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Vaibhav, ICG Dornier and Tug Water Lily, among others, to the scene.

Sri Lanka: More canned fish from China rejected

<https://menafn.com/1101348273/Sri-Lanka-More-canned-fish-from-China-rejected>

"The Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI) has rejected another 21 containers with canned fish containing arsenic laden salmon that was imported from China. Customs Superintendent M. Ashroff told Colombo Gazette that the containers are apart from the 48 containers that were earlier rejected by the SLSI. Among the 48 containers, 16 have been re-exported to China, while the remaining are yet to be reshipped.

Ashroff said less ships arriving in Sri Lanka due to the coronavirus pandemic has caused a delay in re-exporting the remaining containers. He said however, the Customs Department expects to complete the re-exportation of the rejected canned fish back to China by January 2021. Meanwhile, Customs Spokesman Sunil Jayaratne told Colombo Gazette that discussions were held last week with Sri Lanka Ports Authority officials in this regard.

On 17 December, the Customs Department commenced the re-exportation of 48 containers of canned fish that was imported from China after it was rejected for containing arsenic laden salmon. The canned fish that was deemed unfit for human consumption was 768 MT in weight and valued at Rs. 384 million. The containers were imported between July- October 2020.

Sri Lanka: Multiple crises imperil lives and livelihoods

<https://www.sundaytimes.lk/220306/news/multiple-crises-imperil-lives-and-livelihoods-475453.html>

"Critical services such as education, health, transport, and tourism are facing unprecedented multiple blows from the lack of fuel and electricity. This is stirring public anger across the country because lives are in danger and livelihoods have been destroyed. Ambulance services say they have been forced to limit operations to short distances or cancel hires. The manager of a private ambulance service in Colombo, Kalapani Kodituwakku, said patients can not be transported from far away locations.

"We are dealing with the lives of people. We can not take chances, so we cancel hires. On Thursday, we canceled 20 hires. Hospitals as well as patients are inconvenienced," she said. Even though some fuel stations give ambulances priority, most fuel station employees keep them waiting, she said.

The general manager of a private nursing home, Danushka Damith Wijesinghe, said the government must prioritise fuel for ambulances.

"People's lives depend on ambulances. People need our services in emergencies, and in such situations we cannot go in search of fuel or stay in fuel lines at petrol stations," he said. Mr Wijesinghe said requests for ambulances may be rejected because lives could be at risk from

ambulances breaking down while moving patients.

The fisheries sector too has been badly affected by the fuel shortage as well as the fuel price increases. The education sector is suffering. Teachers engaging in online education have had to halt their sessions.

Unions representing teachers say prolonged power cuts and the fuel shortage have a direct bearing on students and exam candidates. Ceylon Teachers Union's (CTU) General secretary, Joseph Stalin, told the Sunday Times that all the students, teachers, and principals are scheduled to come to school on Monday.

“Students are dropped to school by parents, or school vans. When there is no diesel, the students are unable to reach school. Even the principals and teachers take public transport,” he said. Mr Stalin said that they requested the government to not enforce power cuts during the Advance Level examination, but the Ceylon Electricity Board CEB imposed a five-hour power cut. “The government has financial management issues, This has caused a forex issue and due to that, it is unable to purchase fuel and provide power, even for students sitting for exams.” Tourism sector operators, guides, as well as safari jeep operators are struggling. A safari jeep driver who operates at Yala National Park, Mohamad Ameen, said that most drivers cancel trips, or only undertake half-day journeys.

“We just restarted tourism, yet we are unable to make a living due to the fuel shortage. If the government needs dollars we can earn them dollars, but at least we need to operate to find dollars,” he said. Public and private bus operations have been crippled. Half of the private bus fleet is not operating, owners say.

The head of the Sri Lanka Private Bus Owners Association, Gemunu Wijeratne, said that they have asked the SLTB to provide them with fuel. “Bus drivers have been forced to be in long lines to buy fuel,” he said, And yet, most can't fill up their tanks. He warned that he and the other private bus unions would stop operations next week if the government fails to provide diesel.

The Ceylon Electricity Board Engineers Union president, Anil Ranjith, said power generation at the moment depends on the availability of diesel and furnace oil. There is more dependence on furnace oil because there is now much less hydro power generation. Mr Ranjith added that uninterrupted power can only be provided if fuel is provided. Farmers say their expenses have quadrupled because of soaring transport costs.

President of the Parabowa Farmers Association, Rasika Premasiri said that some farmers could not gather the harvest because they could not get diesel. And the farmers who managed to gather

their harvest are now unable to get the paddy milled as there is no electricity. “Most farmers are forced to keep the dried paddy in their homes because they can not transport paddy to the mills as lorries do not operate. The mills don’t function either due to power cuts. Farmers who stock the harvest at home face elephant attacks,” he said.

Mr Peramasiri said they had received an overseas order, but failed to export on February 28, as they were unable to mill and transport the load due to the fuel shortage. The fishing community has been hampered as well, while fish prices have risen.

The convener of the National Fisheries Solidarity movement, Herman Kumara told the Sunday Times, that already 25 percent of the fishing community are not going out to sea. “Large multi-day fishing boats need 15,000 to 20,000 litres per trip. The fishermen don’t get the amount they request. Some fishermen lay nets in the sea while they are operating their small boats. For one such fishing activity fishermen use up around 50 litres of kerosene,” he said.

Mr Kumara said incomes have dropped and the fish export industry, too, has been badly affected. Local fish consumption has dropped due to rising prices, he added. The chairman of the Ceylon petroleum Corporation was unavailable for comment.

Sri Lanka: Multiple shocks of covid-19 and the tragedy of fisheries

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/11/17/features/233714/multiple-shocks-covid-19-and-tragedy-fisheries>

"During the past eight months, fishing has been hit appallingly by the coronavirus. During the first wave of the epidemic, the issues were low prices, low production and incomes due to curfews, lockdowns, etc., while during the second wave, they were the increased risk of spread of the disease, reduced fish consumption, low demand and falling incomes. These incessant multiple shocks have crippled the fisheries sector, torturing especially the small scale fisheries.

On top of the alarmingly high rate of spread of the virus, curfews and lockdowns, the recently surfaced issues such as congestion in markets, imprudence of diverse actors in abiding by health guidelines, incapacity of government facilities in handling fish surpluses, myths about fish being a carrier of the covid-19 virus and the failure of authorities in exonerating this myth, have all contributed sturdily to this tragedy.

Since the first case of Covid-19 was reported on March 11, 2020, the Corona pandemic has had varying effects on the small scale fishing community, depending on the seasonality, availability of supporting services (fuel, ice supply and marketing), alternative livelihood opportunities and

state regulations. A World Bank study reported a sizeable fall in fish production from 50-65 % by the end of the first week of 7th April, compared to the corresponding figure in 2019.

The pandemic affected all links in the fish value chain, dismantling almost all of them; fish landings, marketing, distribution, processing, etc. Closure of retail outlets, the limited number of merchants present at landing sites to buy fish, inadequate number of transport vehicles available, lack of effective demand etc. were the demand side issues, while curfews and lock downs, avoidance of social gatherings and poor Fishing (Low fishing effort), were the supply side issues affecting the SSF sector dreadfully.

Negative impact Price decline meant initially wastage of fish, and unfortunately fish could not be even sent for dry fish making because small dry fish industries were closed and even the prospect of household drying was grim because of the curfews (travel to drying areas) and lack of buyers as well. Sri Lanka's fish exports were hit by a merciless blow, when all international trade links were shattered in April 2020.

Tons of fish caught by multiday crafts remained unsold and, offshore and deep sea fisheries and, even the export oriented ornamental fisheries industry, were literally padlocked. All crew workers of these boats became jobless and were confronted with intense livelihood crises. Fishing is characterized by extremely high income fluctuations and fishers have historically being engaged in diverse non-fishing activities to smoothen consumption in a context of inter-temporal fluctuations of fishing incomes.

Coir industry, net mending, ornamental fisheries, fish drying (by women), working as crew workers in multiday crafts, agriculture, animal husbandry, tourism activities (as guides, providing home stay facilities, fishing tours in lagoons), running boutiques, etc. are some of the activities fishers and their families have undertaken to earn supplementary incomes and to smoothen income fluctuations. It is quite evident that, Covid-19 has made most of these activities defunct, threatening the wellbeing of the fishing community because the major sources of income (fishing), supplementary sources of income and assistance were not available to them.

The sector recovered slowly by June but at a slow pace. There was no fishing for a long time due the breakdown of the fish supply chain, and no incomes were forthcoming from alternative livelihoods. Yet, debts were getting accumulated and recovery required more loans for replacement and repair of crafts and gear. However, by the end of June, the sector had recovered to a fair extent, in respect of production and prices.

Information from Assistant Directors of fisheries from all over the country revealed that by end of June 2020, the reported fish landings and prices were the same as landings reported for 2019 for the same. While it is true that fishing had recommenced, the fishers were still repaying their accumulated debts and their sources of alternative livelihoods were yet to regain their strength. Regrettably, this story of painful recovery did not last long, because the second wave of the coronavirus hit the country with a ravaging force in October 2020.

The Peliyagoda cluster The emergence of the new Covid-19 cluster originating from the Peliyagoda wholesale fish market was a catastrophe, because it came at a time when the new strain of the Coronavirus SARS B142 was razing though every corner of the country at an alarmingly high speed with a heavy virus load. Frighteningly high numbers of Covid cases found in the Peliyagoda cluster prompted immediate closure of the market to contain the spread of the virus. Several major fishing harbours and a number of fish markets and retail stalls in the country were subject to temporary closure.

The Peliyagoda market, which is the only National Wholesale Fish market in Sri Lanka, has about 154 wholesale fish stalls and 15 retail stalls and about 350,000 kg of fish reach the market daily, which, on an annual basis, is about 25% of the 527,060 tons of fish produced in the country. Within the market premises, there is very close interaction among the buyers and sellers who number around 3,000 during a particular day. Similar to the large number of sellers bringing fish from all over the country, the buyers (or retailers) too come from every corner of the country, providing the environment for the operation of a near-perfect competitive market.

All these agents squeeze through each other in making their deals. Their presence within a limited space, the short time period during which the transactions take place, the need for the transactors coming from distant areas to return home immediately, etc. cause a heavy rush during the morning hours. During the rush, people generally tend to forget to strictly adhere to guidelines issued by health authorities.

Rapid dissemination of the virus could also emerge from the poor sanitary conditions that exist inside the market premises, improper handling of fish by the sellers and, more importantly the habit of sharing, food, tea and cigarettes among themselves. Apart from such direct person-to-person contacts, droplets of saliva from the mouth of persons are likely to land on the fish and on the persons nearby quite easily due to their close proximity. It is said that SARS B142 with its heavy virus load can spread billions of virus particles to others through a solitary sneeze.

Thus, a sick person can easily infect others and who in turn may take the infection to other areas when they return with fish or money, and the spread could continue into unmanageable proportions. The impact of the pandemic on people's life is becoming horrendous. The closure of the Peliyagoda fish market with a large number of fish traders being diagnosed as CoViD-19 positive and the resulting panic created among the public, have disrupted the fish supply chain.

A fleet of multiday boats loaded with fish were waiting for landing when harbours were closed. For example, more than 300,000 kg of fish were still in the fish holds of the 90 multiday boats awaiting landing at the Beruwala harbor at the time of the closure of the harbour. It is a misfortune, that the Ceylon Fisheries Cooperation (CFC), which is the state marketing agency, has no capacity of handling such huge quantities of fish.

Having no other alternative, most of the fishers have given their harvest for dried fish and Maldivé fish production at very low prices. About 50,000 kg of fish which remained at the

Peliyagoda market at the time of its closure, were sent to fish meal industry; a very woeful story indeed. Owing probably to a misconception that the Corona virus could be transmitted via fish, many fish consumers of the country have refrained from consuming fish, putting fishers out of the frying pan into the fire.

Today the small scale fishers grieve that their fish is being rejected by consumers, although they are not landed in large harbours, which are known to be the springs that diffuse the virus. The prices have come down tremendously and fishing has become a net cost to the fishers. These fishers form the poor among fishing communities and they have been hit strongly by multiple shocks; first by the CoViD-19 and the health risk and, now by the livelihood threat.

Fish from small scale fisheries land in small landing sites (thotupola) and they are sold in nearby villages and urban areas. Such fish reach Peliyagoda only when there are gluts of fish. Along with the fish caught by offshore boats, the present situation needs to be redressed by taking immediate measures through government intervention to exploit all accessible private cold room facilities for storage, sending excess fish to dried fish making or, to the fish meal industry if the fish is already in a state of decomposition.

Moreover, as the fishers are turning to the dried fish and Maldivian fish as an alternative sources of demand for their catches under the present circumstances, it would be of paramount importance to assist these industries with financial support. Moreover, there are a large number of multi-day vessels currently at sea that are due to return ashore with their catches in the coming days. Those fishers will face serious issues with neither buyers nor sufficient storage facilities for their fish stocks. This necessitates immediate action to restore the fish supply chain.

Sri Lanka: MV X-press Pearl disaster: Regional maritime cooperation vital

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2021/08/29/business/regional-maritime-cooperation-vital>

"On May 20, Sri Lanka's worst-ever marine disaster occurred when a fire erupted on the Singapore-registered container ship MV X-Press Pearl just 18 km northwest of Colombo. While the long-term cost is yet to be determined, the negative impact on industries such as fisheries and tourism, and people who rely on the coastal resources of Sri Lanka is already apparent. This article examines the key consequences of this disaster on Sri Lanka's coastal economy and highlights the need to enhance regional maritime cooperation to prevent the recurrence of such disasters.

Impact on fishing activities: The fisheries industry is an important sub-sector of the economy; it accounts for 1.3% of GDP at current prices, exhibited a growth rate of 9.9% and accounted for 1.5% of export earnings in 2019. It is also a source of many direct and indirect employment opportunities from fishing to processing, distributing and trade and boat-building and maintenance. Approximately 583,000 people are employed in this industry and there is a

supporting workforce of 2.7 million. It is also crucial to note that fish contributes more than 60% of all animal protein consumed in Sri Lanka and is the main source of protein for low-income groups.

However, following the fire and the consequent spill of nitric acid and plastic pellets into the sea and nearby coast, fishing was temporarily banned along an 80 km stretch of the coast. The effect on the local community has been stark, with some estimates claiming that around 16,000 fishers were affected. The X-Press Pearl fire, which disrupted the fisheries supply chain, from fishers to processors to wholesale and retail traders, made the fishing community more susceptible to the structural economic and social inequality they already faced.

The coastal fishing community, one of the three sub-sectors of the fisheries sector of Sri Lanka, is the most vulnerable as they are daily income earners. The loss of even a single day's income severely affects the ability of a fisher's family to meet their basic needs. Furthermore, for most involved in this industry, there are no alternative means of income. Of the Rs. 720 million compensation received by the government, Rs. 420 million has been set aside for the fishing community affected by the fire and fixed prices have been set for fishing gear and equipment in consultation with relevant businessmen.

But it is important to understand the context in which this marine disaster occurred: the fisheries industry was already severely impacted by the pandemic. Islandwide curfews, cross-border mobility restrictions and trade regulations led to various constraints on access to equipment and markets. Tourism: Sri Lanka's coastal tourism is heavily dependent on its rich marine biodiversity.

The plastic waste and potential oil spills from the ship threaten not only the beaches and seas which are home to sensitive ecosystems such as lagoons and coral reefs but also its marine life. The Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), the main government body responsible for marine pollution, has stated that the plastic waste from the ship has probably caused the "worst beach pollution in our history," and will lead to years of ecological damage.

For example, the marine pollution caused by the fire is responsible for the death of 200 marine animals—including 176 sea turtles, 20 dolphins and four whales—as of now. Plastic pellets, which are easily carried by the tide, attract toxins from the water and can cause death if ingested by marine life, have washed ashore from Puttalam to Matara. Despite various efforts such as beach cleanups, the attempt to restore the coast is ongoing.

The coast has lost much of its former beauty and attraction, and of 15 tourist zones, eight have been affected by the fire. The damage caused to fish breeding areas will result in lesser yields of crabs and jumbo prawns, which are specially consumed by foreign tourists. The fear of contamination and reduced supply of these items will have an immediate financial impact on the coastal economy. There is also the fear that toxic chemicals will damage the coral reef which takes years to regenerate.

This depletion and ruin of coastal resources will have a spillover effect on the fishing community and tourism leading to a mid-to-long-term economic impact. This is not the first ship fire or oil spill that has occurred in Sri Lankan waters, with the MT New Diamond ship fire in 2020 being one of the most significant. Sri Lanka's position in the middle of many sea and trade routes in the Indian Ocean, where around 200 to 300 ships —mainly oil tankers from the Persian Gulf to East Asia — pass daily, makes the country especially vulnerable to marine accidents.

Moving forward: The X-Press Pearl fire was controlled only after Sri Lanka received emergency support from India, and this clearly highlights the inadequacies of current institutions to handle a crisis of this scale. While Sri Lanka does have a domestic structure in place to prevent and manage marine pollution, it is crucial that the country works closely with others in the region to achieve the same.

MEPA has the authority to implement the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCOPE) which allows the mobilisation of support from the Navy, Coastguard and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority. However, the emergency response system is too reliant on reactive responses as opposed to more proactive approaches, which aim to not minimise the damage caused by marine pollution but to prevent it from occurring.

This needs continuous monitoring of waters and heightened scrutiny, especially given that Sri Lanka is on a trajectory to become a maritime hub and expand its port capacity. Sri Lanka can achieve this only through regional cooperation — with countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh— that is based on the facilitation of knowledge, resource sharing, constant communication channels and the formulation of standardised security measures for responders.

However, this must occur through a formal, binding mechanism for otherwise, any assistance provided will be purely voluntary and context dependent. For example, requests made to offload the cargo at the Hazira port in India were denied which ultimately led to the X-Press Pearl fire in Sri Lankan waters. Given that the increase in maritime traffic has not led to a proportional increase in response capacities in countries such as Sri Lanka, official regional cooperation is key in preventing marine accidents and protecting shared waters.

Sri Lanka: Nanthi Lagoon to be renovated

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/08/11/local/225542/nanthi-lagoon-be-renovated>

"The Fisheries and Aquatic Development Ministry has stated that it will take steps to renovate the Nanthi Lagoon located in the Nanthi Kadal area of the Mullaitivu District. It has been reported that scientific research for the project has already been carried out, and that it is to be implemented in coordination with the Wildlife Conservation Department, Sri Lanka Fishery Harbours Corporation, and the Central Environment Authority.

A spokesman for the Fisheries Department told the Daily News that the lagoon was contaminated during the 30-year civil war. Moreover, no steps had been taken to renovate the lagoon, afterwards, he added. The spokesman also said that the two-kilometre-long canal linking the Nanthi Lagoon to the Nanthi Kadal Estuary has been overrun with garbage and aquatic plants for a long time.

Furthermore, at a recent meeting held between officials from the Wildlife Department and Fisheries Ministry, it was suggested that debris and munitions from the war could still be stuck between the waste or at the bottom of the lagoon. Among the participants at the meeting were Wildlife Director-General Hemantha Jayasinghe, National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) Chairman Prof. Navarathnaraja, Fisheries Department Director-General Thushara Lokukumara, Beach Preservation Department Director Prabath Chandrasekara, and senior engineers of the Fisheries Corporation.

Sri Lanka: NARA and IMR, Norway to cooperate in fisheries research

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/04/22/local/247240/nara-and-imr-norway-cooperate-fisheries-research>

"The National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) and the Institute of Marine Research, Norway (IMR) joined hands to continue their cooperation in fisheries research in Sri Lankan waters. The signature event in this regard was held on Tuesday. The two institutions will engage in research on fish stocks in the waters of Sri Lanka, with the aim of improved and sustainable management of marine resources in the country.

Norway's financial assistance enabled an ecosystem survey in the coastal waters of Sri Lanka by the Norwegian Research Vessel Dr. Fridtjof Nansen in Sri Lanka in 2018. After the successful completion of the first phase of the project, the Norwegian Embassy was pleased to approve the second phase of the project for development of fisheries management tools at a cost of close to NOK 8.75mn (approx. 1 Million USD), which will be operational until 2022.

Speaking at the event, Norwegian Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Trine Jøranli Eskedal, underscored that Norway is "committed to bilateral cooperation on oceans and to helping Sri Lanka put in place data-based management systems for ocean resources, which will enable Sri Lanka to better monitor its fish stocks." She added that the Norwegian fisheries cooperation with Sri Lanka, which dates back to the 1970s, includes fisheries management, research and education, and private sector development.

From 2013 to 2020, NOK 20.3 mill. (approx. 2.4 mill.USD) have been disbursed to the fisheries sector. Ambassador Eskedal also highlighted the importance of sharing these research findings with other Sri Lankan stakeholders, both in the public and private sector, to make informed

decisions related to oceans and fisheries and to bringing in new and advanced technology to Sri Lanka's fisheries sector.

She also reiterated the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) – to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources, and the importance of the fisheries sector to advance more sustainable economic growth in Sri Lanka.

Speaking at the event, Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda, mentioned that the Government of Sri Lanka is looking for renewed opportunities to strengthen the fisheries sector. "Research projects of this nature are an opportunity for our Sri Lankan fishermen and for the sector as a whole. Sri Lanka and Norway have a longstanding bilateral relationship within the fisheries sector and wish to ensure the livelihoods of fishermen and the local economy," he stressed. The Minister added that Sri Lanka is an island nation blessed with abundant marine resources.

It is the government's mandate to sustain such resources, while bringing in research-based advanced technology to boost the sector. The Minister also thanked the Government of Norway for its continued support during these unprecedented times. State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish and Prawn Farming Kanchana Wijesekera mentioned that the Government's strategy for enhancing the marine fisheries sector in Sri Lanka aims at developing and managing the sector in a successful way using scientific evidence and modern technology.

"To obtain science-based recommendations for managing the fisheries, capacity building of Sri Lankan scientists is essential," the State Minister underscored. NARA Chairman Prof. Navaratnarajah underscored the importance of this cooperation: "The technical assistance from IMR scientists provides immense support to develop the capacity of Sri Lankan scientists, while enabling the collection of proper marine data in a scientific manner."

He also added that Norway's support to the fisheries sector in the past was remarkable, and that NARA, with the guidance of the Ministry of Fisheries of Sri Lanka and its sister organisations, hopes to continue the bilateral relationships while strengthening the technical cooperation with IMR in the future.

Sri Lanka: Negombo's salted delights

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/01/01/features/237580/negombo%E2%80%99s-salted-delights>

"For centuries this island nation has relished the taste of fresh fish. Our seafood beautifully cooked in spices has attracted discerning guests from all over the world. In the recent past, owing to the spread of Covid-19 from one of the major fish markets there has been undue paranoia about consuming fish. This is one element within the greater realm of the fish industry. In this narrative I hope to bring out the dried fish industry that flourishes in areas like Negombo, Trincomalee and Mannar, with memories of visits to the Negombo Fish Market.

The town of Negombo is famous for its beachfront hotels, Catholic churches and bountiful fish. To many people who go in search of fresh fish, the market of Negombo is a seafood lover's paradise. About two kilometres from the fresh fish market is the busy dry fish processing area on the beach. As we got down from the trishaw, the pungent smell of drying fish permeated the air. There was a statue of the Virgin Mary mounted on a pedestal, as most folk engaged in this enterprise are devout Catholics.

For as far as my eye could see there were rows of drying fish that was heavily salted. After finding a path to walk we met Roshan, a young man. He was busy turning the sprats with his bare hands. He greets us and explains, "As you see, we make the best dry fish in the country here. We get the fish from the boats. We wash the fish and then coat them in salt. The sun is so intense these days that the fish dry completely in a few days." There are others around Roshan, young men bending and turning the fish.

They add, "You may have eaten jardi. In this process we immerse the larger cuts of fish in a mixture of brine, saffron and gorraka. After a few days in a barrel, the fish is fully fermented. It goes down well with rice." This item is not often featured in authentic Sri Lankan culinary festivals. It captures that exotic island seafood appeal. Another young woman is walking amidst the rows of fish. Her robust figure indicates her strength as a result of carrying baskets of dried fish. She says, "Sir, we work hard in the hot sun.

We are also young people like you, yet at times we face the social stigma of being fisherfolk. We do this work as this has been the family tradition for generations. Perhaps in the future it may change." The young woman explains that during the rainy season they don't get work and at times the fish in the process of drying can go stale and they would incur a loss. As we walked along this maze of deep-sea delights, we spotted a young man and his uncle carrying a basket of fish on a pole. This pair moved back and forth.

Along the left side of this beach are a few shops. Some vendors were selling baskets – used to carry the dry fish. Others are selling long reels of coir-woven rugs, on which the fish is spread out to dry. A tiny kiosk sold plain tea. The pot-bellied man behind the counter grins and displays his teeth, stained red by chewing betel. A well-nourished calico cat was observing everyone. Further along the beach a group of women are cutting and filleting large fish.

A young girl wearing a silver cross on a chain giggled as she showed us the sharp knife with which, by years of experience, she cut away with dexterity. After this the fish is immersed in cold water. A young man came towards me. His name is James, the name is reminiscent of one of the disciples of Jesus – and many of them were indeed fishermen. James carried the washed fish and began to rub each fillet with a hand full of salt.

Crows hovered around expectantly. This is the vital part of curing the fish. The fish heads are discarded and collected in a large barrel. When asked about prices, they admitted of selling only to wholesale customers, although there were a few small shops. The youth said that the 'fish

mudalali' is the one who decides the price at the daily auction. Like the defiant Alpha male in the food chain, these dominating businessmen control the prices, making profits.

The young people working in this enterprise begin their day at 7.00 am and work round the clock. They have to ward off intruding crows and other birds that try and swoop in for a free meal. After a hard day's work, their primary aim is to wash the strong smell of dried fish from their hands. Amidst the sweltering sun and hard work these youth have good attitudes and smiles.

Their life is simple. They talk, work and drink plain tea. They share their rice and curry. They intercede seeking divine blessings. Hopefully in the future their dried fish will be sold in a more appealing way to domestic customers. As I said before, in comparison to meat, poultry and forms of seafood, dried fish has not been a desired choice on many domestic menus.

The vast dry fish operation on the beaches of Negombo (and other areas in this island) is a must visit place for all who love seafood. Besides when you purchase dried fish it is the most dependable seafood option during any crisis, and in comparison to fresh fish is in a distinct class of its own in a culinary sense.

Sri Lanka: Never be caught again with sea disasters, experts urge

<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/210606/news/never-be-caught-again-with-sea-disasters-experts-urge-446094.html>

"With the prospect of having a vast floating sheet of plastic pellets stretching across the entire Indian Ocean as just one consequence of the environmental damage caused by the fire on the MV X-Press Pearl, experts have called for proactive planning to deal with ship disasters as well as a continuous marine bio-diversity assessing mechanism.

"The impact to marine life from the recent ship disaster will last for decades. Preparedness is lacking and planning is only mobilised when there is a problem. We need to have structures set up to respond to marine extreme events," Dr. Charitha Pattiaratchi, Professor of Coastal Oceanography of the Oceans Institute of the University of Western Australia, said. Prof. Pattiaratchi who has been observing the movement of the surface chlorophyll reflecting the pathway of the nurdles (plastic pellets) released from containers of the burning and sinking X-Press Pearl off the shores of Sri Lanka, told the Sunday Times these would extend across the whole Indian Ocean from Somalia to Indonesia including India and the Maldives.

"Plastics pellets are generally not toxic but the ingestion of large quantities can cause death," he said. "Pellets can get stuck in fish gills and also suffocate marine animals such as turtles and dolphins. The only way to reduce its impact is to remove as much as possible." The worst environmental damage from the sinking ship would be the potential oil spill, he emphasised.

According to Professor Ashoka Deepananda, head of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture at the University of Ruhuna, it will be difficult to assess the damage to the marine environment as Sri Lanka does not have a continuous monitoring mechanism of the marine ecosystem. “We lack the latest data on marine biodiversity prior to the ship disaster to assess the damage caused by the fire. Lack of funding to conduct research, and lack of state intervention to obtain the latest technology or assistance from developed nations will be obstacles for the authorities who are trying to assess the damage now,” he said.

The effect of microplastics and chemicals released into the sea would only be fully evident in years to come. “While the oil spill damage can be noticed and assessed, the damage to marine life from chemicals will show only in the coming years. This can have an impact on the life cycle of fish as larvae are sensitive to chemicals. The Negombo lagoon is rich in biodiversity and mangroves, which attracts marine species.

While fish can swim to deep seas, larvae and algae will be directly exposed to the chemicals,” Prof. Deepananda said. Dr. Ravindra Fernando, Senior Professor in Forensic Science and Founder Head of the country’s only National Poisons Information Centre, said: “The ship was carrying a consignment of hazardous chemicals including 25 tonnes of nitric acid, ethyl alcohol, lead ingots, dust urea, frilled urea, high-density and low-density polyethylene (46 containers), epoxy resins (349 containers), sodium methoxide, caustic soda (42 containers), aluminum processing byproducts and raw materials for cosmetics, as well as 28 containers of raw materials used to make plastic bags. With the sinking of the ship, the release of the chemicals is a serious risk to the ocean and the coastal ecosystem.” Prof.

Fernando said the nitric acid would damage the corals and ocean life as it is a highly corrosive chemical. “It is a very dangerous acid. The chemical spill is already causing damage to Sri Lanka’s coastline, including the popular tourist resorts of Negombo and Kalutara, with beaches thickly coated in microplastics and an oil slick visible in the surrounding ocean,” the toxicology expert said. Prof. Fernando said the plastic pellets used to make plastic bags can be fatal to marine life and cause death to sea-turtles, fish and even birds. Dead fish have washed up on shores already with plastic pellets trapped in their gills.

The Ministry of Urban Development said 584 tonnes of plastic pellet debris from the sinking ship have been collected from the nine-kilometre stretch of coastline between Uswetakaiyawa to Sarakkukanda as a result of beach cleaning conducted by personnel from the Navy, Air Force, Coast Conservation Department and Marine Environment Protection Authority.

Sri Lanka: New assessment shows 74% of Sri Lanka’s freshwater fish threatened with extinction

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/07/new-assessment-shows-74-of-sri-lankas-freshwater-fish-threatened-with-extinction/>

"Surveys carried out in the early 1980s in the many reservoirs in Sri Lanka's dry zone showed abundant populations of the red-fin labeo (*Labeo lankae*), an endemic species of freshwater fish. Reports indicated the fish was also available at local fish markets. But decades later, it has disappeared from the reservoirs it was known to inhabit, a fate it shares with many other freshwater fish across Sri Lanka. In fact, a recent assessment of the island's freshwater fish shows three-fourths of endemic species are facing extinction. The National Red List is updated regularly as taxonomic revisions result in adding or removing species.

The 2020 assessment shows 139 freshwater fish species, 61 of which are found only on the Indian Ocean island. Of the endemic species, the red list classifies 12 as critically endangered, 24 as endangered, and nine species as vulnerable. It also lists five species as near threatened, two as data deficient, and the rest as being of least concern in terms of their conservation status. Thirty-six non-endemic freshwater fish species were also assessed under the red list review, with eight listed as threatened.

Threatened endemics: Sampath Goonetillake, IUCN Sri Lanka's senior program officer for biodiversity and one of the assessors of the National Red List, said the assessment will be accepted globally as it was carried out according to the global red list criteria. "The assessment should not be viewed as a mere listing of species under different levels of threat but as a scientific yardstick to execute specific conservation actions, Goonetillake told Mongabay.

About 28% of Sri Lanka's land area has been declared protected areas, managed either by the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) or the Forest Department. Most of the species listed as threatened, endemic or range-restricted are found in habitats located outside this protected areas network and are severely impacted by human activity. "There had been several local extinctions, and if this trend continues, it may lead to extinction of entire species as well, Goonetillake said.

Rohan Pethiyagoda, an expert in freshwater fish and leading taxonomist who previously served as deputy chair of the IUCN's Species Survival Commission, said Sri Lanka's protected areas network has almost no relevance to aquatic organisms. As a result, streams and stream-side habitats are at risk, he said. While freshwater fish face many threats, Pethiyagoda identified three key issues: "First, the pollution of streams and rivers by sewage and agricultural chemicals. Next, there is the loss of riverside shade.

It is important to recognize that almost all wet-zone endemics are strongly associated with shaded streams, Pethiyagoda told Mongabay. The third major threat is the increasing number of non-native fish taking over Sri Lanka's inland waters, whether from the inland fisheries industry or as escapees from the ornamental fish industry, Pethiyagoda said. Still, there are some positive developments. Several species, such as the red-fin labeo were listed as critically endangered in 2012, but today have seen their conservation status eased to endangered.

“This is because surveys done afterward discovered different populations, Goonetillake said. Pethiyagoda said conservation initiatives are possible. Once local communities are made aware of the value that freshwater fish carry, they take great interest in contributing to their conservation, he said. He cited the examples of the critically endangered Bandula barb (*Pethia bandula*) and Asoka barb (*Systomus asoka*), both endemic species, which are now strictly protected by local communities in Galapitamada and Kitulgala in Kegalle district, in Sri Lanka's lush Sabaragamuwa province.

“I had a hand in describing both these species around 1990, and the moment the local people were shown the fish and told that it was unique to their stream or river, they became very protective of it, Pethiyagoda told Mongabay. Giving local communities ownership in conservation initiatives is arguably the best, and probably only, method of conserving such species, he added. Conserving freshwater fish The 2020 freshwater fish red list assessment includes recommendations for conservation. One is to launch islandwide systematic surveys of freshwater fish, as recent evolutionary studies show there are species yet to be described and that taxonomic clarity is needed for several already described species.

Another recommendation is to conduct population assessments of at least the critically endangered species. The recent evaluation process revealed that some nationally threatened species with a wide distribution range could not be listed under any of the IUCN threat categories, Goonatilleke said. Development of conservation action plans have been proposed for the threatened fish species found only in Sri Lanka and to evaluate the feasibility of ex-situ conservation, where breeding of critically endangered species occurs.

“We want to use the national red listing effort as a springboard to introduce much-needed urgent conservation actions for the endemic threatened freshwater fishes, Padma Abeykoon, head of the Biodiversity Secretariat of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Environment and Wildlife Resources, told Mongabay. As a means of generating funds for the vital conservation initiative, Pethiyagoda recommended tapping the country's two main state-owned utility companies, Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) and the National Water Supply and Drainage Board (NWSDB).

Both agencies rely for their operations on the freshwater habitats of the Kelani and Mahaweli rivers; they earn more than \$300 million combined from hydropower and urban water supply, respectively. At present, there is no mechanism to reinvest in the natural resources used for hydropower generation or water supply.

“Investing in the conservation of these natural resources is of direct benefit to them, Pethiyagoda said. “If just 1% of the earnings can be reinvested in conservation efforts, it can make a difference. A 5% tariff on water and electricity could generate around \$15 million a year and have a transformative impact not just on the aquatic biodiversity of these two rivers but all natural waterways in the biodiversity rich island, he added.

Sri Lanka: New gov't aims to boost exports

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-08/14/c_139290237.htm

"The new Sri Lankan government is aiming to boost exports this year as at least four state ministers have been appointed to develop key local products such as gems, batiks, coconut, rubber, vegetables and tea, local media reports said here Friday. Last Wednesday, Sri Lanka swore in a new 26 member cabinet along with 39 state ministers which included a state minister for coconut, fishtail palm, palmyra and rubber product promotion, and allied industrial production and export diversification, then a state minister for the development of sugarcane, maize, cashew, pepper, cinnamon, cloves, betel production and promotion of allied products and export, and a state minister to concentrate on the export of ornamental fish, freshwater fish and shrimp farming development, multi-day fishing, and fish export.

Export Development Board (EDB) Chairman Prabhash Subasinghe was quoted in the local Daily FT as saying that sector-specific state ministers/ministries had amplified the importance of the export sector and that they look forward to working with all line ministries to boost merchandised exports. ""Exports have been recognized as a deserving sector to appoint sector-specific ministries in reviving the economy post-COVID-19.

A lot of emphases has been given to agricultural exports and farming, which has been a weak area in our export basket for decades,"" Prabhash said. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Sri Lanka's merchandise exports last month crossed the one billion dollar mark, local media quoting official statistics said. Soon after the COVID-19 pandemic erupted in Sri Lanka in March, exports in April fell to 277.4 million U.S. dollars, but a continuous pick-up in exports was seen thereafter, with 587 million U.S. dollars in May and 906 million U.S. dollars in June.

The EDB is optimistic and anticipates that the steady growth trend would continue in the last quarter of this year. It's confident that the food and agriculture exports would help Sri Lanka achieve the 10.5 billion U.S. dollar target set for this year.

Sri Lanka: New Govt. policy of 'people centric economy' and future potential in agricultural development

<http://www.ft.lk/columns/Making-Sri-Lanka-work/4-701777>

"Globalisation has created an environment for moving with new technology, market access and factor mobility particularly labour, capital and technology. At the same time, in developing countries, agricultural development faced many global and domestic challenges and it opened new opportunities through market integration. The new government has developed an agricultural policy framework of 'People Centric Economy' with 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor – 2020' with a goal to modernise Sri Lankan agriculture in line with strategies and

opportunities of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) including Automation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Precision agriculture, Nano-technology, Internet of Things (IOT), Big data, Robotics, 5G technology, etc.

The objective of this paper is to identify the future potential in agricultural development in Sri Lanka in-line with the new government policy framework of 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor – 2020' and develop strategic operational options for agricultural modernisation. The new government policy framework of the 'people centric economy' includes the agricultural development in the country as one of the key goals specified. It is explained as 'Agriculture to be Developed Through Advanced Technology'. Further, the agricultural policy would be to promote an agricultural sector in which small producers using small extents of land producing high quality outputs using modern technological methods, which cater to fulfil the food security in the country and demand for the regional and global markets.

The key areas included in the new policy framework for agricultural development are: A domestic agriculture – a revolution in the use of fertiliser; Seed and planting material production, Marketing and value chain promotion, Lucrative income from export crops; Building up a healthy and productive nation by guaranteeing the peoples' right for safe food; Strengthening the fisheries sector by designing a strategic development plan; Promoting milk production in the country as well as the promotion of poultry and eggs for the export market.

The contribution of the agriculture sector has been gradually reduced from 11.9% in 2010 to 7% in 2019 and the overall agriculture sector contribution to the total employment in the country is about 25.3% of the total workforce (CBSL, 2020). The total value of agricultural exports in Sri Lanka was \$ 2489.2 m (Average) per year (Range – \$ 2041-2793.4 m per year) during the period from 2010 to 2019, which mainly comprised of tea, spices and vegetables. The contribution of agricultural exports to the total value of exports was 23.5% per year (average) during the same period.

The structure of imports of agricultural products in the country is comprised of mainly consumer goods (e.g. food and beverages, rice, sugar and confectionaries, dairy products, lentils and other agri-products); Intermediate goods (e.g. Wheat and maize, fertiliser, etc.) and investment goods (e.g. Machinery and equipment). The value of imports of consumer goods per year was ranged between \$ 2870 m and \$ 4979.7 m (i.e. \$ 3902.5 m – Average per year) during the period from 2010 to 2019. Further, the value of total consumer goods imports in 2019 was 19.8% as a percentage of total value of imports in the country.

The relative reduction of contribution of the agriculture sector to GDP shows the path for restructuring the sector by diversifying the export base and encouraging to import more intermediate and investment goods, rather than consumer goods. Accordingly, it needs to take new initiatives with strategic directions for agricultural development in the country. The identified future global and domestic challenges in the Sri Lankan agriculture are namely:

maintaining food security and safety; attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) into agriculture sector, adopting modern technologies, integration into the global and regional niche markets and modernising the agriculture sector.

The strategic policy and operational options are needed to modernise the agriculture to improve productivity and sustainability of natural resources for catering to the future domestic and global needs by promoting tradeables. Making Sri Lanka work: Future potential in agricultural development 'Making Sri Lanka Work', the future potential in the Sri Lankan agriculture was analysed based on the main components and opportunities in modern agricultural development, namely: Agri-business development (Farmers Vs Agro-Entrepreneurs – covering production, processing, storing, value chain development and distribution); Intensive farming (The green house farming, vertical farming, and intensive livestock farming to improve productivity per square metre of land); Organic farming (Using organic fertiliser and promoting organic culture and cycle of production); Precision agriculture (farming management concept based on observing, measuring and responding to inter and intra-field variability in crops to increase productivity at low unit cost);

SMART farming or Internet of Things (IOT) (IOT based real-time data captured by IoT sensors, farmers can predict the weather, check radiation and soil levels and water conditions, prevent diseases and manage crop conditions); and Sustainable agriculture ('meeting society's present food and textile needs, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, which means to sustain soil health as well as crop productivity by harmonising all resources in such a way that does not degrade natural resources. Accordingly, the future potential in agricultural development relies mainly on the above components of modern agriculture. There are three pre-requisites, which are needed to be implemented prior to embarking the policy changes on modernising the Sri Lankan agriculture.

The proposed pre-requisites are namely: (a). Development of National Agricultural Development (NAP) plan including modernisation of the Sri Lankan agriculture; (b) Designing a new institutional development framework for operationalisation of new policies; (c) Development and adoption of farmer cooperatives or farmer company model as a mode for modernisation of agriculture. The concluding remarks on 'Making Sri Lanka Work: New government policy of people centric economy and future potential in agricultural development' includes the absolute necessity of the digital transformation, which is extremely pertinent and necessary for Sri Lanka's modernisation of future agricultural development, given its key role in the economy as a contributor to GDP, generation of employment opportunities, maintaining food security and safety and people's income and foreign exchange earner.

Yet, the sector faces a growing number of challenges and constraints that include low productivity, lower potential for exports, poor product quality and standards, climate change, technology adoption, market integration, etc. It is very clear that Sri Lanka is lagging behind with adaptation of 4IR technologies in modernising the Sri Lankan agricultural sector in relation

to ongoing technology based agricultural development. In this context, operationalising six 4IR based modern agriculture systems specified earlier is the path for really achieving the development policy goals of utilising advanced technology in agricultural development as envisaged in the new policy of 'Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor – 2020' of the government.

Further, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has also reiterated the importance of maintaining food security and safety in the country as well, which needs agricultural modernisation to meet the challenges. The way forward: Modernising the Sri Lankan agriculture within the framework of 'people centric agricultural economy' It is obvious that Sri Lankan agriculture needs to be overhauled and modernised to face the present and future global and domestic challenges and convert it into modernised agriculture, catering to the domestic and global market demand including for maintaining food security and safety and assist to open up livelihood options for majority of the population in the country and contribute more to the national GDP.

As a way forward, the following key six strategic operational options are proposed to establish and maintain to modernise the Sri Lankan agriculture including livestock (poultry meat and eggs), milk production and offshore and inland fishing sub-sectors in Sri Lanka. Under the pragmatic and dynamic policy environment proposed, modernisation of agriculture would be one of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the relevant Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries in Sri Lanka, as it is being implemented in Singapore, and United Arab Emirates (UAE). a. Mapping and zoning of agro-economic zones in Sri Lanka The Government should encourage private sector investment into the agriculture sector for modernisation, technology transfer, production, marketing and value chain promotion to produce exportable agricultural products mainly.

Attracting private sector capital through FDI, modern technology mentioned above, country should identify the agro-economic zones for encouraging private sector investment, which is the dire need in the Sri Lankan agriculture. The agricultural land areas in the country are needed to be mapped and zoned into the following four categories based on the land availability and suitability for specific crops, environmental feasibility aspects, market access, and availability of access for marketing infrastructure. The categories are, namely: (a) Highly suitable; (b) Moderately suitable; (c) Least suitable; and (d) Unsuitable.

The agro-economic zones of highly suitable and moderately suitable zones would attract FDI with modern technology for modernisation of agriculture, technological advancements (intensive farming, SMART farming, Precision agriculture, IOT) and export promotions for high value exportable products, which eventually generates livelihood development options through employment, promoting agro-entrepreneurs and foreign exchange through exports and value added products, as it is being implemented in Thailand, Vietnam and South Korea. b. Design a National Organic Agriculture Development Plan (2020-2025): The development of a National Organic Agriculture Development plan (2020-2025) envisions Sri Lanka to be one of the organic

agriculture leaders in the South Asian region in terms of production, consumption, trade and services in organic agriculture and product marketing at the regional and international level.

For the purpose of designing a plan for the promotion of development of organic agriculture, there are eight strategic options proposed to be incorporated into the plan through the modernisation of agricultural sector, in line with the new agricultural development policy framework. I. Establish a system for promoting organic Agri-Business and organic Agri-Business entrepreneurs in the country to cater to the global needs of organic agricultural products (e.g. rice, tea, vegetables, fruits, spices, etc.); II. Amend the age old organic fertiliser act to promote organic culture in the country and stimulate organic fertiliser production, imports, distribution and usage in the country; III. Promote R&D, knowledge dissemination and innovation in organic agriculture development; IV. Develop an institution under the Ministry of Agriculture for promoting new organic culture and agricultural production, marketing, value chain and other services and extension;

V. Develop a certification system for organic agricultural products through Sri Lanka Standards Institute (SLSI), VI. Design a generic promotional campaign for promoting production, marketing and consumption of organic products through electronic (i.e. Web, Facebook, TV, etc.) and print media (i.e. newspapers, magazines, popular journals, leaflets, handbills, etc.); VII. Develop an Innovation Fund in collaboration with the private sector, foreign universities and donors to promote organic agriculture; and VIII. Promote organic agricultural development extensively with establishing a separate unit for organic product extension services within the Department of Agriculture. c. Develop a Digital Agriculture Strategy (2020-2025) I. Developing a Digital Agriculture Strategy (2020-2025) is an absolute necessity for the Sri Lankan agriculture sector, covering all the aspects of production (type of crops, area, volume of production, etc.), marketing, processing, storage, distribution, exports, imports, and other relevant trade data (Department of Customs and Banks) and information through establishing a single digitised network to monitor and make policy decisions rationally, timely and precisely.

Accordingly, the following five strategic options are proposed to digitise the Sri Lankan agriculture. The Ministry of Agriculture needs to develop a roadmap for the long-term steps to digitalise Sri Lankan agriculture starting from preparing an Agriculture Management Information System (AMIS), covering domestic food crops, export agricultural crops and other export crops for export markets, products for niche markets, livestock, fisheries and milk production; for being digital agriculture, even to linkup with stock management through private and government sector producers, importers, processors, and wholesalers;

II. Design a new act for daily updating of stock positions of key food crops at the point of millers, processors, wholesalers, and importers of food chain to monitor and take rational decisions about food security, distribution and imports in the country; III. Introduce a Quick Response (QR) coding system to trace the origin of the product, and brand, which helps to protect food safety; IV. Develop a strategic plan comprising of three options which are (a) to develop an AMIS for

proactive management, (b) to apply appropriate digital technology (i.e. Cloud facilities, mobile apps, island wide computer networks, etc.) with context to agriculture sector, and (c) to support sustainable agriculture.

V. The proposed five-year (2020-2025) strategic plan should include the following key aspects as well: a. To impart knowledge and skills for farmers to digitalise agriculture through a system with mobile phone apps and other internet platforms; b. To use GPS/GIS technology for mapping of areas under each crop or product for spatial distribution of Sri Lankan agriculture. This should be completed at the planting and harvesting of the product cycles; c. To adopt digital technology with proposed AMIS for supply-chain management, imports, exports, wholesaling, retailing, processing, storing, etc.; d. To integrate data and information for farmers' well-being and sustainable agriculture, e. To add values into agriculture products for increasing accessibility to markets through linking and promoting e-marketing platforms. d. Designing a food security and safety strategy framework, (2020-2025)

The Government has to give utmost priority to maintain food security and food safety (2020-2025) through designing a systematic approach by analysing the availability of volume of food by linking with proposed AMIS. The five-year plan envisions that population in Sri Lanka to have enough volume and sustainable quality food for maintaining food security and food safety with promoting public-private partnerships. For this purpose, the proposed AMIS will play an integral role to monitor the status of the food security in the country. The plan for achieving the goal of building up a healthy and productive nation by guaranteeing the people's right for safe food includes the following four strategic options. a) Producing food to maintain domestic consumption sustainably by increasing food production capability, investing in compulsory infrastructure, supporting with private investment in agriculture sector particularly for maintaining buffer-stocks, etc. b) Supporting people at all levels, for promoting access to food at all times by increasing food production in community level by facilitating through logistics management (e.g. transport, storage, maintaining buffer stocks, etc.)

c) Encouraging high-quality production, reduce post-harvest losses, and suitable usage by enforcing food safety regulations along with the supply chain, branding, educating food literacy among people, reducing food losses (post-harvest losses) and wastage using modern technology; d) Supporting to maintain food security, food safety and nutrition security by basing on R&D and modern technology to increase food safety and nutritious agricultural products. e. Mega farming policy through farmer companies/cooperatives to promote agro-enterprises In the Sri Lankan smallholder agriculture, it needs to introduce novel concepts in the small farming sector with community based mega farming through land consolidation, by maintaining the individual private land ownerships without any change.

For promoting community based mega farming, the following five strategic options are proposed: I. The fields of each small farmer in the neighbourhood are consolidated to make a large farm (mega-farm) under the supervision of a Farm Manager, who would be appointed by

the Department of Agriculture, while the ownership of land remains unchanged to promote agro-enterprises with agro-entrepreneurs. II. The objective of the area-based extension system is to make it achieve economies of scale in order to increase the bargaining power of farmers. III. It is also very convenient for government officials to transfer site specific packages of modern technology to minimise cost and improve the productivity with intensive farming/ precision agriculture/and SMART farming with agro-entrepreneurs.

IV. The Farm Manager will be assigned the task of production planning, technology transfer, marketing, value chain promotion in the respective area, by promoting public-private partnerships for technology transfer, marketing, value chain promotion, building bank linkages for agriculture financing, etc. V. All the land owners will be grouped as a Cooperative Organisation or a Farmer/Producer Company to promote agro-entrepreneurs in the mega farming programme in each location selected within proposed agro-economic zones. f. Building a PPP model for exporting fish, poultry meat, eggs and promoting domestic milk production It is required to develop Private-Private Partnerships (PPPs) or joint ventures for producing and exporting fish, poultry meat, and eggs and promote domestic milk production as per the new government policy on 'people centric economy' through opening up of investment opportunities for the private sector.

Sri Lankan offshore fish varieties such as Spanish mackerel, Trevally, Skipjack tuna, Yellowfin tuna, other tuna-like species, shark and skate, rockfish, shore seine species, prawns, and lobsters and ornamental fish varieties [Guppies, Plates, Gold Fish, Barbs, Danios (e.g. Zebra danio), Tetras (e.g. Serpae, Neon), Gouramis, Cat fishes, Cichlids,] are very popular and in high demand at international markets. To grab this opportunity, Modern technology, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and GPS, IOT, Digitised equipment (sensors, robotics, automation, drones, etc.) could be utilised for fish and livestock production at mega scale for exports.

In addition, investment in modern technology packages for off-shore fishing like trawlers, GPS and GIS technology, communication technology and equipment, sensors for detection of fish stocks, fish processing centres, fish canning factories, etc. could be developed through private sector investment with new incentive packages (tax relief, tax holidays, duty free imports, etc.) by the Board of Investment (BOI) for promoting new technology, particularly for promoting the exports of off-shore fish varieties and ornamental fish. The plan for improving the inland fisheries production is also needed to be designed (2020-2025) to safeguard the nutrition security of the rural people in the country.

Further, the exports of poultry meat and eggs need to be promoted as BOI ventures with incentives to generate employment and foreign income. For this purpose, fully automated poultry production units, IOT, modern digitised processing, packing and refrigeration units are needed to be established through the private sector investment under PPP models. International forward sales contracts are necessary to be promoted to make place for an assured market for poultry meat, eggs and fish exports from Sri Lanka.

The domestic milk production can be promoted through forming Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) models to increase milk production, by designing a five-year plan (2020-2025) for promoting production and marketing (including milk value chains) by applying modern technology through establishing as BOI enterprises with obtaining FDI and applying strategies in the 4IR. In addition, it is necessary to promote to form milk farmer producer groups and consumption of liquid fresh milk among consumers.

Once the above strategic options are operationalised, it will be a paradigm shift in the modernisation of Sri Lankan agriculture to 'Making Sri Lanka Work' with a right direction of establishing a people centric economy in Sri Lanka in line with the Vistas of Prosperity and Splendor – 2020 policy framework of the new government. Finally, agriculture sector will be able contribute more to GDP and manage to earn foreign exchange and generate more employment opportunities through developing agro-entrepreneurships in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka: New rules to protect fisheries sector from foreign domination

<http://www.sundaytimes.lk/210523/news/new-rules-to-protect-fisheries-sector-from-foreign-domination-444769.html>

"The Government has passed regulations to ensure that any entity engaged in the export, import and re-export of fish and fishery products has a majority Sri Lankan shareholding after observing a trend of foreign interest in the industry. An amendment has been introduced to regulations first promulgated in 2017 to state that any establishment that intends to export, import or re-export fish or fishery products shall be a corporation, board or other body which was or is set up with funds or capital wholly or partly provided by the Government.

It could also be wholly owned by one or more persons who are citizens of Sri Lanka or "be wholly owned by any company, society or other association of persons, incorporated or established under any written law in which majority of the voting shares are held by citizens of Sri Lanka." The earlier regulation did not offer such protection to the domestic fisheries sector and only specified that any person engaged in export, import and re-export of any fish or fisheries products shall register with the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources for that purpose.

It also referred to anyone who wanted to register an establishment for the same purpose without specifying that it needed majority Sri Lankan shareholding. "We want to ensure protection to the domestic fishermen and fisher societies," a Fisheries Ministry official said. "Earlier, it was possible to register a company with 10-15 Sri Lankan shares but now we would require at least 51 percent of equity to be held by a Sri Lankan."

“This is because we observed a trend of foreigners seeking to invest in the fisheries and fisheries products sectors and if they came in a massive scale with large investments, domestic fishermen will lose their livelihoods,” he said.

Sri Lanka: No decision to license India fishermen in Sri Lanka waters: Minister

<https://economynext.com/no-decision-to-license-india-fishermen-in-sri-lanka-waters-minister-80248/>

"No decision has been made by the government to license fishermen from India to fish in Sri Lanka waters, Co-cabinet Minister Udaya Gammanpila said. He was responding to questions over a statement attributed to Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda that discussions were underway with India to license limited number of Indian boats to fish in Sri Lanka waters. Minister Gammanpila said no such proposal had been discussed at cabinet level.

Fishing vessels from South India had got into the habit of straying over the Indo-Lanka maritime border during a 30 year civil war when Sri Lanka fishermen were banned from entering the Northern waters. Last week Sri Lanka Navy arrested several Indian boats, as election fever was hotting up in South India. Sri Lanka then released the fishermen, reportedly at India's request.

Minister Gammanpila said sometime arrested fishermen are fined and their equipment confiscated, and sometimes they are released at the intervention of India. India also releases arrested Sri Lanka fishermen from time to time, he said. He said he hoped India would reciprocated.

Sri Lanka: No end in sight: Country faces its worst marine crisis as plastic from burning ship washes ashore

<https://www.firstpost.com/tech/science/no-end-in-sight-sri-lanka-faces-its-worst-marine-crisis-as-plastic-from-burning-ship-washes-ashore-9670741.html>

"Sri Lanka faces an unprecedented pollution crisis as waves of plastic waste from a burning container ship hit the coast and threaten to devastate the local environment, a top environment official warned Saturday. Thousands of navy ratings using mechanical diggers scooped tonnes of tiny plastic granules on the beaches that had come from the Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl that has been smouldering on the horizon for ten days. Sri Lanka's Marine Protection Authority (MEPA) said the microplastic pollution could cause years of ecological damage to the Indian Ocean island. "

"This is probably the worst beach pollution in our history," MEPA chairman Dharshani Lahandapura said. The tiny polyethylene pellets threaten tourism beaches and fish-breeding in

shallow waters. Fishing has been banned along an 80-kilometre stretch of coast near the ship that has been burning for 10 days despite an international firefighting operation. "There is smoke and intermittent flames seen from the ship," navy spokesman Captain Indika de Silva told AFP. Orange-coloured plastic booms were set up in case oil leaks from the crippled ship reaches the Negombo lagoon that is famed for its crabs and jumbo prawns.

Thousands of small boats were beached at Negombo Saturday because of the fishing ban. No end in sight Naval rating Manjula Dulanjala said his team had almost cleared the beach on Friday evening, but were shocked to find it covered again the following morning. "This is like the coronavirus. No end in sight. We removed all the plastic yesterday, only to see more of it dumped by the waves overnight," he said. The pellets and waste were packed into green and white polythene sacks and taken away by trucks.

An officer leading another team said that in certain parts of the beach the microplastics and charred debris was 60 centimetres (two feet) deep. Local fisherman Peter Fernando, 68, said he had never seen such destruction. The December 2004 Asian tsunami devastated much of the island's coastline and killed an estimated 31,000 people, but only damaged coastal infrastructure. Roman Catholic priest Sujewa Athukorale said most of his parishioners were fishermen who risked becoming destitute. "Their immediate need is to be allowed to go back to the sea," he said. "There are 4,500 fishing families in my parish alone."

Mangroves threatened Fisherman Lakshan Fernando, 30, said people feared the plastic waste could destroy mangroves as well as the corals where fish breed in the shallow water. "No one is able to say how long we will have the adverse effects of this pollution," Fernando told AFP. "It could take a few years or a few decades, but in the meantime what about our livelihoods?" An oil leak from the vessel, said to be carrying 278 tonnes of bunker oil and 50 tonnes of gasoil, would increase the risk of devastation.

Much of the ship's cargo, including 25 tonnes of nitric acid, sodium hydroxide, lubricants and other chemicals, appeared to have been destroyed in the fire, officials said. The X-Press Pearl caught fire as it waited to enter Colombo harbour and remains anchored just outside the port. An international salvage operation is led by the Dutch company SMIT, which has sent specialist fire-fighting tugs. India has sent coastguard vessels to help Sri Lanka's navy.

SMIT was also involved in dousing a burning oil tanker off Sri Lanka's east coast last September after an engine room explosion killed a crew member. The fire on the New Diamond took more than a week to put out and left a 40-kilometre (25-mile) long oil spill. Sri Lanka has demanded the owners pay \$17 million for the clean-up.

Sri Lanka: No fishing, transport restrictions for fishermen

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/03/25/local/215184/no-fishing-transport-restrictions-fishermen>

"The Ceylon Fisheries Corporation has accelerated the purchasing of fish from fishermen, the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Ministry said today, It said a programme to buy fish from the owners of fishing vessels commenced at Dickovita Fisheries Harbour on Tuesday and this would be extended to all other fisheries harbours in the next couple of days. Minister Douglas Devananda visited the harbour to inspect the progress of this project. The release said that Minister Douglas Devananda would discuss with the President and the Prime Minister and put in place a mechanism shortly to speed up fish purchases from fishing vessels.

This assurance came in the wake of complaints from some Fisheries Associations that they have been unable to sell their catch. The minister said the Fisheries Corporation would do its best to buy the fish from the fisheries community. The government has also given permission for transporting and unloading of fish during the curfew hours, considering appeals made by the fisheries community. Transport Services Management Minister Mahinda Amaraweera said those who are engaged in the fisheries sector will be allowed to transport fish.

Fisheries communities are also allowed to engage in all fisheries-related activities during the curfew hours without any interruption. This decision was taken during the Party Leaders meeting chaired by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. Party Leaders stated that fisheries communities were facing great difficulties since their catch was not allowed to be transported during the curfew hours. Prime Minister Rajapaksa instructed the Acting IGP to take steps to ensure that fishermen can transport their produce without any trouble.

Sri Lanka: Northern fishermen protest against infiltration by Indian fishers

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2022/01/23/news/northern-fishermen-protest-against-indian-infiltration>

"Northern fisherfolk staged a protest on Friday, January 21 calling for the adoption of measures to prevent Indian fishermen from infiltrating into the Northern waters. Hundreds of people from various fisher associations in the Northern Province participated in the protest in Karainagar on Friday morning carrying banners and placards calling on the Sri Lankan and the Indian Governments not to permit Indian fishermen to hamper their livelihood.

Organisers of the demonstration said that for the past ten years they suffered immensely due to the infiltration of Indian fishermen and their crossing of the International Maritime Border Line (IMBL) should be stopped at any cost to protect the livelihoods of the Northern fisherfolk. The fishermen said that due to the infiltration, the damage caused to the fishing nets and the marine resources ran into several millions of rupees over the past ten years.

Sri Lanka: Norway funds fishery master plan for Sri Lanka

<https://island.lk/norway-funds-fishery-master-plan-for-sri-lanka/>

"Norway has provided financial and technical assistance to prepare a policy document to pave the way for drawing up a fishery Master Plan for Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka's Ambassador in Oslo Godfrey Cooray said in a statement to The Island recently. The statement followed Ambassador Cooray's meeting a top level Norwegian delegation led by Minister of the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Fisheries and Seafood Odd Emil Ingebrigtsen.

According to the Sri Lankan mission in Norway, the Master Plan would be prepared in line with the fisheries policy developed with Norwegian assistance. The overall plan included preparation of health guidelines for the sector. Ambassador Cooray has also requested Norway to explore the possibility of deploying the research vessel RV Dr.Fridjof Nansan to conduct marine resource surveying every three years, in addition to strengthening capacities of NARA RV Samudrika vessel for conducting marine surveys.

Cooray also functions as Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Finland and Iceland. Cooray has briefed the Norwegian delegation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's efforts to expand the fisheries sector in an effort to halt fish imports. The embassy statement quoted Ambassador Cooray as having said: "There is a need to establish proper quality and safety certification system for fish and fisheries products.

Proper fish quality and safety is important in the assure the safety of the consumers. Presently, there is no proper quality and safety certification system. Sri Lanka has to develop the proper safety and quality certification including MSC (Marine stewardship Council) certification. This should be developed for local as well as for the export market. We need Norwegian assistance in this regard

Sri Lanka: Norway to enhance collaboration in energy, fisheries sectors

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/09/01/local/258137/norway-enhance-collaboration-energy-fisheries-sectors>

"Norway's Ambassador to Sri Lanka Trine Jøranli Eskedal paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Prof.G.L. Peiris on August 30, 2021 at the Foreign Ministry. Minister Peiris appreciated the mutually beneficial partnership existing between Sri Lanka and Norway, and reiterated the country's interest to further strengthen cooperation in spheres of synergy and mutual interest.

Ambassador Eskedal elaborated on areas of bilateral interest with emphasis on Norwegian development cooperation, investment in renewable energy and cooperation in the fishery sector, where Sri Lanka continues to benefit from Norwegian technical expertise and collaboration. She referred to the potential for investment partnerships with Norway in renewable energy. The

Ambassador Eskedal highlighted strong collaboration in the fishery sector as a cornerstone of the Sri Lanka- Norway partnership.

Reference was made in this regard to research and development collaboration in marine resources, and support towards the development of an ocean strategy. Reiterating Sri Lanka's commitment to climate action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including transfer to a renewable energy mix, Minister Peiris welcomed technical collaboration with Norway in green energy.

Minister Peiris also welcomed Norwegian scientific and technical cooperation in aqua research and the blue economy, and investment by the prestigious Norwegian Pension Fund in Sri Lanka's share market. Reference was made to the potential to further expand cooperation in Information Communication Technology (ICT), tourism, education technology, and value addition in the gem and jewellery industry. The Foreign Minister apprised the Ambassador on Sri Lanka's regional and multilateral engagement.

Sri Lanka: Number of development projects planned for fishermen

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2021/09/20/local/259798/number-development-projects-planned-fishermen>

"Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda said that the Fisheries Ministry will launch a number of development projects worth Rs.26 million in the Jaffna Peninsula for the benefit of fishermen. The Minister said on Sunday (19) that these projects are being implemented under the Field Protection and Development Programmes of the Ministry of Fisheries.

Accordingly, Rs.5.7 million will be spent to develop the Fisheries Harbour and Maintenance Centre in the Thanankilappu and Kovilkandi areas in Jaffna. The Minister also said that several other projects are also planned under these development projects, including the installation of safety telecommunication equipment at four locations in Jaffna and the improvement of communication facilities between the Navanthurai Web Centre in Jaffna and Colombo.

Sri Lanka: Oluvil harbour to reopen soon targets USD 400 mn fish export revenue

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/03/05/finance/213444/oluvil-harbour-reopen-soon>

"One of the largest sea food exporters in Sri Lanka TESS Group has come forward to start operations in the abandoned Oluvil Fisheries Harbour said Chairman of Ministries secretaries' Union, Keerthi Sri Weerasinghe. Weerasinghe said that the TESS Group will first clear the sand dunes helping the opening of the now defunct harbour. They will then operate the fish processing plant which was never used to date. "It's ironic to note that TESS was one of the contractors of the Rs. 16 billion Danish funded Oluvil Harbour project.

It was initiated by former President Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2008 as a part of the Nagenahira Navodaya Development Program and now TESS has come forward to help open this harbor. Weerasinghe said that collecting of sand dunes in harbours is a natural phenomena but the previous government did not bother to clean them resulting in the closure of the harbour. “This resulted in the loss of over 25,000 livelihoods and around 200 fishing vessels were stuck in the harbour.

Requests made to the Port Authority to remove the sand dune were to no avail and the fishing community hired lorries and tractors to take the fishing vessels from the Oluvil Fisheries. He thanked both ‘Sunday Observer’ and ‘Daily News’ for first highlighting the closure of the harbour and pointing out the economic loss from it. “Subsequent to this exposure President has expressed keenness to re commence the harbour and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has appointed a committee to expedite the re opening.

“Subsequently both Fisheries and Port and Shipping Ministers Douglas Devananda and Johnston Fernando had instructed their authorities to speed up the opening of the harbour and this was how TESS Group came forward. The Geological Survey and Mines Bureau officials also visited the harbour and have suggested building a Breakwater. “This would be done by the Coast Conservation Department.

Weerasinghe said that the former Shipping Minister after a visit to the Oluvil Harbour, had said that it was a white elephant. “But he was wrong. With the EU fish ban taken off, an international shipping route just 10 km away and international standard Fish Processing Plant with generators, chilling and storage facilities still functional, Oluvil Harbour when operational again can bring in annual USD 400 million fish exports revenue.

CEO and Director of TESS Group of Companies, Shiran Fernando said that they are keen to get involved in the opening of the Oluvil harbour and having one of their plants in it since they see tremendous potential in fish processing and exporting.

Sri Lanka: Operations at Peliyagoda fish market to resume once health ministry gives the go-ahead

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2020/11/28/operations-at-peliyagoda-fish-market-to-resume-once-health-ministry-gives-the-go-ahead/>

"The Health authorities conducted an inspection at the premises this morning, in order to expedite the re-opening process, Kanchana Wijesekera, the State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish & Prawn Farming, Fishery Harbour Development, Multiday Fishing Activities, and Fish Exports said. The traders at the market were informed on the health guidelines and regulations issued by the Ministry of Health on Saturday, he noted.

According to the State Minister, the traders were informed on the measures to be followed to upgrade the infrastructure at the premises, the need to register all traders, and the importance of adhering to the health guidelines. “Following approval of the Ministry of Health, the Peliyagoda Fish Market will resume operations restricted only for wholesale, State Minister Wijesekara further noted.

However, the State Minister emphasized that the date on the re-opening of the Peliyagoda Fisheries Market cannot be announced as of yet, adding once the Health Ministry recommendations are implemented, operations will resume.

Sri Lanka: Pandemic hits all sectors

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2020/04/27/business/pandemic-hits-all-sectors>

"Fisherfolk across the country have fallen from the frying pan into the fire due to their inability to sell the catch and keep the home fires burning due to the current environment in the country which has added to the woes of the community. All Ceylon Fisherfolk Trade Union President Aruna Roshantha said a large number of fishermen have confined themselves to their homes as prices have dropped drastically due to the sharp decline in demand.

“Over 70 percent of the demand has dropped with buyers reluctant to come out to purchase. We understand the current situation but how are we to put food on the table and sustain our trade with the cost of living including fuel prices yet being staggeringly high, he said. Fisherfolk trade unionists said middlemen and those in the supply chain are making hay while the sun shines exploiting the situation in the country to jack up prices of fish through home delivery services. “Intermediaries, for example, buy a kilo of fish for Rs. 600 from us and sell at Rs. 900.

We urge the authorities to check the unfair trade and take to task errant traders, a trade unionist said. The fisheries sector which comprises over 300,000 direct and another 200,000 indirect beneficiaries contribute around 1.5 percent to the country's GDP. “Fishermen have been facing many storms especially after the outbreak of the deadly virus. We call upon the authorities to pass down the benefit of the drop in global oil prices which will provide a sigh of relief for the community saddled with many issues, Roshantha said.

While kerosene is used mostly by small single day boats, diesel is used by multi-day boat operators. US crude crashed to below \$15 a barrel last week, its lowest for over two decades, with traders concerned that storage facilities are filling up as the coronavirus pandemic strangles demand. “Given the seriousness of the health implications in venturing out for business and other daily chores, what we propose is for the government to provide food and medicine to people free to minimise interaction and transactions which will help curb the spread of the virus, he said.

The fisheries sector has emerged as an important source of foreign exchange with Sri Lanka gaining the List 01 status for exports to Europe while increasing its market share in the Japanese and US markets. Exports comprise several items of high value fish and fishery products, such as chilled and frozen tuna, and other marine products such as shrimp, lobsters, shark fins and sea cucumber.

Sri Lanka has exclusive fishing and economic rights for an ocean area of 500,000 square kilometres and a coastal line of 1,700 km in addition to inland water bodies, which makes fisheries to be one of the promising industries in the country. However, exploitation of the natural resource has been unsatisfactory with opportunities for higher volume of exports not being tapped. Sri Lanka has been granted duty free access for a large number of export items to the EU market under the GSP Plus facility.

Sri Lanka: Peliyagoda Fish Market vendors and employees cleared

<https://menafn.com/1100076401/Sri-Lanka-Peliyagoda-Fish-Market-vendors-and-employees-cleared>

"Peliyagoda Fish Market vendors and employees have been cleared after being tested for the coronavirus. Director General of Health Dr. Anil Jasinghe said that all 529 persons who underwent PCR tests for the virus have been cleared. A fish vendor from Piliyandala, who was detected on Monday (20) to have contracted COVID-19, had visited the Peliyagoda fish market. Retail trading at the fish market was later restricted.

Sri Lanka: Peliyagoda fish-market to re-open on Dec 16 under Covid-19 rules

<https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-peliyagoda-fish-market-to-re-open-on-dec-16-under-covid-19-rules-76920/>

"A fish-market in Peliyagoda north of Sri Lanka's capital Colombo, which was the epicentre of a Coronavirus cluster that spread around the country and built up areas nearby, will re-open for wholesale trade on December 06.

"The fish-market which was temporarily closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic will be re-opened under Health Ministry guidelines for limited wholesale activities, Secretary to the fisheries ministry R M I Ratnayake said in a statement. The fish-market has to be re-modelled to conform to health ministry guideline for retail sales to take place, he said.

Until then limited wholesale trading will be allowed. The fish-market where thousands of people visit each day, made it difficult for authorities to trace and quarantine contacts and the disease spread rapidly in built up areas in north Colombo. It is not clear whether traders in the market,

where hundreds were infected will now have herd immunity.

Sri Lanka: Plans to develop Wanami Shrimp farming in Puttalam district targeting \$600 mn export income

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21A/Jul18_1626622069CH.php

"A special discussion was held at the Ministry of Trade recently on the development of ""Wanami"" shrimp farming in the Puttalam District. Kanchana Wijesekera, State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish & Shrimp Farming, Fishery Harbour Development, Multi day Fishing Activities and Fish Exports Kanchana Wijesekera also participated in the meeting which was chaired by Trade Minister Dr. Bandula Gunawardena. At present there are about 2,924 shrimp farms in the Puttalam District.

The project to develop Wanami shrimp farming aims to achieve an export income of US \$ 600 million within 3 years. Introducing a biological life protection system for the existing shrimp farming and increasing the shrimp production by 100,000 metric tons within a period of three years have been identified as other objectives. Accordingly, a one year interest free loan for shrimp farmers and a number of new project proposals related to marine fisheries resources were also discussed.

Sri Lanka: Plans to discuss fish exports with Russia's Agriculture Ministry

<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/world/sri-lanka-plans-to-discuss-fish-exports-with-995224.html>

"Sri Lanka wants to expand its exports of fisheries to Russia and plans to hold talks with the Russian Agriculture Ministry to discuss the opportunities, Prof. M.D. Lamawansa told Sputnik. On Thursday, a reception was held at the Sri Lankan Embassy in Moscow to celebrate Lamawansa officially assuming his role as an ambassador after presenting his credentials to the Russian Foreign Ministry. "

"We export fish to Russia but the basket has to be expanded. We will be taking measures to talk to the fisheries department under the Ministry of Agriculture and then, we will devise a system on how to expand the export basket while maintaining the quality standards," Lamawansa said.

Apart from that, Sri Lanka is also looking into expanding its cooperation with the Russian regions and has already held a meeting with the Ural Chamber of Commerce, and in the future, it plans to visit the Kursk region, the ambassador added. In 2018, Sri-Lankan-Russian trade stood at almost \$400 million, but last year showcased a slight dip to some \$370 million due to the Easter Sunday terror attacks that rocked the island nation.

Sri Lanka: Plastic garbage destroying country's ocean bed, fish – NARA

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/02/12/local/211203/plastic-garbage-destroying-country%E2%80%99s-ocean-bed-fish-nara>

"The environmental audit report released last month indicated that 50 percent of Sri Lanka's ocean bed has been polluted due to accumulation of garbage. The report made this revelation citing research results conducted by the National Aquatic Resources Research Institute (NARA) jointly with the crew of a Norwegian ship.

"The marine fish resources in the seas around Sri Lanka have decreased drastically over the past 40 years as a result of this marine pollution. NARA has reported that the marine biodiversity is damaged due to lack of sunlight and ventilation for marine organisms. According to this research, the Northwest coastline is a heavily polluted coastal line with relatively high concentration of micro plastic particles per cubic meter.

The Western coastal belt is also seriously polluted due to accumulation of micro plastics, the report stated. The report said 150,242 beverage bottles, 100,875 food wrappings, 80,483 straws, 74,183 lids of bottles, 64,646 plastic bags and 56,154 cigarette buds had been collected within five years from 2013 to 2017 along the coastal belt of Sri Lanka.

Compared to 2017, the report pointed out that, the number of plastic bottles, plastic grocery items, and straws collected in the Sri Lankan coastline had increased by 7,053 percent, 5,456 percent and 1,089 percent respectively in 2018. The number of plastic cups and plates, cigarette buds, bottle caps, food wrappings, and glass bottles collected in the coastal belt had increased by 439 percent, 492 percent, 225 percent, 131 percent and 110 percent respectively in 2018 compared to 2017.

Sri Lanka: Plenty of fish but no catch as economic crisis bites

<https://news.yahoo.com/plenty-fish-no-catch-sri-044647369.html>

"The sky and seas off Sri Lanka's coast are crystal blue but a worsening economic crisis has kept fishermen moored at Negombo harbour, out of gas and unable to reel in the day's catch. The waters nearby are a tropical bounty of fist-sized prawns and mackerel that normally find their way into the island nation's staple seafood curries.

But the crisis has left coastal communities short of fuel to send their vessels out to the ocean, and the repercussions are rippling down to dinner tables around the country. ""If we queue up by five in the morning, then we will get fuel by three in the afternoon, on good days,"" Arulanandan, a seasoned member of Negombo's close-knit fishing community, tells AFP.

""But for some, even that is not possible, because by the time they get to the end of the queue, the kerosene is gone."" Around the local estuary, idle crew members sun themselves on deck or lean against the rails of trawlers bobbing in the water, puffing on cigarettes as they listlessly wait for news of a fresh diesel shipment.

Their ships are equipped to go deep into international waters for weeks at a time but the shortages have prevented most from setting sail. Other fishermen work closer to land, on smaller kerosene-powered motorboats like Arulanandan's, but locals say three in every four of these vessels are not working on any given day.

The adversity has knock-on effects -- if a crew specialising in catching bait has no fuel, then other boats fortunate enough to source kerosene are also forced to stay on land. ""When I can't bring money home, my children ask me, 'Why are you not feeding me?'" Arulanandan says. ""But they don't understand the problems we are going through.""

'What will everyone else do?'

An hour's drive south, on the outskirts of the capital Colombo, stands the country's biggest fish market -- a bustling open-air warehouse that usually serves as a hub for wholesale buyers from across the country. The consequences of Sri Lanka's shrinking catch are being keenly felt here, with far less seafood making its way to stallholders and far fewer customers passing through.

""The buyers come from far away, and because of diesel and petrol shortages, they haven't shown up,"" says Mohammed Asneer, a young shrimp vendor. ""Our sales have gone down and our expenses have gone up."" Asneer grows exasperated while bemoaning his straitened circumstances and says he would seize any opportunity to leave for abroad.

""I don't want to be in this country anymore,"" he tells AFP. ""We work in the fish market and we can't even afford to buy a kilo of fish. So what will everyone else do?""

'Everything is expensive'

Sri Lanka's government admits that the current economic crisis is the nation's worst since independence from Britain in 1948. Inflation is running rampant. The cost of diesel -- when the fuel is available -- has almost doubled in a matter of months, and official figures show the average price of food shot up by 25 percent in January. "

"Now everything is expensive -- for us it's very difficult to do business,"" says K.W. Shiromi, the owner of Mama's Place seafood restaurant in the bucolic southern coastal town of Weligama. By the roadside, a smattering of foreign tourists select a fish for Shiromi's brother to scale and gut before it is dispatched to the kitchen to be sauteed in chilli and spices.

As a few satisfied customers watch the waves roll in at their tables, Shiromi tells AFP that the rising cost of her catch has forced her to jack up prices. "If the government does something to make things better, then everyone will be happy," she says. "Otherwise everyone in Sri Lanka will suffer."

Sri Lanka: Post-harvest losses, processing and gender issues in fisheries

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2020/11/01/news-features/post-harvest-losses-processing-and-gender-issues-fisheries>

"One of the serious issues in the fisheries of Sri Lanka today is the alarmingly high post-harvest losses, which remain as high as 40-60 per cent of the total fish harvested. While diverse strategies have been introduced to deal with the issue, none have led to any significant reduction in post-harvest losses. Although fish processing is one such means of reducing these losses, while providing the masses with a nutritious and palatable food, this sub-sector too is suffering from technological stagnation, lack of investment and miscellany, poor hygienic conditions maintained in processing sites, etc.

Women fisherfolk, who earn supplementary family incomes and contribute significantly to family wellbeing, are confronted with an array of problems which include, crude technology, unfair prices for produce, poor access to capital and, social barriers for engagement in fisheries related work. Understanding the magnitude of these issues and to find appropriate solutions to at least some of the urgent issues, the Sri Lanka Forum for Small Scale Fisheries (SLFSSF) and the National Fisheries Solidarity (NAFSO) jointly organised an Interactive Platform in Negombo in early 2020. This Interactive Platform was formed by representatives of all stakeholders involved in the issues: fishers, fisher women, fish processors, civil society organisations, fisher community organisations, state actors (Department of Fisheries and the Aquatic Resources and National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency: NARA) and academics.

The following is an account of the outcome of the deliberations on the issue of post-harvest losses, fish processing and gender, including agreements reached by all parties in resolving some important issues. Post harvest losses Losses due to unfriendly gear and fishing techniques It was revealed that, fish quality is strongly affected by the type of gear used. Research carried out by NARA had revealed that the highest post-harvest loss (percentage loss being 39 per cent) had occurred due to ring nets while it was lowest (7 per cent) with the long lining type of selective gear. However, the most distressing issue is the use of inappropriate mesh sizes which trap even juvenile and trash fish.

Other disconcerting issues are the use of higher depths (or heights) in the gill nets (catching all types of non-target fish) and the longer times of keeping nets at sea (aimed at catching more fish)

causing higher deterioration of fish quality. The process of mechanisation of the fishing fleet is another contributing factor because mechanisation has led to multi-day fishing and the landing of poor quality fish, apart from its positive impacts on production. Fishing traps (such as kudu dal) were also considered as gear that lead to harvest losses because they tend to catch the juveniles of fish. The need to develop gear that is more selective, prohibit gear which are more destructive, such as ring nets, setting limits on the depth to which gill nets are laid and, to impose the trawl ban law in identified areas, were suggested as remedial measures in resolving these issues.

Losses due to bad on-board handling of fish It is known that fishing vessels which are engaged in long fishing trips are not adequately equipped with proper facilities for fish storage (fish is not frozen, only iced). Fish that are caught deteriorate with the prolongation of the fishing trip. As revealed by NARA's research results, only 60 percent of the fish catch landed by boats are of "export quality, or Grade A. Sometimes, fishermen resort to beating large fish with clubs, which is an unacceptable act, leading to loss of blood and fast deterioration of fish quality. Needless to say that poor handling and unhygienic practices cause contamination.

It is (extremely) essential to follow proper hygienic measures inside the fishing vessel. This brings to light the need to develop the capacities of the vessel crew in employing proper hygienic practices inside the vessel. A related issue is the need to ensure that the boats are equipped with a smooth and easily cleanable deck and storage rooms. Rules are meaningless unless they are enforced. The lack of a proper mechanism and authority (with required professional qualifications) for craft inspection and providing certification on quality standards is a deterrent for ensuring the maintenance of proper hygienic and prophylactic practices on board fishing vessels and the skill of the crew in handling fish on board.

In respect of the latter, the ILO Convention (C188) on Work in the Fishing Sector (2007) could provide guidelines in developing the necessary control measures. Losses at landing sites Losses could take place at landing sites due to non-smooth landing floors, dragging of fish along the floor, unavailability of clean water, poor sanitary conditions, improper fish handling, absence of ice boxes and cold storage facilities etc. Fish processing and gender Processing issues What goes for fish processing are the poor quality fish from offshore crafts and those fish from coastal crafts during surplus landings. Post-harvest, value addition takes two paths: i. preparation into ready-to-cook fresh forms and ii. processed fish.

Ready-to-cook fresh forms: This is generally done for fish that needs a great degree of cleaning and skinning, such as Pothubari, Thilapia, Flat fish and other similar species. This is undertaken by some women and such cleaned products are sold in retail outlets. Although, fish filleting might have a good potential for more affluent urban consumers who demand value added fish products, this alternative has not been studied in detail. Yet, this type of value addition is very poorly developed in the country. Processed fish (dried fish):In general, the dry fish preparation process involves, cleaning, washing, cutting, salting and drying, while Maldive fish is a steam-dried product.

As a means of dealing with fish quality deterioration in multi-day fishing, the first-caught fish are dried on the deck of the craft during the voyage and such dried fish is called “Boat-Dried Fish (boattu karawala). It is believed that boattu karawala are clean, contain less moisture and are of better quality. Nevertheless, the volumes available are limited. The dry fish traders, who usually visit the houses of producers (mainly women) enjoy oligopsonistic buying powers and producer prices are said to be very “unfair. As revealed by small scale fish processors they earn a healthy profit margin only if they use poor quality fresh fish for processing. Some processors at industrial level use good quality fresh fish for fish processing, but only target certain limited niche markets among the high income groups. In fact, the small scale processing industry is confronted with the dilemma of carrying out dried fish making as a viable livelihood alternative, while providing a quality product to the consumer.

Processing technology, as a whole tend to be stagnating without any improvement as revealed by nation-wide stakeholder consultations. It is also to be taken into account that, dried fish is considered as an important food item in the poor man's diet and his major source of protein. The problem is to find the exact trade-off between input price and quality. Today, the fish drying areas, especially the beaches, are being narrowed down to mere strips of sand, hardly sufficient to provide space for craft landing and fish drying. Both, natural factors such as climate change and expanding coastal tourism under the anxious blue economic growth initiatives have resulted in displacing the small scale fishers from their traditional rights to the beach.

Gender dimension: One of the traditional household activities of women fisher folk in Sri Lanka has been the processing of fish into dried fish and Maldive fish and salted fish, which earned them supplementary incomes. In fact, for many fishing villages, where dried fish processing is widely practised, it has become a way of life for the women. Women's engagement in fish processing activities can be considered as a type of strategy towards coping with an array of risks and uncertainties inherent in fishing as it contributes for the smoothening of inter-temporal flows of daily fishing incomes.

However, during recent times, small-medium scale dried fish and maldive fish industries have been established and they might offer a threat to engagement of women in this industry and thereby threaten the function that dry fish processing at household level perform in improving the resilience capacity of fishing households. In fact, the role of women has often been undermined in fisheries, which is a male dominant industry. Their access to credit, information and training opportunities is poor, and very few efforts have been made to improve women's access to such financial, physical and human capital.

Empowerment of women to gain control over their own lives is one of the Millennium Development Goals of the UN, and is also included in the Sustainable Development Goals, under gender equality. Article 7.2 of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries states that “all parties should recognise the role women often play in the post-harvest subsector and support improvements to facilitate women's participation in such work. States

should ensure that amenities and services appropriate for women are available as required in order to enable women to retain and enhance their livelihoods in the post-harvest subsector (FAO of the United Nations, 2005).

Into the future: Use of selective type of gear, better on-board handling of fish and improved on board preservation facilities, are of significant importance in reducing losses of the catches landed by offshore crafts. While post-harvest losses are quite low in coastal fisheries, the issue of losses could only be minimised if ice boxes are provided to fishers and cold storage facilities are available at large market centers to handle gluts. Even if the quality of fish landed by multi-day crafts is improved through new innovations, it is unlikely that such benefits would trickle down to the dried fish and Maldives fish producer at the bottom because the higher purchase price of good quality fish would push down the profit margins of the small scale producer.

The solution would be to add value to the end products by adopting health standards, cleaning, cutting, packing and labeling and sell the products through the establishment of market links with the busy urban consumer, and through product diversification (new products such as smoked fish, fish pickles, ambul thiyal and similar products. Of momentous importance would be investment on further research and innovations in fish processing technology (including drying) and government intervention in training and capacity building of small scale fish producers in resolving the aforementioned issues.

It is necessary to protect the small scale fish processor, especially the women, by providing them with technical know-how (through training and capacity building) and access to new technology and credit. By organising themselves into cooperatives, the women fish processors could increase their bargaining power vis-à-vis the unscrupulous traders and also develop links directly with markets (ex. large chain stores), leading to improvements in the wellbeing of their families.

Sri Lanka: Potential products from fishing industry waste: Green solutions

<http://www.slguardian.org/2020/07/potential-products-from-fishing.html>

"Sri Lanka produces about 530,000 MT of total fish catch annually from 500, 000 square kilometers of ocean area where there are exclusive fishing rights and nearly 2900 square kilometers of inland water bodies. We export less than 3% of the total catch while importing 100,000MT of fish varieties becoming a main fish and fishery products importer in South Asian region. On the other hand, we generate considerable amount of fish waste either in solid form or liquid forms. FAO says that we lost tons of fish catch because of an array of undesirable characteristics such as extreme heterogeneity, small size, flavor, bony structure, unacceptable appearance, substantial fat content, threat of toxic substances plus mainly, due to improper handling and during the fish processing operations.

For an instance, nearly one ton of fish is discarded daily without getting any use from Peliyagoda fish market which is the largest whole sale market in the country. Other than that, in fin fish processing, two third of the whole weight is discarded in the form of gut and frames. Processing of prawns generate waste about 25% of the total weight depending on the final product. This has two major consequences; environmental and economic. Though this is not a famous topic among the public, awareness in possibilities of conversion fish waste into useful products is important towards a sustainable future. There are some projects that fish meal and manure are manufactured using fish waste in the country but still, the local requirements aren't fulfilled by the production output.

Further, different byproducts and value added products can be developed including food supplements, pet feeds, pharmaceuticals (chitin, liver oil, calcium, vitamins, minerals, peptides), cosmetics (collagen) and other products such as fish leather. Currently, there are more innovative products in the experimental level which need to be introduced and incorporated with the industry. Moving to waste management to resource management. Most of the fish wastes are utilized to produce fish meal in Sri Lanka.

Peliyagoda fish market produces nearly three tons of fish waste per day and around only one ton of fish waste is used for producing fish meal. Later, the government established and maintaining Ekala fish feed factory in order to produce nutritive and cost effective fish feeds for local industries. It has been sponsored by FAO and technical assistance was given by NARA. Recently, a high capacity technological facility was established to satisfy the local requirement of fish feed and remaining is aimed to be exported. Sri Lanka has fish processing, shrimp processing and tuna processing plants which are ideal opportunities to extract pathogen free good condition fish waste.

They also could be used as a pet feed ingredient, as it represents a valuable source of high quality protein and energy. Moreover, Tuna fish heads have been observed as an excellent source of fish oil in the form of unsaturated fatty acids. The oil extract percentage is nearly 4%. Though this can be implemented in fish processing plants in Sri Lanka, still there is no any effective program or project to conduct this process. Specially, fish species like *Sardinella longiceps* (Yaksalayo) which have no market value also can be utilized to produce fish oil as they are rich in oil.

Fish silage is another potential product that can be produced by fish waste within the country. Fish silage is a liquid product resulting from the liquefaction of a whole fish or a part by a autolytic process carried out by enzymes already present in the fish and accelerated by an acid that induces the proper conditions for the enzymes to breakdown the tissues and limits the growth of spoilage bacteria. This operation is simple, economically feasible and no sophisticated equipment are required. Unfortunately, none of the fish processing plants in Sri Lanka is producing fish silage using offal.

There is a previously established fish silage plant in fishery harbor, it exists without getting the maximum use. Most of the fish markets expel their solid and liquid wastes with urban waste without treating. The extensive literature on biogas production using many animal materials have been tested, but not fish waste. It's relatively a good option to implement near small scale fish markets and landing sites. In addition, produced biogas can be used directly in a burner to produce thermal energy, electrical or mechanical energy.

Chitin and chitosan are food additives that can be extracted from crustacean exoskeleton which contain 15–20% chitin by dry weight. Collagen extracted from hygienic fish waste, can be used to produce valuable ingredients in cosmetic industry which is an alternative to animal collagens. They can be utilized for supplementing the skin of land vertebrates as well as in foods and biomedical materials. Fertilizers and food packaging are also can be found among most prominent current uses of fish waste worldwide. gelatin extracted from fish skin, calcium supplements from fish bones, flavoring agents from prawn heads are among other value added potential products which are still in the stage of research and development.

Researchers have shown that a number of useful compounds can be isolated from fishing industry waste including enzymes, proteins and many secondary metabolites that have antimicrobial and antitumor and antioxidant capabilities. In the Sri Lankan context, there is a gulf between science and technology, together with the research findings and the commercial reality. Along with, skilled people with innovative ideas are abundant but the opportunities for them are rare. However, it's necessary to turn into methods that convert fishing industry waste into valuable products on the roads towards sustainable development. That will be a huge step forward from the waste management to the resource management.

Sri Lanka: Prime Minister inaugurates construction work on Mawella and Rekawa fisheries anchorages

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20B/Dec07_1607282541CH.php

"The construction work of the Mawella Fishing Anchorage commenced Sunday (December 06) under the patronage of the Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. The proposed anchorage will include a 260-meter main breakwater, two offshore breakwaters and an access canal to facilitate navigation. It is expected to provide a secure livelihood for the fishermen as well as their families by providing facilities for 350 fiberglass vessels with external engines as well as safe access for the vessels. It also will provide facilities for multi-day fishing vessels to engage in fishing activities.

The construction of the proposed Mawella fishing anchorage is expected to provide livelihood to about 1500 people and will make the fishing activities of the fishing community more productive. The construction is expected to be completed within 15 months at an estimated cost of Rs. 380.07 million. The construction of the Rekawa fishing anchorage also commenced today

under the patronage of Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. Its construction is expected to be completed within a year.

The proposed fishing berth, located between Tangalle and Hambantota fishing harbors, will have a 300 meter breakwater, a 75 meter sand breakage and an access canal to facilitate navigation. The construction of the berth will provide livelihood to over 1500 people and will enable about 70 multi-day vessels to engage in fishing. The estimated cost is over 379 million rupees. The Prime Minister also distributed a fishing vessel worth Rs. 750,000 and fishing gear to each of the 26 fishermen affected by the fire at the Kalametiya fishing harbor.

Sri Lanka: Prime Minister instructs to provide relief to the people living in fishing villages

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21B/Aug16_1629130960CH.php

"The Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa has instructed Indika Anuruddha Herath, State Minister of Rural Housing and Construction & Building Materials Industries Promotion Monday to develop the "Fishing Villages" initiated by the Prime Minister during his tenure as the Minister of Fisheries. The Prime Minister has given these instructions during a discussion held with the State Minister today.

During the tenure of the Prime Minister as the Minister of Fisheries, more than 60 fishing villages have been built along the coast and in the vicinity of reservoirs throughout the island. State Minister Indika Anuruddha told the Prime Minister's Media Unit that he had been instructed by the Prime Minister to prepare a proposal for the 2022 budget to provide relief to those people. The Prime Minister has also instructed the State Minister to look into the possibility of starting new housing projects in the fishing villages.

Sri Lanka: Program launched to uplift the inland fisheries industry in Northern Province

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20B/Jul11_1594471976CH.php

"The Fisheries Ministry has launched a program to uplift the inland fishery industry in the Northern Province where about 2,500 families are engaged in the freshwater fishery industry. Under the program, which is aimed to uplift the living standards of the fisher people, equipment will be provided to the fisher community and the fish fingerlings will be released in the main reservoirs in the region.

Under the program, boats were handed over to fishermen in the Vavuniya district yesterday at the Vavuniya District Office. Meanwhile, speaking at a press conference held in Vavuniya, Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda stated that steps will be taken to solve the problems of illegal fishermen from India illegally fishing in the island's waters.

Sri Lanka: Program to sink discarded buses and boats in sea to promote fish breeding

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21A/Feb27_1614440880CH.php

"Another program to sink discarded buses and fishing vessels with the objective to increase the fish population in the sea was launched at the Galle Fisheries Harbor today under the patronage of State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekara.

The dilapidated buses and fishing vessels will be hauled by the Sri Lanka Navy Ship 'Sayura' about 5 km away from the Galle Harbor and submerged in the sea. The purpose is to create an environment conducive to the breeding of small fish. The program was implemented under the supervision of the Navy. The pilot project was first launched near the Trincomalee Port and is currently in operation successfully.

Sri Lanka: Project to produce fish feed in the country launched

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/Feb06_1580930156CH.php

"Sri Lanka Ministry of and Aquatic Resources Development today launched a project to produce fish feed required for the aquaculture industry within the country. Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development Douglas Devananda and State Minister Sanath Nishantha Perera opened the production facility in Ja-Ela, Ekala today.

A fish feed production machine donated by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization was established at the Ekala Fish Food Factory. The machine can produce 500 kilos of fish food per hour. There is also the possibility of exporting the excess, said State Minister Perera. The fish feeds are produced using the discards from the Peliyagoda fish market with the technical assistance of National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA).

Sri Lanka: Promotes boat industry in Southern Africa

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21B/Sep23_1632413936CH.php

"In collaboration with the State Ministry of Warehouse Facilities, Container Yards, Port Supply Facilities, Boats, and Shipping Industry Development of Sri Lanka, the Sri Lanka High Commission in Pretoria organized an informative webinar on 13 September 2021 to identify the possible business opportunities for the SL boat industry, paying special attention to the fisheries sectors of Mozambique and Namibia.

The focus of the webinar was on developing fish- producing markets in this region which give lucrative opportunities for the international business community. A considerable amount of fisheries products of Mozambique and Namibia are exported to the European and Asian markets. High Commissioner Amarasekara of Sri Lanka highlighted the opportunities available in these

two markets and the movement of the international investment grants to the fishing industry focusing on community development.

The competition is coming from Spain, China, and Japan since they have already established their fishing businesses in this region. The unsaturated harvesting capacity of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans encourages new investments/ businesses to enter into these markets. Small and medium level entrepreneurs of the above two countries may be encouraged to venture into the fishing industry by introducing vessels of appropriate size and designs, for which, Sri Lankan boat manufacturing companies have the capacity.

State Secretary Dammika Mataraarachchi expressed the necessity of penetrating this market by advanced business models going beyond the traditional export business and promotes the high caliber of boating technology similar to the European and Japanese industries. The participants said that the demand for the boats should be addressed from the viewpoint of eradication of poverty and fulfilling the nutrition gap of the community in the region.

High Commissioner Amarasekara agreed to discuss with the relevant authorities of the above two countries to seek opportunities for Sri Lankan boat manufacturers. State Secretary Mataraarachchi agreed to play the facilitating role for the Sri Lanka side. Representing the industry, Kapila Sumanapala - Neil Marine Company, Z.M. Hairu – Hairu Naval Craft Engineering, Sumithra Fernando and Sachitra Fernando – Dhanusha Marine, D.V. Abeyasinghe – Colombo Dockyard PLC, Indra Rajapaksha – BAFF Polymech participated and shared their experiences relevant to the African region. The Commercial Section of the Mission organized and moderated the event.

Sri Lanka: Prosperity is linked to ocean resources

<http://www.ft.lk/columns/Sri-Lanka-s-prosperity-is-linked-to-ocean-resources/4-716536>

"Current and future prosperity of Sri Lanka is intrinsically linked to its coastal, marine and mineral assets or neglected ocean resources. Fisheries and tourism can be two main pillars of its gross domestic product GDP economy and source of employment. Ocean resource development connected fisheries, nautical tourism, boat/ship building, ship repairs, mineral sand mining, aquaponics/hydroponics should be considered by our ministers, planners, public officials connected to ministries, as well as private sector connected to fisheries, tourism if they are capable of thinking out of box.

We still follow stories related by planners in the 1940s when we were a developed economy compared to the rest of South Asia managed by the British. All countries around us since 1948 have turned a new leaf and are passing us or have passed us. Our governments and planners are still reading pages of the old book. Sri Lanka's GDP Global Rank was 57 in 2020, China 2, India 6, Indonesia 16, Philippines 34, Pakistan 39, Vietnam 40, Bangladesh 44. By 2040 India is posed

to be most populated country overtaking China and GDP Global Rank 3, China hitting position 1, Indonesia 8, Pakistan 23, Vietnam 24, Bangladesh 28, No prediction available for Sri Lanka.

Where we will be by 2040? There are many related agencies connected to ocean resource domestic product such as the National Aquaculture Development Authority, Department of Coast Conservation, Coastal Resource Management, Sri Lanka Coast Conservation Management, Marine Environment Protection Authority, Sri Lanka Fishery Harbour Corporation, Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Tourism Development Authority, Merchant Shipping Secretariat, Ceynor, Mineral Sands Corporation, Department of Wild Life, Navy, Coast Guard, Sri Lanka Customs, Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Trade, Export Development Board, Ministry connected to Petroleum Resource Development (now asleep), Ministry of Agriculture, Board of Investment, private sector boat/yacht builders, yacht/leisure boat operators, ship repairers to name some.

They are administered under many ministries where right hand does not know what left hand is up to. Have all these departments ever met as a team or with private sector operators to discuss development of domestic product as a part of economy? This may be the only island nation surrounded by ocean that imports low quality canned fish controlled by a canned fish importers mafia that imports canned fish to feed so called malnourished citizens. The same canned fish importers mafia incited Buddhist clergy to protest when a Prime Minister in the 1980s wanted to introduce fish spawn into inland tanks and reservoirs.

The project was abandoned. Foreign fishing boats/multi-day craft/traulners fish in our water and we sleep over it with many ministers, Navy, Coast Guard paid by public as they have no capacity to think of country first. Fishery sector needs rapid, revolutionary and accelerated development. The private sector needs to be encouraged to deploy 'mother vessels' around the island to help fishermen to store their catch in cold rooms or blast frozen to meet export requirements and also assist with first aid, fuel, water, etc. during the days they are at sea.

There are massive sea water tank vessels operated by Japan and other sashimi consuming countries that help sashimi fish harvesters to store their fish fresh for many days in sea water till they dock. Sri Lanka must develop cold room services in every fishery harbour with facilities to store fish at -60c for export market or blast frozen. Establish training schools for fishing folks in modern methods of fishing by use of electronic equipment. Enhance involvement of an ocean university in fishery sector education and boat building. Encourage multi day fishing vessel builders to fit sea water ice generation plants or deep freezers by granting soft loans to buyers instead of using 0c ice and Styrofoam boxes to store fish while at sea.

Establish dedicated subsidised insurance scheme based on annual fitness check of boats as done for road vehicles for fishermen to cover their families and boats in the event of disaster or sickness. Promote and provide low cost loans for deep sea fish cultivation farms. Development of fish processing and canning plants. Encourage processing fish waste into fish food and

fertiliser. Enhance cold chain logistics to transport fish into hinterland for local consumption at affordable prices. Expand Fisheries Corporation and eliminate or minimise corruption and middlemen.

Establish laboratories to periodically check fish quality/toxins and monitor harvest. Sri Lanka is yet to develop organic vegetable growing technology using the principle of aquaponics/hydroponic. Aquaponics involves growing fish and plants together within the same environment, which is considered to be a sustainable process. Hydroponics is a gardening method that allows plants to be grown without the use of soil. A hybrid between aquaculture and hydroponics, using organic fish waste to fertilise vegetable growth. Aquaponics works on a circular system. Water from fish tanks and lagoons is filtered by the growing medium and plants as they grow.

The water is then returned to tanks/lagoons cleaner than before. Aquaponics/hydroponics is commonly used in many countries alongside river basins/lagoons as only a small percentage of water is consumed using zero artificial fertiliser and pesticides compared to traditional soil based farming. Nautical tourism is neglected in this island nation. Nautical tourism can be developed using the 20 fishery harbours, other protected lagoons and river mouths around Sri Lanka by promoting mini marinas. Speedy implementation of 'Harbour Village Concept' should be encouraged by the Urban Development Authority and private sector where land around fishery harbours and other lagoons can be developed for tourism related services, real estates and coastal urban development.

Grow/house boats can be encouraged for individuals to own their boats and live in them with facility to anchor in mini marinas right round the island with services for discharge of sewage, kitchen waste and obtain services, supplies. Bangladesh, one of the fastest growing nations in our surroundings has a 22-day ban on fishing in inland waters, rivers and reservoirs during fish spawning season. I have been on restaurant river boats in Bangladesh where they harvest river fish 40–80 Kg in weight. Female fish are put back and only male fish are cooked on board. Do any of our fishermen put female fish back in to sea or inland water? Thirty years ago there were many fish in lagoons, rivers, tanks in paradise. Where are they now? Fish cannot breed or grow in inland water due to high contamination of water by poison washed in to them by excessive use of chemical fertiliser and weedicides.

Trout fishing was very popular in N'Eliya, now unheard of. Female lobsters were not harvested by fisherman of the past. Now who cares? Female lobsters with eggs are found in plenty where lobsters are available for purchase. There are no fishing bans in lakes and tanks during spawning periods in this country. If a ban is introduced our empty vessel politicians will organise protest marches as they have no capacity to think beyond their nose that fish too need a peaceful environment to breed.

Harvesting and development of mineral sands based industries should be a long term plan instead of exporting mineral sand without processing and importing processed mineral sand such as zircon, titanium for use in industry. These are just a few to note for action by our planners who have neglected ocean resources of the country since independence. Public is yet to hear plans by our legislators on ocean resource development. Our legislators will keep on wasting time on personalities other than voicing opinion on development at least for Sri Lanka to be GDP rank 30 by 2040. Mr. President/Prime Minister: Food for thought if you can muster the governing party politicians to think country first.

Sri Lanka: Protectionist taxes on canned fish, sugar cut

<https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-says-protectionist-taxes-on-canned-fish-sugar-cut-74759/>

"Sri Lanka is cutting protectionist taxes on canned fish, sugar and large (Bombay) onions and dhal (lentils) the President's office said. The tax cut will result in the price of a large can of tinned fish falling to 200 rupees, B-onions to 100 rupee and a kilo of sugar to 85 rupees, the President's office said. Sugar is now retailed at over 130 rupees a kilo.

Sri Lanka taxes canned fish and sugar to give high profits to import substitution mercantilists. Sugar is produced by expropriated state enterprises. The tax cuts will give relief to the people amid a Covid-19 crisis, the President's office said. Earlier in 2020, Sri Lanka's consumer affairs authority slammed price controls on both tinned fish and dhal and made them disappear from shop shelves.

Sri Lanka: Raises minimum working age from 14 to 16 years

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Sri-Lanka-raises-minimum-working-age-from-14-to-16-years-50335.html>

"The Sri Lankan government yesterday raised the minimum working age from 14 to 16 years, marking World Day against Child Labour, which was instituted by the United Nations in 2002. This year's theme was COVID-19: Protect children from child labour, now more than ever. The amendment to the labour law meets the need to harmonise the working age with that of compulsory education, as well as bring the country's legislation in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), at least 152 million children are working worldwide. Of these, 72 million do so in hazardous conditions. This is reflected in child labour mortality data. Around 48 per cent of child labourers who die are aged 5 to 11 years, 28 per cent are between 12 and 14 years, and the remaining 24 per cent fall in the 15-to-17 bracket.

About 71 per cent of working children are engaged in agriculture, which includes fishing, livestock herding, aquaculture, and forestry.

According to the ILO, in 2016 in Sri Lanka had 103,704 working children, which represents a sharp drop compared to a decade before, when the figure was around half a million. Of the children working, 39,007 are engaged in hazardous forms of child labour. In Sri Lanka, working children are employed mainly in fishing, to feed themselves and their family. They belong to fishing families and tend not to want to go to school, nor do they have another trade in mind.

A 15-year-old boy from the western province, near Chilaw Beach, told AsiaNews that he does not like going to school because he is lazy. He finished school, but did not take the final exam. He said that he goes fishing to earn money. "If you have money, you can do many things. This is our traditional way of life and I want to continue living the same way.

According to the ILO, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in child labour. "As economic contraction reduces opportunities in the labour market for parents, it can push their children into hazardous and exploitative work, reads an ILO report.

Sri Lanka: Reeling fishermen seek government relief

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/reeling-sri-lankan-fishermen-seek-government-relief/90370#>

"Justin Vincent Anthony's village has been locked down for more than a month. During this time, he went to sea for a few days to support his family but the fish he caught could not be sold at market. Both local fish markets were closed and he tried to sell his catch on the streets, but the police chased him away. On many days, Anthony and other fishermen could not even afford the diesel for their boats. Sri Lankan fishermen face another problem too.

Many people erroneously believe the coronavirus can be transmitted by eating fish. Vendors have to face numerous obstacles selling their catch as the public has shunned fish. "These days, living with a family of five is very difficult," said Anthony, a 62-year-old Catholic from Basiyawatta, Negombo. Meril Fernando, who ties a small box on the back of his bicycle and goes from house to house to sell fish, said families have stopped eating fish since Covid-19 struck. He has to go to areas where the lockdown has been lifted to sell fish.

The fishing town of Negombo has long been called "Little Rome" because the population is about 75 percent Catholic. The fishing industry is facing severe problems due to media misinformation and unreasonable fear among the public. Sri Lanka has reported over 18,400 cases of coronavirus and 69 deaths. Before the country experienced its second wave in the first week of October, there were only 3,396 cases and 13 deaths. Infections have jumped fivefold since then. Former minister of fisheries Dilip Weddarachchi ate raw fish at a press meeting to assure the public it is safe to eat fish.

He said the biggest favor the public can do for the fishing community is to purchase fish, adding that it is the duty of the government to advise the public. The Government Medical Officers' Association has stated that properly cooked fish do not carry the virus. The government has banned all public gatherings until further notice and locked down many villages to battle the fast-spreading second wave of the pandemic.

Hundreds of fishing organizations and rights activists have urged the government to provide relief to fishing communities reeling from the impact of the contagion. "A scientific approach should confirm whether the virus is transmitted by fish. Based on that fact, the Ministry of Fisheries and medical officers should issue statements through the media," fishing organizations said in a joint statement on Nov. 15. They urged the government to purchase stocks of fish that cannot be sold at a reasonable price and store them.

Several priests in Negombo have supported poor fishing families. Father Sujeewa Athukorala, parish priest of St. Sebastian's Church, has distributed dry ration packets to fishing families with the support of his parish council and the Fisheries Association. A Catholic priest from a fishing family in Negombo said the government has paid little attention to fishermen even though there are several Christian parliamentarians. "

"Fishermen are people who do a great service to the economy without burdening any government," said the priest who preferred to remain anonymous. Fernando urged the government to pay special attention to these voiceless fishermen. "We are afraid that our children will lose their future after training for this job."

Sri Lanka: Revenue of over Rs. 43 billion from fish exports in the last 9 months

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21B/Nov16_1637040897CH.php

"Fish exports have generated over Rs. 43 billion (Rs. 43,106 million) in revenue from January to September this year, according to the Ministry of Fisheries. This is an increase of 38 percent over 2020, according to a report released by the Ministry of Fisheries. The income comes from exports of fish such as tuna, prawns, lobsters, and crabs, as well as freshwater fish.

Commenting on this, Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda said that there is a huge demand for Sri Lankan ornamental fish in Europe and the United States. He says these export targets have been met due to the Ministry of Fisheries providing all the necessary facilities for fish export activities even during the last Covid epidemic.

Sri Lanka: Revive mangroves degraded by shrimp farms

<https://island.lk/revive-mangroves-degraded-by-shrimp-farms/>

"The Wildlife and Nature Protection Society (WNPS) in partnership with Hemas Consumer Brands commemorated World Wetland Day by planting mangrove seedlings in degraded areas within Anawilundawa Wetland Sanctuary in Puttalam, together with the local community. "The planted seedlings were carefully nurtured and grown to adapt to conditions within the wetland in Nurseries within the surrounding mangrove habitats prior to being planted in the areas that are now demarcated for regeneration and around abandoned shrimp farms.

Hemas Consumer Brands has committed to regeneration a 3.5 hectare area demarcated for regeneration," a news release in this connection said. The Anawilundawa Wetland Sanctuary spans over 1,397 hectares and is an amalgamation of forest wetlands like mangrove and freshwater swamps, coastal saltwater ecosystems and freshwater lakes. It is one of Sri Lanka's six designated "Ramsar Sites". The release explained that mangroves form the foundation of a highly productive and biologically rich ecosystem which provides a home and feeding ground for a wide range of species, many of which are endangered.

Although mangroves make up less than one percent of all tropical forests worldwide, they are highly valuable ecosystems, providing an array of essential goods and services which contribute significantly to the livelihoods, well-being and security of coastal communities. Mangroves are also Carbon Sinks and store up to four times the amount of CO₂ than a tropical rain forest. In the past, mangrove restoration projects in the area often failed because local communities ended up destroying the mangrove habitats to establish fish and shrimp farms, a common and popular mode of income in the region with short term benefits for local fishing communities, it said.

"Understanding the importance of community participation and to inculcate a sense of stewardship, Professor Sevvandi Jayakody and her team of researchers together with the WNPS and the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) have built close ties with members of the local community since the launch of the pilot phase of the project in 2018. "Men and women from the local regions are actively involved in every stage of the project from maintaining the mangrove nurseries to mangrove replanting and by incorporating silvo fisheries, a practice where mangroves are planted alongside shrimp farms, into rehabilitation efforts."

Whilst restoring the environment, this initiative also provides job opportunities for locals who are impacted by the pandemic. The stakeholders will work closely with local communities in the management of mangroves post-rewilding to ensure the sustainability of the project and the deliverance of the amazing ecosystem services that this restored wetland could offer, it said.

The five-year programme was implemented by the The Wildlife and Nature Protection Society (WNPS) with technical expertise from the University of Wayamba and under the patronage of DWC, with financial support and active participation from Hemas Consumer Brands. "The three agencies will work in close synergy, drawing on their complementary technical capacities to achieve concrete results in terms of sustainable management, restoration and conservation of the

wetland,” the release explained.

Sri Lanka: Rs, 216.5 million paid as compensation to fishermen who lost income due to Express Pearl fire

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21B/Sep07_1630988773CH.php

"The Ministry of Fisheries has provided Rs. 216.5 million to the relevant District Secretariats to pay as compensation to 12,111 fishing vessel owners and fishermen in the Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara districts who lost their livelihoods due to the burning of the X-Press Pearl containership. Accordingly, Rs. 150 million has been paid for the fishermen in the Gampaha District, Rs. 52.67 million for the fishermen in the Colombo District and Rs. 13.83 million for the fishermen in the Kalutara District and the compensation has been credited to their bank accounts.

Kanchana Wijesekera, State Minister of Fisheries disclosed this information during an online discussion on the progress of paying compensation to the fishermen in the sea area which is a no fishing zone, with the members of the committee, officials of the Ministry of Fisheries and the Department of Fisheries, the Fathers of the Catholic Church and representatives of those fisheries organizations. Due to the damage to the ship, fishing from Panadura to Negombo (Ma Oya) was suspended and declared a no-go zone.

The ship caught fire on May 20 in Sri Lankan waters and the insurance company had paid Rs. 720 million as the first installment (May 20-June 01) as compensation for the damage caused to the marine environment due to the fire. President Gotabhaya Rajapaksa has also instructed that Rs. 420 million from the first tranche of the interim compensation be given to the fishermen who have been directly affected by the loss of fishing industry.

The first installment of this interim compensation will be paid to fishermen in 27 sectors in the Gampaha, Colombo and Kalutara districts. The next stage will be to compensate the stakeholders in the fishing industry who have lost indirect income due to the suspension of fishing in the relevant maritime zone. State Minister Kanchana Wijesekera says that the necessary information has been obtained and the compensation will be credited to their bank accounts soon.

Sri Lanka: Rs. 5000 for farmers and fishermen

<https://menafn.com/1100137748/Sri-Lanka-Rs-5000-for-farmers-and-fishermen>

"An allowance of Rs. 5000 will be paid from this month as a special relief to farmers' and fishermen receiving pension, the Agricultural and Agrarian Insurance Board (AAIB) said. The Government earlier announced an allowance of Rs. 5000 for low- income families affected due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Chairman of the AAIB Attorney-at- Law Premachandra Epa said measures have been taken to enable farmers and fishermen receiving pension to collect their allowance from their specified post offices from 11th - 15th May. He said Rs. 831 million has been allocated for the distribution of allowances to 162,000 farmers and 4907 fishermen identified as pension beneficiaries.

The Department of Posts has commenced preparations to distribute the allowances through 4200 post offices islandwide under the instructions of the Postmaster General. In the event of curfew being imposed in certain areas on the said dates, the pensioners have been requested to use their pension account books as curfew pass, Premachandra Epa added.

Sri Lanka: Scientific approach to realise full potential of fisheries sector

<https://www.dailymirror.lk/business-news/SL-told-to-have-scientific-approach-to-realise-full-potential-of-fisheries-sector/273-231164>

"Sri Lanka has an immense potential to fetch higher export revenue from its fisheries sector, however, holding it back from reaping full benefits is the lack of scientific management, the World Bank (WB) said. Coastal species such as lobster, cuttlefish, wild-caught shrimp, mud crab, and sea cucumber hold promise for higher export revenues and more secure jobs by tapping into higher-value market segments.

WB Country Manager stresses importance of having in place scientific, evidence-based stock mgt. to avoid overfishing Points out country not well-equipped to prevent postharvest quality deterioration during long trips at sea WB and govt. embarked on a project to carry out in-depth analysis of country's marine fisheries, coastal aquaculture and ecosystems in 2020 Sri Lanka's export revenue from fish and fisheries products expanded by 47% in 2021.

In an effort to continue to gain, and improve gains from the fisheries sector, WB Country Manager for Sri Lanka and the Maldives Chiyo Kanda stressed it is imperative for Sri Lanka to have in place scientific, evidence-based stock management to ensure overfishing does not take place. One of the key challenges of offshore fisheries sector is identified as the high rate of post-harvest quality loss. "The Sri Lankan fleet is not well-equipped to prevent postharvest quality deterioration during long trips at sea.

This reduces the amount of exportable fish catch," said Kanda, addressing the Knock Knock Conference 2022 hosted by the Daily FT and MBA Alumni of the University of Colombo yesterday. Kanda added that the growing global and domestic demand for seafood offers an important opportunity for Sri Lanka to sustainably expand aquaculture production, employment, and business opportunities for the private sector.

In a bid to capture the potential in the fisheries sector, the government has embarked on an ambitious programme to broaden coastal aquaculture into sea bass, seaweed, sea cucumber, mud

crab, marine ornamental fish, and baitfish??. Moreover, the WB and the government undertook in 2020 a project to carry out an in-depth analysis of Sri Lanka's marine fisheries, coastal aquaculture, and ecosystems that support them, focusing on coastal fishery, offshore fishery, and coastal aquaculture sub-sectors.

The analytical work aimed at extending support to the government in prioritising investment and policy actions to enhance the welfare and resilience of marine fishing communities and fisheries contribution to the economy considering the COVID-19 pandemic and climate risks. The final report of the in-depth analysis will be released by early March.

Sri Lanka's export revenue from fish and fisheries products expanded by 47.9 percent in 2021 when compared with 2020. The economy earned a total of US\$ 318 million from fisheries in 2021, while in 2020 the sector fetched US\$ 215 million.

According to the State Ministry of Ornamental Fish, Freshwater Fish, and Shrimp Farming, the country's production of farmed shrimp nearly doubled in 2021 with exports increasing by 162 percent.

Sri Lanka: Sea rally demands implementation of laws against bottom trawling

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sea-rally-demanding-implementation-of-laws-against-bottom-trawling/article37037352.ece>

"Dozens of northern fishermen on Sunday set out on boats from the coast of the eastern Mullaitivu district to Point Pedro in Jaffna in the north, demanding that Sri Lankan authorities implement laws banning the destructive bottom trawling method of fishing. The protest comes in the wake of an increase in reported intrusions by Indian trawlers over the last few weeks into Sri Lanka's territorial waters.

On October 13 the Sri Lankan Navy, arrested 23 Indian fishermen and seized two fishing vessels on charges of trespassing, resuming action months after limiting arrests of foreign fishermen, fearing COVID-19. Northern Sri Lankan fishermen have been resisting Indian trawlers in their seas for over a decade. Bilateral talks and governmental mechanisms have not delivered a solution yet. India is unable to prevent its fishermen from crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), and has not been successful yet in diverting them to deep sea fishing practices elsewhere.

The tensions have persisted, at times with a human cost like in January this year when Tamil Nadu four fishermen were found dead following an attack allegedly by the Sri Lankan Navy. The protest on Sunday was led by Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MPs M.A. Sumanthiran, S. Shriritharan and Shanakiyan Rasamanickam, and former MP Shanthi Sriskantharajah, and sought

to pressure Fisheries Minister and Jaffna MP Douglas Devananda to use Sri Lankan laws to initiate action on those engaged in illegal fishing.

“We have joined this protest to demand that our fishermen’s livelihoods are protected, and to demand that the Fisheries Minister initiate appropriate legal action against fishermen using the bottom trawling,” Mr. Sumanthiran told the media in Jaffna. Sri Lanka banned bottom trawling in 2017 and imposed hefty fines in 2018 to deter illegal fishing, which has been a recurring concern in the narrow Palk Strait running between northern Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu. The 2017 law banning trawlers was based on a Private Member’s Bill tabled by Mr. Sumanthiran in 2015.

The new law and stiff penalty saw a reduction in the number of Indian fishing vessels spotted in Sri Lankan waters briefly. It brought some relief to thousands of northern Sri Lankan fishermen whose post-war livelihoods were severely affected by the Indian trawlers ravaging their coastline. But the trawlers from India are back again in large numbers, according to northern fishermen, some of whom wrote to the Indian Consulate in Jaffna recently, seeking compensation.

While Indian fishermen, from Tamil Nadu, are repeatedly caught trespassing, the TNA has avoided a frontal challenge to Tamil Nadu on the issue, due to the solidarity extended by the state to Sri Lankan Tamils during the civil war years and after. The TNA rarely challenges India, seeing the country as an ally and arbiter in its call for a long-pending political solution from the Sri Lankan government.

Fragmented polity The largest grouping of Tamil legislators — with 10 seats in the 225-member Parliament — from the north and east, the TNA also faces criticism for “ignoring” its voters’ economic concerns. “As an Alliance they don’t show a shared understanding or clarity on our problem and how we ought to respond to it collectively and responsibly. Tamil politicians should not use our problem to settle scores between themselves.

That will only dilute our struggle,” said Annalingam Annarasa from the Federation of Jaffna District Fishermen’s Cooperative Society Unions. “We are neither supporting today’s protest, nor opposing it,” he said. For the northern fishing community, it is hard to turn away rare support coming their way. It is also difficult to antagonise the politically influential Fisheries Minister, a local MP, whose intervention they will need in resolving their crisis, fishermen observed.

Sri Lanka: Seafood exports swimming against Coronavirus tide to keep economy afloat

<https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-seafood-exports-swimming-against-coronavirus-tide-to-keep-economy-afloat-66392/>

"Sri Lanka seafood exports are seeing strong demand and higher prices during a global Coronavirus crisis though air freight rates have sky rocketed, as airlines are grounded worldwide,

an official said. “So, the good news is amongst COVID-19, the seafood industry has been able to operate, and the demand still seems to be decent, Prabash Subasinghe, Chairman of Sri Lanka's Export Development Board told an online forum organized by Advocata Institute, a Colombo-based think tank. You would be surprised when I tell you that even though Italy is in lockdown we still ship to Italy. Key seafood exports from Sri Lanka include fresh and frozen yellow fin tuna, shrimp, prawns and crabs.

The industry is valued around 300 million dollars. The main markets Sri Lanka are in Europe, US and Japan. Subasinghe is also Managing Director at Global Sea Foods, a Colombo-based export firm. “We export tuna in two main categories, one the fresh which is more expensive and is sold at 15-20 dollars a kilo, it's a little bit niche, but surprisingly still the demand for fresh has been strong, he said. “Even for frozen, which is mass in terms of the amount of people that would be buying, because it is about 6-7 dollars a kilo.

The government declared seafood as an essential service soon after nation-wide curfews started. “Being an essential service certainly helped and that also gave us the impetus to bring people to our factories, Subasinghe said. “There were mainly two issues with COVID-19, one we needed to get our factories operational, two due to social issues we also needed to get people to come and work in our factories. Subasinghe said the factories have been operational, fishermen have been fishing. “So, I would say for the last two weeks the industry holistically have been operating maybe about 25 percent compared to what we used to operate at. However, Sri Lanka's seafood industry is heavily dependent on airfreight.

The balance goes by reefer containers. “The rates are almost 300 percent of what we used to pay before plus that's been passed on the final buyers and they are willing to pay that, Subasinghe said. “There seems to be strong elasticity. “Even though the airport is closed, surprisingly there's been a sufficient amount of cargo planes have been coming to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka closed its airport for inbound passenger on the March 19 while emergency diversions, humanitarian flights, freighter operations, technical landings were allowed. Cathay Pacific had been flying all cargo aircraft and Qatar and Sri Lankan ferry flights to take passengers out.

New opportunities In seafood there will be a shift from fresh to frozen from Sri Lanka so moving from a 20-dollar product to 6-7-dollar product, he said. Globally, there was a demand side shock when the second Wave II of the novel coronavirus broke out and consumers scrambled to stock up on goods amidst curfews and lockdowns which resulted in empty shelves across the retail sector. The food service and retail have become more important now than ever with all the functions of a market (supply, demand and production) coming to a standstill.

“Fortunately, in this dark scenario in front of us, the seafood industry I would say going forward would do well, said Subasinghe. “There are several factories in Sri Lanka who are geared for the shift so that's the shift we will see in the sea food industry. Sri Lanka should also look at areas closer to home for markets, he said. “Historically our markets have been the US, Europe, Japan

mainly, but now the markets which are closer to us have been important such as Middle East, Singapore, Malaysia because demand for food has been quite strong from this area, he said.

“Lulu supermarkets in UAE had been sending their own planes to pick up food from Sri Lanka. The other factor the industry has benefitted from is order cancellations and payment delays. Sri Lanka's seafood exporters are working with smaller wholesalers who supply to retail chains such as Sainsbury, Tesco and Marks & Spencer who have been in operation. “Some companies have asked for little bit of grace, Subasinghe said. “But there hasn't been any discussions about not paying us or about any cancellations. “In frozen business, people have said they don't mind waiting for two weeks due to logistic issues.

Sri Lanka: Seaweed farming offers a boost for ‘blue economy’ ambitions

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/09/seaweed-farming-offers-a-boost-for-sri-lankas-blue-economy-ambitions/>

"In its territorial waters and exclusive economic zone, Sri Lanka is home to an abundance of coastal and marine resources. And while national policies and development visions already aim toward a blue economy, much of this natural wealth is currently not being used in a sustainable way or to its full potential, experts say. “Coastal fishing communities are vulnerable,” says Ruchira Cumaranatunga, a senior professor in the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture at the University of Ruhuna.

“There is a need to create or enhance alternative livelihoods in coastal areas of Sri Lanka. While helping coastal fishermen to sustain their fishery activities, they should be provided with additional sources of income. The best method for this would be to promote small- and medium-sized enterprises based on fish processing, utilization of fishery waste or trash fish, and seaweed farming. Women and school dropouts in fisher families could be involved in these SMEs.” The benefits of seaweed Seaweed farming in particular offers a pathway for developing the blue economy and creating sustainable livelihoods, proponents say. Globally, seaweed aquaculture is one of the fastest-growing components of food production, with 99% of production taking place in Asia.

If the sector is scaled up further, it could generate 500 million metric tons dry weight by 2050 and completely replace fishmeal and fish oil in animal feed, provide protein for humans, and save vast amounts of land and freshwater. There are many other ways in which seaweed is beneficial for humans, the environment, and the climate. The commercially valuable types of seaweeds are species of algae that generally fall into three groups: green algae (Chlorophyta spp.), red algae (Rhodophyta spp.), and brown algae (Phaeophyta spp.). The different species of seaweed have many uses, and farming them has a small environmental footprint, as they do not significantly alter the existing coastal environment or require fertilizer input, freshwater resources, or medicines.

“Seaweed species like *Ulva lactuca* [sea lettuce], *Caulerpa racemosa*, or *Caulerpa lentillifera* [sea grapes] are popular delicacies,” says Isuru U. Kariyawasam, a lecturer in the Department of Botany of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. “In addition, chemicals extracted from seaweeds can be widely used as nutraceuticals, pharmaceuticals, UV blockers, anti-cancer compounds, and many other applications.” Dilanthi Koralagama, a senior lecturer at the University of Ruhuna, says seaweed farming could provide inputs for the organic fertilizer industry as well.

“As some seaweeds and microalgae contain comparatively high percentages of nitrogen,” she says, “issues related to nitrogen content in organic manure can be solved up to an extent, which is not possible using terrestrial flora and fodder alone.” Seaweed can be grown rapidly and vertically, which makes efficient use of available water space and provides an opportunity to diversify the coastal blue economy. However, providing a sustainable source of income and employment for coastal communities is only one of the many benefits and opportunities that seaweed could provide.

“Seaweed farming can provide alternative livelihoods,” says Sarath Jayanatha, research officer at the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA). “Income generation is a major output of seaweed farming, but if it can be initiated on larger scales, seaweed could also be important to mitigate climate change.” Seaweed is highly versatile and useful when it comes to addressing the causes and impacts of climate change. On one hand, seaweed stores carbon dioxide, and can be used for biofuel generation, replacing inorganic fertilizer, or lowering methane emissions as cattle feed.

On the other hand, seaweed is an effective adaptation tool that can reduce wave energy and protect shorelines, improve water quality, and alleviate the local effects of ocean acidification and oxygen loss. Furthermore, seaweed can be used to clean up pollution in the marine and coastal environment by removing agricultural nutrient pollution. Such pollution is difficult to remove once it has entered the water, and seaweed is one of the few effective methods to address it. Seaweed farming in Sri Lanka “Currently, seaweed farming is only done on a small scale in Sri Lanka,” Cumararatunga says. “The seaweed is dried and exported without any value addition. Sri Lanka has a lot of living and non-living resources in the coastal belt, but at the moment, they are extracted and sold to other countries. Value addition within Sri Lanka could be a hugely important topic.”

Sri Lanka’s coastline abounds with seaweed species and habitats, for example along the southwest coast from Ambalangoda to Galle, or along the northern coastline near Jaffna, Palk Strait, and the Gulf of Mannar. “Seaweed farming or cultivation is a cheap, low-technology practice that requires little input and has been practiced in many Asian countries for decades or centuries,” Kariyawasam says. “However, in Sri Lanka, it is still in its infancy. We have many sheltered bays, lagoons and estuaries that could be used, but so far, no large-scale attempts have been made to establish seaweed mariculture in the country.”

If such large-scale attempts would be made and seaweed farming enhanced alongside the coastal sector and its blue economy, Kariyawasam says, it opens up a future of many possibilities: “Integrated Multitrophic Mariculture (IMM) systems are a very effective and sustainable method to culture seaweeds. Seaweed could be farmed in polycultures with shrimps and molluscs and even help to address problems of aquatic pollution and effluent water treatment for existing shrimp farms. Seaweed mariculture could also be integrated with sea cucumber farming to open up novel avenues for sustainable mariculture systems.” Koralagama highlights the economic potential: “Some seaweed species provide edible protein and are recommended as a dietary supplement.

Growing such seaweeds for export could bring foreign exchange into the country, as there is already a well-established market in developing countries. Challenges and perspectives for Sri Lanka Given all these benefits and applications, what is the potential for seaweed farming in Sri Lanka? If it is indeed a viable source of livelihoods that offers a range of co-benefits, why has it not been adopted at a larger scale yet? Jayanatha from NARA says many companies are trying to get subsidies through seaweed projects. “Therefore, many of these companies are not willing to invest their own money,” he adds.

“It is important to note that seaweed farming requires sufficient capital and proper technical know-how to be set up,” Koralagama says. “Therefore, support from the private sector is essential to scale up the seaweed industry in Sri Lanka.” Even with financial support, however, there are still barriers and challenges that have to be overcome, Kariyawasam said. “Some of the constraints to build a strong seaweed industry in Sri Lanka are lack of awareness and knowledge, lack of technology dissemination, lack of seed stocks, personal attitudes and lack of motivation among fishing communities, environmental fluctuations, and the short, seasonal lifecycles of certain seaweed species.

Sri Lanka had a solid seaweed market in the 1930s, but it was lost due to adulterations done by our people. Therefore, it is very important to make high export-quality stocks when improving the seaweed industry in Sri Lanka.” The scope to expand seaweed aquaculture is also limited by the availability of suitable areas, competition for these areas with other uses, the availability of engineering systems capable of coping with rough sea conditions, and market demand for seaweed products.

As the world increasingly becomes aware of the potential of a sustainable blue economy, investing in seaweed could provide many benefits for Sri Lanka, the experts say. In addition to providing a relatively cheap and low-technology option for economic diversification of coastal communities, they point out, seaweed farming also offers a range of use cases as well as serious co-benefits related to climate change mitigation, resilience, environmental protection, and pollution cleanup.

Sri Lanka: Several regulations for fisheries industry to be presented to parliament next week

http://www.adaderana.lk/news_intensedebate.php?nid=60279

"Nine regulations under the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act including the prohibition on disposal of industrial or domestic effluent directly or indirectly to Sri Lanka Waters will be taken up for debate in Parliament on 21st January 2020. These regulations include a number of directives to protect fish and aquatic resources in the Sri Lankan waters.

Accordingly regulations related to disposal of any pollutant, waste or foreign matter and fill or reclaim the sea areas in a manner causing destruction to fish and aquatic resources in Sri Lanka waters, engagement in removing, cutting or altering mangrove eco systems grown in the coastal belt or in any area adjacent to the Sri Lanka Waters, engagement in any activity which causes a threat to the conservation of fish species in Sri Lanka Waters or coastal belt adjacent to it, will be presented to the parliament.

Engagement in any fishing operation using spear guns or hand held spears within Sri Lanka Waters and possession, or having on board any local fishing boat, any spear gun will be prohibited, a statement said. Also catching, possession, transportation, purchasing, displaying for sale, selling or exportation the fish species Thambuwa, (*cephalopholis sonnerati*) within Sri Lanka or Sri Lanka Waters will be prohibited.

There are also regulations pertaining to export of fishery products, import and re-export of fish and fishery products, registration for export, import and re-export of fish or fisheries, inspection of import and fish processing establishment for export or re-export of fishery products. The Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Douglas Devananda will present the regulations to the Parliament in terms of the provisions of the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act No. 2 of 1996.

Sri Lanka: Shark fishing bans partially effective

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2020-12/uoe-sfb121620.php

"Bans on shark fishing are only partially effective in protecting sharks, new research suggests. Scientists from the University of Exeter, international conservation charity ZSL (Zoological Society of London) and Sri Lankan NGO Oceanswell examined the effects of a blanket ban on landing thresher sharks, brought in by the Sri Lankan government in 2012. Information gathered from local fishers suggests the ban has stopped targeted fishing for the sharks - but persistent ""bycatch"" (accidental catching) continues.

The study also found that bycatch appears to be widely unrecorded, partly due to ""mistrust and confusion"" amongst fishers. ""Sri Lanka's long-standing ban offers us an opportunity to assess

the impacts of bans, which are increasingly being implemented globally to protect sharks," said lead author Claire Collins, of the University of Exeter and ZSL's Institute of Zoology. "The ban has almost completely halted targeted fishing for these sharks, so in this sense it has been very successful."

"However, continued bycatch is a problem not only because of the direct impact on this vulnerable species, but also because it makes it tempting for fishers to get round the ban. "Because it is easy to conceal threshers as other shark species, by cutting fins off before landing, fishers can sell them easily and the ban can be hard for authorities to enforce. "Without addressing continued bycatch, there's always going to be a temptation to land these sharks - especially because in Sri Lanka there is a strong market for shark meat as well as fins."

The study does not address ways to reduce bycatch, but methods could include local fishing bans in areas known for sharks, modifying fishing gear, and reducing the time gear is left in the water so sharks caught by accident have a higher chance of being freed before they die. Oceanswell researchers gathered data from fishers over a ten-month period last year. Despite many fishers reporting feeling disengaged with authorities in advance of the ban, compliance with it was very high among communities that used to rely on threshers for their livelihoods.

The study notes "unequal" impacts of the ban. Unsurprisingly, fishers involved in targeted shark fishing were affected most severely, and the researchers say such impacts should be mitigated whenever possible. Dr Ana Nuno, senior author of the paper, based at University of Exeter and NOVA University Lisbon (Portugal), added: "If we want conservation and fisheries policies to work, we need to get much better at understanding how they might impact resource users and take that into account during policy design. "That's key to implementing robust policies that deliver positive outcomes for people and biodiversity."

Sri Lanka: SL to meet 90% yellowfin tuna fish quota for EU

<https://www.nation.lk/online/sl-to-meet-90-yellowfin-tuna-fish-quota-for-eu-44924.html>

"State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish and Prawn Farming, Fishery Harbour Development, Multi-day Fishing Activities, and Fish Exports Kanchana Wijesekera. Having being given a yellowfin tuna fish quota of 5,600 tonnes for the year 2021 by the European Union, the State Ministry of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish and Prawn Farming, Fishery Harbour Development, Multi-day Fishing Activities, and Fish Exports is planning to export about 90% of that quota to European markets this year.

Speaking to The Morning, subject State Minister Kanchana Wijesekera stated that fish exports usually do not have an assigned annual target. However, the industry is planning to achieve the aforementioned target this year. The State Minister highlighted that Sri Lanka's main fish export market is Europe. "Due to the global pandemic of Covid-19, Europe has been under lockdown

for most of last year. This resulted in the demand for Sri Lankan fish exports decreasing from the foreign consumer base and European restaurants in 2020,” he added.

In addition to this, other effects of the global pandemic of Covid-19 on the Sri Lankan fish export industry included a decrease in production and increase in trade costs in relation to airport restrictions which resulted in a decrease in export value as well. Wijesekera explained that due to the first and second clusters of the global pandemic, Covid-19, in Sri Lanka, especially with regard to the Peliyagoda cluster that occurred last year, most of the fishermen and their associates were quarantined. Thereby, the harvest that was arriving from the vessels that were out at sea could not be collected due to the quarantine.

Also, the decrease in demand of Sri Lankan seafood and fish exports influenced fishermen to be reluctant to go back into the ocean. Secondly, the airport restrictions that were initiated because of the pandemic influenced a rise in trade costs for seafood and fish exports in the country, leading to a decrease in export revenue with regard to increased costs. Wijesekera mentioned that the Ministry is currently having negotiations with SriLankan Airlines to lower their trade cost in order to resolve this issue.

Furthermore, the local market was reported to have an estimate of 40% decrease in demand last year. However, State Minister Wijesekera highlighted that the demand in the local market stabilised to the point that was present in 2019 prior to the pandemic. In addition to this, there was also a sharp decrease in foreign imports of dry fish, canned fish, and food fish last year (2020) compared to 2019.

Commenting on production targets and foreign imports, State Minister Wijesekera said: “We have made plans for productions for about 450,000 metric tonnes per year which is coming from the ocean resources. We import about 90,000 metric tonnes annually and we also import canned fish and dry fish for another 70,000. So our requirement is about 650,000 metric tonnes. Thus, we have identified the substitutes for imports.

Basically, the 90,000 dry fish and food fish that are being imported, we have identified to substitute that from the inland fisheries sections of dry fish and also food fish.” He added: “The canning requirement is about 250,000 cans per day, and our capacity that we were going at in the local market was 30,000 worth of local production. However, we have increased that to about 200,000 last month in canning from our requirement.

Our target is to achieve the 250,000 that we have in the local market through local production.” Moreover, the State Minister also mentioned an investment in swan farming that is going to be involved in the export production targets. Additionally, Wijesekera highlighted the increased taxes on imports and the tax rate for local producers with regard to the five-year tax rate for the fisheries sector that the Government recently announced.

This was followed by the Ministry's aim to replace 70% of foreign imports by local production even though there are some foreign fish imports that the local producers are unable to replace. Moreover, the Minister noted that Mazda and other companies are working together on introducing new technology and hygienic methods. Furthermore, the technology that is going to be introduced would involve solar powered dryers which would be given to community-based associations along with 100 units of storage facilities and cool room facilities to store stocks.

Sri Lanka: SLNS Samudura continues to provide fuel to distressed fishing trawlers at sea

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/May25_1590419972CH.php

"Sri Lanka Navy Ship SLNS Samudura is assisting the multi-day fishing vessels that were washed-away to Indonesian seas as a result of the recent cyclonic storm Amphan to return to the island. The multi-day fishing vessels, under the supervision of SLNS Samudura, are returning to the island and are about 375 nautical miles off the coast, the Navy Media Unit said.

SLNS Samudura is continuing to provide food, water, medical aid to the fishermen onboard of the 16 distressed boats and the fuel to make the return journey. Earlier it was reported that about 180 fishermen from Galle and Hambanthota districts are on board 30 ships that got swept away into the Indonesian seas. Further, SLNS Samudura is also closely monitoring all of these vessels and will continue to provide necessary facilities to these fishing trawlers until they are safely escorted to land.

Sri Lanka: SLYG and BAFF are to replicate in the north of Sri Lanka their successful boat-building and marine training project for youth

<https://www.ft.lk/business/Sail-Lanka-Yachting-Group-to-replicate-successful-marine-training-project-in-the-North/34-729254>

"Sail Lanka Yachting Group (SLYG) and Building a Future Foundation (BAFF) are to replicate in the north of Sri Lanka their successful boat-building and marine training project for youth. Following the recent inauguration of the project in Velanai in the Jaffna district, SLYG Chairman Pierre Pringiers said: "Our idea is to replicate in the north of Sri Lanka, the successful 'Building a Future Foundation' project which we developed in the south of Sri Lanka to assist the local economies, following the devastating tsunami of 2004.

BAFF has already created hundreds of employment opportunities for young people in the yachting industry in the south of the island, and we hope to replicate this in Jaffna. Twelve youth from the North have already followed a theoretical and practical training course of 12 months duration at the BAFF training centre in southern Sri Lanka." The project was inaugurated with Minister of Fisheries Douglas Devananda as Chief Guest and in the presence of several

distinguished guests. It has the blessings of the Governor of the Northern Province Jeevan Thiagarajah.

“We believe Jaffna has the potential to be our new hub for marine and experiential tourism. It will become our third centre of operations after Mirissa and the Port City Colombo Marina, and will allow us to develop local and cross-border tourism. The 540-square-metre new SLYG training centre and boatyard is situated on a 4.5-acre land in Velanai.” The Jaffna training centre will conduct courses in the basic skills of mechanical engineering, electricity, welding, refrigeration and air-conditioning, followed by hands-on experience in dedicated boat building, and outboard and inboard engine repair and maintenance.

The courses, which will be conducted over one year, will comprise a mixture of theory and practical training to enable the graduates to work in the developing boat manufacturing industry in Sri Lanka. The practical training will be in the manufacture of yachts such as the Ocean Diamond – an 80-foot floating boutique hotel – and the Ceycat – a 55-foot sailing catamaran for water-based tourism – both in Sri Lanka and overseas.

“We are aiming to bring Jaffna closer to Colombo by developing cruises to connect the Port City Colombo Marina and Jaffna, so that it becomes our new hub for water-based tourism and marine tourism in the North, and eventually cross-border tourism as well,” Pringiers continued. “We plan to develop ferry boats with the Ceylon Shipping Corporation to be initially used locally, followed by commercial versions and boats for cross-border sailing in the future.” Sail Lanka Charter – a SLYG company – has for several years been offering cruises around the islands off Jaffna from October to April. These cruises are in addition to other cruises offered in the seas off the south coast, east coast and west coast of the island.

Passengers have the option of snorkelling and enjoying the beauty of underwater marine life including corals; swimming in the middle of the sea; sunning on the deck and even fishing for their own meals. All this is done under the careful supervision of qualified and skilled mariners with an emphasis on safety. Many of them are youth who have received training under the BAFF programs. “The yachts operated by Sail Lanka are mainly designed and built in Sri Lanka by our sister companies, BAFF Polymech Ltd. and Solar Impulse,” Pringiers added.

“Wind and solar power are the main sources of energy that power the fleet. Sail Lanka employees are trained and educated in-house. They receive training in sailing skills, yacht maintenance, technical repair skills, sailing related sales and marketing, and operational and administrative skills. “Building a Future Foundation, which initiated the creation of Sail Lanka, facilitates local youth to develop and improve their talents and skills in a number of sailing related activities while respecting and preserving their environment.

“The new boatyard and marine training centre opened by SLYG and BAFF in Jaffna will provide boat-building training for up to 100 Tamil youth with an opportunity to develop new livelihood skills,” the founder of Sail Lanka and BAFF Co-founder said. “The training is totally free, and

all students will also be provided free breakfast, lunch, safety equipment and a daily allowance,” Pringiers explained. Once they complete the training, they will be offered both NAITA (National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority) and BAFF certificates, which are valid locally and internationally.”

Sri Lanka: Small boats given permission to engage in fishing activities as weather improves

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/May25_1590381779CH.php

"The Department of Fisheries has decided to permit small scale fishing boats to engage in fishing activities for small fishermen from today (25). The Fisheries Department further stated that measures will be taken to provide the relevant permits through the Regional Fisheries Offices. The Fisheries Department has decided not to grant permission for small fishing vessels to venture into the sea due to the recent adverse weather conditions.

The Department has decided to grant permission for fishing activities as the weather conditions have recovered to a certain extent. However, the Meteorology Department cautioned that the deep and shallow sea areas off the coast extending from Puttalam to Kankasanthurai via Mannar and from Matara to Pottuvil via Hambantota can be rough at times. The other sea areas around the island can be fairly rough at times. Naval and fishing communities are requested to be vigilant in this regards as strong gusty winds (up to 70-80 kmph) and very rough seas can be expected temporarily during thundershowers.

Sri Lanka: Small fishermen increasingly threatened by the pandemic

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Small-fishermen-increasingly-threatened-by-the-pandemic-51665.html>

"Colombo (AsiaNews) – Sri Lanka's small fishermen are losing their fishing grounds and are at risk of losing their fundamental right to life and sustenance, warned Herman Kumara, coordinator of the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO), last Saturday, 21 November, World Fisheries Day. To mark the event, NAFSO held a national meeting online. Working with of 17 other organisations, meetings were also held in person at the district level with a maximum of 30 people present.

Discussions centred on issues such as the national policy on inland reservoir fisheries, the social and economic situation of fisherwomen and the impact of the ""blue economy"" on the lives of small fishermen. Fishing is a key sector in Sri Lanka. Some 175,000 people depend on small-scale coastal fishing. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a major blow for them. To help the sector, Kumara has urged fellow Sri Lankans to eat fish and not believe rumours that it is contagious.

Speaking to AsiaNews, he said that the fishing community is not responsible for the second wave of infections; instead, the government is to blame for not enforcing quarantine measures to please their henchmen. The activist also slammed plans by international institutions to exploit fish resources under the slogan of the blue economy, the sustainable use of marine resources to support economic growth. ""They will devastate the environment and the lives of fishermen even more, removing them from their native lands and dispossessing them of their assets.

To protect small-scale fishermen, Kumara wants the government to fully implement FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries, which were drafted with the contribution of organisations like NAFSO. Based on this document, Sri Lanka adopted a law in 2018 to protect local fishermen from the activities of Indian competitors. "We are now working with the authorities and trade unions to ratify the ILO (International Labour Organisation) Work in Fishing Convention, said Kumara. For him, this tool can provide security to Sri Lankan fishermen.

Sri Lanka: Solution to poaching in Lankan waters: Contradictory statements from Fisheries Minister

<https://island.lk/solution-to-poaching-in-lankan-waters-contradictory-statements-from-fisheries-minister/>

"Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda on Wednesday (7) contradicted a statement attributed to him regarding the continuing crisis over the Indian fishing fleet invading Sri Lankan waters. The Fisheries Ministry quoted the EPDP leader Devananda as having told fisheries sector trade unions, at separate meetings held at his ministry that the Indian fishing fleet would be prevented from entering Sri Lankan waters before the end of 2021. Trade union representatives were accompanied by former lawmaker Nihal Galappaththi.

The assurance was given in the wake of fisheries trade unions complaining about Indian poaching and continuing harassment of Sri Lankan trawlers by the Indian Coast Guard when entering the Arabian sea via the Indian Ocean. Minister Devananda explained steps taken by him to bring the situation under control. Claiming that he had held more than four rounds of talks with India, Minister Devananda said the talks meant to reach a consensus in that regard were continuing.

Pointing out that the northern fishing community had been the worst affected due to unbridled Indian poaching, Minister Devananda said that the impact would be devastating. The Minister said that during his visit to New Delhi with Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa last year, they had reached a consensus with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in that regard. However, it had not been possible to implement what was agreed upon due to outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. Minister assured that once the ongoing Indian elections were over, he would seek

Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena's assistance having received instructions from President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Premier Mahinda Rajapaksa to address the long-standing issue.

The minister said that pending finalisation of the proposed solution, illegal bottom-trawling had been prohibited and the Navy issued instructions to arrest those violating Sri Lankan waters. However, a week ago, Minister Devananda said that he proposed to introduce a licence system under which Indian fishermen would be allowed to catch fish in the northern waters.

They would be able to engage in fishing under tough conditions and controls, the former militant said. In a statement issued by the ministry, the EPDP leader was quoted as having said that Sri Lanka could collect substantial revenue by issuing licenses to Indian fishermen and the project could be implemented under the supervision of the Navy.

Sri Lanka: Special plan rolled out for fisheries industry amidst COVID-19

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2020/10/26/special-plan-rolled-out-for-fisheries-industry-amidst-covid-19/>

"Authorities have rolled out a special plan to allow fish stocks in harbours shut due to COVID-19 fears, to be directed to the market. "We hope to continue operations in all 21 fishing harbours in Sri Lanka under certain limitations, state fisheries minister Kanchana Wijesekera said.

He noted that retail sale of fish would be halted and that wholesale trading would only be allowed to take place, upon the request of health authorities. "Fishermen will be allowed to go to sea if they do not display symptoms of an illness, if they have undergone PCR tests, and if they are not contacts of the Peliyagoda fish market cluster, Wijesekera noted.

Sri Lanka: Steps will be taken soon to fully meet the local demand for canned fish: State Minister

<https://www.nation.lk/online/steps-will-be-taken-soon-to-fully-meet-the-local-demand-for-canned-fish-state-minister-91155.html>

"Steps are being taken to meet the local demand for canned fish in Sri Lanka, stated the State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera today (10). With two new facilities in the pipeline, the canned fish requirement in Sri Lanka will be met through local manufacture, stated the State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera. He stated that Sri Lanka's canned fish requirement is about 250,000 cans per day.

However, only 60,000 cans per day were produced locally a few months ago. Due to the encouragement and provision of facilities by the relevant manufacturers over the past few months, the capacity to produce 220,000 locally has been increased and two more factories will

be able to produce 350,000 cans per day in the next six months, the Minister said. Meanwhile, the government is ready to provide canned fish at a concessionary price after discussions with the Cooperative Wholesale Establishment (CWE).

“Today they produce 220,000 cans per day. With two new facilities in the pipeline 350,000 will be reached in 6 months. I met them today to discuss the plans for the industry,” MP Kanchana Wijesekara told the Morning today (10). However, he stated that local Production is still not enough to be self sufficient. “There are three reasons for this shortage. One is the arsenic factor in imported cans, which spoils the contents so that 90% containers have been sent back in last four months. One other reason is the panic buying due to the lockdown for COVID-19.

People were afraid that they would not be able to obtain seafood. Meanwhile, increased buying by organizations distributing food packs has also increased local demand,” he said. A meeting was held at the Ministry of Fisheries today with local canned fish manufacturers to meet the demand for canned fish in the market and to provide canned fish at concessionary prices through CWE outlets.

Sri Lanka: Support from the Canadian Government to uplift Sri Lanka’s inland fisheries industry

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/Jan23_1579760769CH.php

"The Canadian government has agreed to further enhance Sri Lanka's inland freshwater fisheries industry, state media reported. The support to uplift the inland fisheries industry was announced during a meeting held between Minister Douglas Devananda and Canadian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka David McKinnon yesterday at the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Already the Canadian government has made technical and financial contributions to boost the fisheries industry in the country and Minister Douglas Devananda has expressed appreciation to the Canadian government for the assistance.

The Minister also welcomed the contribution made by the Government of Canada to bolster self-employment of women and demining activities in the Northern Province. The Canadian High Commissioner has assured continued support needed to uplift the fisheries community in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka: Tax on imported fish raised to boost the local fishing industry and protect fishermen

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/Mar04_1583294482CH.php

"As a measure to protect local fishermen and boost the fisheries industry, the Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in his capacity as Minister of Finance, has decided to increase the special commodity levy on imported fish from midnight Tuesday (03). The Minister of Finance has taken this step in response to a request by the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Ministry heeding to the requests by the fishermen.

Accordingly, from midnight last night the tax for a kilo of imported fish will be ten percent of the value or 150 rupees. Previously the tax for a kilo of imported fish was ten percent of the value or 25 rupees after giving 100 rupees concession.

Sri Lanka: The Fisheries Corporation has purchased fish stocks worth Rs. 650 million from the fishermen

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2020/04/22/local/217009/fisheries-corp-buys-fish-worth-rs650-m>

"The Fisheries Corporation has purchased fish stocks worth Rs. 650 million from the fishermen who were unable to find a market for their harvest due to the Covid 19 outbreak in the country. The Corporation started buying the fish harvest brought from multiday fish trawlers on the directive of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Minister Douglas Devananda.

Arrangements have been made to distribute these fish stocks to all parts of the country enabling the consumers to purchase fish at a fair rate under the close supervision of Corporation Chairman and retired Major General L Davulugala. The Cabinet of Ministers recently set apart Rs. 600 million for the purchase of fish harvest brought to the shore by fishermen as the fishermen faced difficulty in selling their harvest during the curfew.

Corporation Senior officials told the Daily News, that fishermen had to sell their fish harvest at a very low rate before the Corporation started purchasing the fish stock. Now fishermen can sell their fish stocks at a fair rate after the corporation started buying their harvest.

Sri Lanka: The government decides to buy all the fish harvest

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20B/Oct28_1603897849CH.php

"The government has decided to buy all stocks of fish held by fishermen that cannot be sold due to the spread of the coronavirus within the next four days. With the emergence of a Corona cluster in the Peliyagoda fish market After the Minuwangoda Corona cluster, problems arose to sell the fish harvest.

One of the reasons for this was the temporary suspension of fishing activities in the main fisheries harbors. The State Minister of Multi-Day Fisheries and Fisheries Exports stated that the stocks of fish purchased in this manner will be used for canned fish production in the future.

The Beruwala fishing harbor, which was closed after encountering infected people in the Peliyagoda corona cluster, was reopened yesterday after six days. However, a date for the reopening of the Peliyagoda fish market has not yet been announced.

Sri Lanka: The X-Press Pearl disaster and the imperative for regional maritime cooperation

<https://island.lk/the-x-press-pearl-disaster-and-the-imperative-for-regional-maritime-cooperation/>

"On 20 May 2021, Sri Lanka's worst-ever marine disaster occurred when a fire erupted on the Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl container ship just 18 km Northwest of Colombo. While the long-term cost is yet to be determined, the negative impact on industries such as fisheries and tourism, and people who rely on the coastal resources of Sri Lanka is already apparent. This article examines the key consequences of this disaster on Sri Lanka's coastal economy and highlights the need to enhance regional maritime cooperation to prevent the recurrence of such disasters.

Impact on Fisheries and Fishing Activities: The fisheries industry is an important sub-sector of the Sri Lankan economy; it accounts for 1.3% of GDP at current prices, exhibited a growth rate of 9.9% and accounted for 1.5% of export earnings in 2019. It is also a source of many direct and indirect employment opportunities from fishing to processing, distributing and trade and boat-building and maintenance. Approximately 583,000 individuals are employed in this industry and there is a supporting workforce of 2.7 million. It is also crucial to note that fish contributes more than 60% of all animal protein consumed in Sri Lanka and is the main source of protein for low-income groups.

However, following the fire and the consequent spill of nitric acid and plastic pellets into the sea and nearby coast, fishing was temporarily banned along an 80 km stretch of the coast. The effect on the local community has been stark, with some estimates claiming that around 16,000 fishers were affected. The X-Press Pearl fire, which disrupted the fisheries supply chain, from fishers to processors to wholesale and retail traders, made the fishing community more susceptible to the structural economic and social inequality they already faced.

The coastal fishing community, one of the three sub-sectors of the fisheries sector of Sri Lanka, is the most vulnerable as they are daily income earners. The loss of even a single day's income severely affects the ability of a fisher's family to meet their basic needs. Furthermore, for most involved in this industry, there are no alternative means of income. Of the LKR 720 million compensation received by the government, LKR 420 million has been set aside for the fishing community affected by the fire and fixed prices have been set for fishing gear and equipment in consultation with relevant businessmen.

But it is important to understand the context in which this marine disaster occurred: the fisheries industry was already severely impacted by the pandemic. Islandwide curfews, cross-border mobility restrictions and trade regulations led to various constraints on access to necessary equipment and markets. Ecological Impact and Tourism Sri Lanka's coastal tourism is heavily dependent on its rich marine biodiversity. The plastic waste and potential oil spills from the ship threaten not only the beaches and seas which are home to sensitive ecosystems such as lagoons and coral reefs but also its marine life.

The Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA), the main government body responsible for marine pollution, has stated that the plastic waste from the ship has probably caused the “worst beach pollution in our history,” and will lead to years of ecological damage. For example, the marine pollution caused by the fire is responsible for the death of 200 marine animals — including 176 sea turtles, 20 dolphins and four whales— as of now. Plastic pellets, which are easily carried by the tide, attract toxins from the water and can cause death if ingested by marine life, have washed ashore from Puttalam to Matara. Despite various efforts such as beach cleanups, the attempt to restore the coast is ongoing.

The coast has lost much of its former beauty and attraction, and out of 15 tourist zones, eight have been affected by the fire. Furthermore, the damage caused to fish breeding areas will result in lesser yields of crabs and jumbo prawns, which are especially consumed by foreign tourists. The fear of contamination and reduced supply of these items will have an immediate financial impact on the coastal economy. There is also the fear that toxic chemicals will damage the coral reef which takes years to regenerate.

This depletion and ruin of coastal resources will have a spillover effect on both the fishing community and tourism leading to a mid-to-long-term economic impact. This is not the first ship fire or oil spill that has occurred in Sri Lankan waters, with the MT New Diamond ship fire in 2020 being one of the most significant. Sri Lanka's position in the middle of many sea and trade routes in the Indian Ocean, where around 200 to 300 ships —mainly oil tankers from the Persian Gulf to East Asia—pass daily, makes the country especially vulnerable to marine accidents.

Moving Forward: The X-Press Pearl fire was controlled only after Sri Lanka received emergency support from India, and this clearly highlights the inadequacies of current institutions to handle a crisis of this scale. While Sri Lanka does have a domestic structure in place to prevent and manage marine pollution, it is crucial that the country works closely with others in the region to achieve the same. Currently, the MEPA has the authority to implement the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCOP) which allows the mobilisation of support from the navy, coastguard and the Sri Lanka Ports Authority.

However, the emergency response system is too reliant on reactive responses as opposed to more proactive approaches, which aim to not minimise the damage caused by marine pollution but to prevent it from occurring. This requires continuous monitoring of waters and heightened

scrutiny, especially given that Sri Lanka is on a trajectory to become a maritime hub and expand its port capacity. Sri Lanka can achieve this only through regional cooperation —with countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh— that is based on the facilitation of knowledge, resource sharing, constant communication channels and the formulation of standardised security measures for responders.

However, this must occur through a formal, binding mechanism for otherwise, any assistance provided will be purely voluntary and context dependent. For example, requests made to offload the cargo at the Hazira port in India were denied which ultimately led to the X-Press Pearl fire on Sri Lankan waters. Given that the increase in maritime traffic has not led to a proportional increase in response capacities in countries such as Sri Lanka, official regional cooperation is key in preventing marine accidents and protecting shared waters.

Sri Lanka: To construct a playground at Kadolkele mangrove in the Negombo lagoon

http://www.dailymirror.lk/print/front_page/Construction-of-playground-at-Kadolkele-mangrove-I-will-proceed-with-the-project-whatsoever-Sanath/238-183091

"State Minister of Inland Fisheries Industry, Sanath Nishantha Perera said last Tuesday that he would proceed with the project to construct a playground at Kadolkele mangrove in the Negombo lagoon despite objection from the Gampaha District Wildlife Officer. He told a news conference that the Rs.1000 million project which involved dredging the Negombo lagoon, constructing a playground, roads, bridges and several other programmes had been delayed from 2014 as the Wildlife Department had not supported the initiative.

“I will proceed with the project without cutting down any tree in the mangrove. Rs.1 billion has been allocated for the project of which only Rs.300 million had been spent. None can obstruct the government's development projects. State officials have been able to act firm like what happened in the case of the Gampaha District Wildlife Officer because there is a President like Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Relevant officials should act carefully when dealing with the fishing community considering their education and background.

The Gampaha District Wildlife Officer escaped unhurt as I was there, he said. The press briefing was convened after a video containing the footage of the discussion in which several residents in the area verbally clashed with the forest officer asking her to allow the construction of the playground went viral on social media.

The proposal to construct the playground had been withdrawn following the strong stance taken by Gampaha District Forest Officer Devani Jayathilaka at a meeting chaired by State Minister of Inland Fisheries Industry Sanath Nishantha Perera last Monday.

Sri Lanka: To fix transponders to monitor 4,200 ocean going boats

<https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-to-fix-transponders-to-monitor-4200-ocean-going-boats-82588/>

"Sri Lanka will fix transponders in 4,200 multi-day ocean going boats to track them through a vessel monitoring system, using a grant from Australia, which has been trying to stop boat people from migrating informally. The cabinet had cleared the procurement of the equipment by International Organization on Migrants utilizing a grant of Australian Dollars 5.38 million granted by the Home Affairs Department of Australia, the government said. In 2015 Sri Lanka had fixed transponders in 1,250 tuna boats under Indian Ocean Tuna Commission rules.

"Apart from those vessels those equipment should be affixed to another 4200 such multi – day fishing vessels," the statement said. Sri Lanka began a satellite based vessel monitoring system shortly after the European Union slapped a fish import ban.

Sri Lanka: To see record fisheries export revenue this year: official

http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2021-12/22/content_77946970.htm

"Export revenue from Sri Lanka's fisheries sector is on track to reach a record high in 2021, State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera said. The state minister said on Twitter on Monday that Sri Lanka's fisheries exports amounted to 287 million U.S. dollars by the end of November. Local media reported that the figure marked an increase of 33.5 percent from the fisheries export revenue of 215 million U.S. dollars for the whole year of 2020.

According to Wijesekera, the export revenue growth was led by the export of prawns which has increased by 181 percent compared to the same period last year. Data from the fisheries ministry showed that Sri Lanka's balance of fish trade has recorded a surplus of 170.98 million U.S. dollars by the end of November, largely as a result of a 68-percent reduction in the import of canned fish in a push for self-sufficiency. The main markets for Sri Lanka's edible fish products are the European Union (EU) and the United States.

Sri Lanka: To strengthen security to block Indian fishermen

<https://menafn.com/1100772339/Sri-Lanka-to-strengthen-security-to-block-Indian-fishermen>

"Sri Lanka is to strengthen security in the Northern seas to block Indian fishermen from poaching in Sri Lankan waters. Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Parliamentarian Charles Nirmalanathan raised concerns in Parliament today of an increase in poaching by Indian fishermen. He said that fishermen in the North have demanded action against Indian fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters.

Responding to his concerns, State Minister of Fisheries Kanchana Wijesekera told Parliament that he is also aware of an increase in poaching by Indians these days. He said that with the coronavirus pandemic there had been a concern as to where Indians will be detained if they are arrested.

The State Minister also said that with the Navy focused a lot on the oil tanker on fire near Sri Lanka, there is very little focus on Indian fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters. However, he said that he had discussed the matter with the Navy and security will now be strengthened in the Northern seas to prevent poaching by the Indians.

Sri Lanka: Tons of toxic cargo: How a fire aboard a container ship has caused one of the worst environmental disasters country has ever seen

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2021/sri-lanka-cargo-ship-fire-pollution/>

"The waters off Sri Lanka's capital of Colombo seem calmer now, more than two weeks after a blazing 610-foot container ship lit up the coastline. Most of the X-Press Pearl, a four-month-old Singapore-flagged container ship, has settled on the bottom of the sea. But the ocean has already begun to tell its own story. Lifeless fish are washing up on Sri Lanka's sands, plastic pellets lodged in their gills. Those pellets have also covered picturesque beaches, lapped ashore by the waves. Dead turtles and birds have been reported on the coast as well, although the connection to the ship is still being investigated. Satellite imagery released last week showed discolored water near the site of the disaster that some feared indicated an oil spill.

On June 12, X-Press Feeders, the company that owns the ship, shared in a news statement that a "gray sheen" was observed emanating from the vessel but that there were no confirmed reports of fuel oil pollution. The government has not officially reported an oil spill. A spokesperson for the Sri Lankan navy, which has been investigating the site, told The Washington Post that "samples are being tested to ascertain the composition of the slick." Experts say the catastrophic effects of the disaster are only beginning to take hold. The ship's cargo, now partly on the ocean floor, contains toxic chemicals and harmful items that could devastate Sri Lanka's marine wildlife, as well as its fishing communities.

To better understand how this happened and the potential effect on Sri Lanka's environment and economy, The Post mapped the ship's path, had experts analyze its cargo, geo-located photos and videos of the debris on the country's shores, and acquired models of the extent of its spread. The analysis shows the impact on Sri Lanka's western coastline and the potential of further environmental damage that some experts worry will take years to repair. Aboard the ship were nearly 1,500 containers, dozens of which contained dangerous goods, including nitric acid, sodium methoxide and methanol.

In addition to the chemicals, the small plastic pellets pose a danger to marine life. “It’s very close to a nuclear disaster, what has happened here,” said Muditha Katuwawala, a coordinator at the Pearl Protectors, a volunteer organization committed to protecting Sri Lanka’s marine life. “This is not a problem just in Sri Lanka. In the coming weeks, this is going to be a regional problem.” According to X-Press Feeders, the ship “reported smoke from the cargo hold” near the port of Colombo on May 20. The next day, the ship reported a fire on deck. Sri Lanka’s government activated firefighting tugs and a helicopter to battle the blaze. One day later, an explosion was heard on the X-Press Pearl. Satellite imagery captured May 22, the day of the explosion, shows the fire and smoke rising from the ship.

On May 25, five days after the first signs of smoke, another explosion was heard. The X-Press Pearl’s crew and a firefighting team that had been brought on board were evacuated. On June 2, the ship started to sink, ultimately hitting the ocean floor 68 feet below. As of Tuesday, 25 days after the fire began, the vessel remains at sea, raising concerns among environmentalists about the possibility that oil and other dangerous chemicals might leak into the ocean. It is still unclear what caused the fire, but Andrew Leahy, a spokesman for X-Press Feeders, said a leaking container of nitric acid — a compound used to make fertilizer and plastic — is “one of the many aspects in the lead-up to the fire which is now under investigation.”

The company said the ship’s crew applied to the ports in Hamad, Qatar, and Hazira, India, to offload the leaking container, but the ports denied the requests because they said they did not have experts available to handle the container. The Post contacted both ports for comment but did not receive a response. Close to 1,500 containers were aboard the ship. According to X-Press Feeders, 81 of them contained dangerous goods, including 25 metric tons of nitric acid. The Post obtained a copy of the manifest for the ship, which details all of the cargo on board. The company’s spokesman declined to comment on the document.

The Post verified its contents by tracing serial numbers of the cargo containers back to the X-Press Pearl through various shipping company websites. The Sri Lankan navy, whose divers have been inspecting the disaster site, said June 6 that “no abnormality” had been observed in the water. But scientists who focus on the region fear that if the chemicals seep into the ocean, they could leave a delicate marine ecosystem in distress.

“Many chemicals easily react with water,” said Dureshika Markovich, a California-based biochemist who works in a lab that handles toxic chemicals. Ajantha Perera, a Sri Lankan environmental activist and scientist, said that any change to the pH of the water could alter sensitive algae, which in turn could kill parts of the coral reef that would push fish away from the area if there is no longer a food source for them. “It could become a dead region,” Perera said. “Because once the coral reef is gone, then the fishery would also go down. So we are looking at years, if ever, for regeneration.”

Although not themselves toxic, the plastic pellets, known as nurdles, can strangle small sea creatures. When scattered on sandy beaches, they can cause the temperature of the ground to rise, affecting the incubation of turtle eggs. “The most long-lasting event and widespread for the region is definitely the plastic,” said Charitha Pattiaratchi, a professor at the University of Western Australia’s Ocean Institute. “They are in the ocean forever,” he added. Nurdles have been recorded on a stretch of about 230 miles along the western coast of Sri Lanka, according to data obtained from a nurdle tracker run by the marine conservation research and education organization Oceanswell, which uses crowdsourced data to identify the spread of pellets along Sri Lanka’s beaches. The pollution isn’t constrained only to the beaches.

A computer model by Pattiaratchi at the University of Western Australia shows where the plastic pellets have most likely spread and where they will continue to spread based on ocean currents, wind speeds and ocean density changes. The Post re-created a model to show the potential extent of the nurdles based on data collected from Pattiaratchi’s team. Herman Kumara, head of Sri Lanka’s National Fisheries Solidarity Movement, said the disaster will be damaging to both the marine life and the people who depend on it, as the government banned some fishermen from going out to sea.

“The area where the ship burnt and sunk is a very rich fish breeding and feeding ground. Immediately, people are reluctant to eat fish, so there is a huge threat to the income” of fishermen, he said, adding that the fishing economy in that part of the country could “totally collapse.” As of Tuesday, the X-Press Pearl remains in the ocean, partly submerged. Leahy, the X-Press Feeders spokesman, said that once the ship settles, an assessment of the vessel and cargo and an investigation of the fire will be completed. Sri Lankan officials are investigating and working to mitigate the potential damage.

As of May 26, the country’s Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) reported that 42,000 bags of debris were collected from 138 beaches. As of June 10, MEPA said it had collected 1,075 tons of waste. But the plastic spill remains overwhelming and unprecedented. Pattiaratchi said it was probably the worst nurdle spill in Sri Lanka’s history. As time goes on, he predicts, the pellets will continue to disperse, arriving in Indonesia in about 60 days, before reversing course during monsoon season later in the year to reach India, Sri Lanka again, the Maldives and perhaps Somalia, ending up in Cocos-Keeling Island and Christmas Island in one to two years.

Sri Lanka: Towards sustainable fisheries

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2021/12/13/features/267165/sri-lanka-towards-sustainable-fisheries>

"In a major supermarket in Washington, DC, USA, the seafood section includes a product that comes from far away: the blue swimming crab imported all the way from Sri Lanka. The packaging proudly announces that the product is “Committed to Sustainability” and is a “Product

of Sri Lanka.” About 9,000 miles (14,500 Km or nearly 24 hours by air counting transit times) away in the island country of Sri Lanka, close to one million people are engaged in the fisheries sector on a full- or part-time basis, including those fishing and processing blue swimming crabs.

Fish make up about 50 per cent of Sri Lankans’ annual animal protein intake, a ratio three times higher than the global average. Thus, sustainable management of Sri Lanka’s fisheries is essential for continued food security and livelihoods, and for providing opportunities for new jobs and exports in the country. Efforts to sustainably manage Sri Lanka’s blue swimming crabs began in 2013 with the launch of the Blue Swimming Crab Fishery Improvement Project as a joint initiative of the National Fisheries Institute Crab Council, an association of North American crab importers, and the Seafood Exporters’ Association of Sri Lanka (SEAS). It is being carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries and more than 70 small scale fishing communities in four districts in Sri Lanka.

The project aims to improve the biological and ecological status of crab fisheries and their management in the Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar and make them sustainable in and for the future. A well-managed fishery forms the basis for consistent catches and steady incomes for fishers as well as the many women working along this labour-intensive value chain. Alternatively, overfishing would erode incomes, creating greater vulnerability among Sri Lanka’s coastal fishing communities (Sri Lanka has a 1,340 Km coastline).

The analysis first assessed the blue swimming crabs’ stock status using an innovative, simple but robust methodology that relies on measuring the length of crabs harvested. The assessment helped determine sustainable catch levels and is repeated periodically to gauge the stock status and adjust the catch levels accordingly. In January 2018, the blue swimming crab fisheries achieved a ‘good alternative’ recommendation from the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch, a recognition of the progress made towards improved management.

This recognition allowed the Taprobane Seafood Group, Sri Lanka’s top exporter of pasteurized crab products, to access new, premium markets in the United States for eco-labelled high quality seafood products. It is noteworthy that at the height of market disruptions induced by the COVID-19 in April-May 2020, Taprobane’s only orders in North America were from premier markets for “sustainably sourced seafood.” The success of the blue swimming crab project led to new questions: Can Sri Lanka adopt a similar approach for other fisheries and seafood products? Can similar projects achieve sustainable resource management and better revenue in Sri Lanka and elsewhere?

Considering the importance of the fisheries sector for Sri Lanka, the World Bank carried out an analysis between 2020 and 2021 with the Sri Lanka Ministry of Fisheries and its agencies, the National Planning Department, fisheries and processor organisations, NGOs, and academia. The study “Priorities for Sustainably Managing Sri Lanka’s Marine Fisheries, Coastal Aquaculture, and the Ecosystems That Support Them” includes an analysis of coastal and multiday fisheries,

coastal aquaculture, and coastal ecosystem services that support these fisheries, partly funded by World Bank-administered trust fund, PROBLUE.

The study's main recommendations for coastal fisheries centre around data-based and participatory management. For example, it recommends that the Ministry of Fisheries allocate more resources to regular stock assessments, including developing methods for data-poor fisheries, and create sustainable management plans based on these assessments, in close consultation with fishers and other local stakeholders. These plans should incorporate measures to conserve and, where feasible, restore ecosystems such as coral reefs and mangroves that support the fisheries and increase coastal communities' resilience to weather events and Climate Change.

To ensure these plans are implemented, it will be crucial to provide support to diversify the livelihoods of fishers and their families, as well as transmit to fishers' part of the sustainability premiums achieved through exports to premium markets. The study report will be launched at a public event with high level participation from the Sri Lankan Government and the World Bank, which will feature policy and technical discussions.

These discussions are an integral part of the exchanges to develop the next Country Partnership Strategy for 2022 - 2026, and will hopefully help Sri Lanka build back better towards a sustainable blue economy.

Sri Lanka: Tri-lingual 'Sayuru' provides early warning and alert service to fishing community

<https://www.dailymirror.lk/business-news/Tri-lingual-Sayuru-provides-early-warning-and-alert-service-to-fishing-community/273-234668>

"Having been aware of the increasingly volatile weather caused by worsening climate change and based on the notion that fishermen have access to basic mobile phones, Dialog partnered with the Department of Fisheries and the Meteorological Department of the Government of Sri Lanka to develop and release the tri-lingual 'Sayuru' alert service with the goal of reducing the loss of life and marooning caused by unexpected extreme weather.

The free service is accessible by using the short code 828, texting 'ACT' to '828' or activating the service via the MyDialog App. Sayuru provides daily 24-hour weather forecasts by SMS, and emergency voice calls in hazardous situations, all customised to the language and coastal region specified by the user.

Sayuru TV, already operating at the country's major fisheries harbours, is an extension of the 'Sayuru' service and further enhances fishermen's safety by providing greater accessibility to the timely and accurate weather forecasts and emergency alerts.

The initiative displays 24-hour weather forecasts in all three local languages in a relatable and easy to follow style for any local fisherman.

Controlled remotely by the main Fisheries Department Operations Centre, the displays can flash instant alerts in the event of an emergency, as directed per location. The first Sayuru TV installation was launched at the Tangalle fisheries harbour in February 2020, followed by six other locations along the coastline, and most recently, this 8th installation at Point Pedro.

Together with its partners, Dialog aims to expand the Sayuru TV service to include an information display at every port around the island. As Sri Lanka recovers from the peak of the ongoing pandemic, empowering key stakeholders that form the crux of the nation's communities, and thereby economies, is of utmost importance. Through Sayuru TV and the Sayuru mobile service, Dialog has the unique ability to significantly improve the livelihoods of day-boat fishermen, all while securing their health and safety."

Sri Lanka: Trinco fishermen protest against external threats to livelihood

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2021/02/10/trinco-fishermen-protest-against-external-threats-to-livelihood/>

"“The President, Prime Minister, the Ministry of Fisheries, and the Subject Minister were informed on the interferences by external entities hampering their livelihood; however, the authorities are yet to provide solutions,” one protester told News 1st.

According to the protestors, the said external entities chase away the fishermen engaged in small-scale fishing activities in a violent manner and claim the aqua culture.

Sri Lanka: UN Convention on the Law of the Sea: Sri Lanka's legal regime on the sea – Part 2

<https://www.dailynews.lk/2021/08/12/features/256426/sri-lanka%E2%80%99s-legal-regime-sea-part-2>

"The Maritime Zones Law recognizes the principle of sovereignty as it states that the sovereignty of the Republic extends to the territorial sea, and to the air space over the territorial sea and subsoil. The Constitution of Sri Lanka in defining the territory of Sri Lanka states that ‘the territory of the Republic of Sri Lanka shall consist of the 24 administrative districts and its territorial waters. The land and sea territory are treated as being in no way different and it is

implied that the sovereignty of the State applies over both parts of its territory equally without distinction.

On the question of territorial waters, and functional or jurisdictional zones, Sri Lanka's policy in common with India and other developing nations was one of extension of national jurisdiction, and the control of economic resources lying offshore as is evidenced by the declaration of a Fisheries Conservation Zone as early as 1957, and the extension of territorial waters from 3 to 6 and then to 12 miles, which was confirmed by the Maritime Zones Law of 1976 which also declared a 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone and Pollution Prevention Zone. By the Maritime Zones Proclamation of January 1977 the territorial limit was declared to be 12 miles. This limit is now further confirmed in the 1982 Convention.

The 12 miles is drawn from the baseline, and is the low water mark of ordinary spring tides along the coast. However from the port of Kalpitiya up to the islands forming Adam's Bridge in the area demarcated as the Gulf of Mannar, the territorial sea is much wider than 12 miles because here the regime of historic waters prevails and these waters have been delimited by the Boundary Agreements between Sri Lanka and India of 1976.

Boundary Agreements between Sri Lanka and India: The first boundary agreement of 1974 demarcates the waters from Adam's Bridge to Palk Strait. The boundaries drawn by connecting by straight lines to terminal points and four turning points which have been plotted by the system of drawing arcs are great circles from points on the baselines of the two countries and taking the point of intersection as the required point. The Baselines here follow the low water mark of the seaward edge of the islands off the coast line.

The Agreement states each country shall have sovereignty and exclusive jurisdiction and control over the waters, the islands the continental shelf and the subsoil thereof, falling on its own side of the aforesaid boundary (Article 4 of the Agreement). Article 5 of the Agreement gives Indian fisherman and pilgrims access to visit Kachativu as hitherto, which in the context means access to visit Kachativu during the annual church festival of St. Anthony, without obtaining travel documents or visas for this purpose. Article 6 states that vessels of India and Sri Lanka will enjoy in each other's waters such rights as they have traditionally enjoyed.

This Article which is framed in broad terms has however to be interpreted in the context of the Exchange of letters between the two governments annexed herein as well as the surrounding circumstances. Article 7 refers to the fact that if there is any single geological or natural gas structure or field straddling across the boundary, the two countries should seek to reach an agreement on the manner in which the structure or field should be most effectively exploited and the manner in which the proceeds deriving therefrom shall be apportioned.

This agreement which was signed June 1974 was ratified on July 8, 1974 and the agreement entered into force from that date. In 1976 a second boundary agreement was entered into in order to extend the maritime boundary between the two countries by determining the boundaries

in the Gulf of Mannar and the Bay of Bengal, i.e. to the West and East respectively of the boundary which had already been delimited above.

Under the terms of this agreement the boundary on the Western coast was extended from Adam's Bridge southwards to a position marked 13M on the annexed. Article 1 says the extension of the boundary beyond position 13M will be done subsequently. This was extended in July of the same year 1976 up to position marked T on the map. Legal Regime in the Territorial sea It is necessary to examine the legal regime which operates within this 12 mile area of territorial sea. The Maritime Zones Law clearly states that the right exercised by Sri Lanka is a sovereign right which extends not only over the territorial sea, but also over the airspace, as well as over the seabed and subsoil.

This is in keeping with the text of the Geneva Convention on the territorial sea and contiguous Zone, which have now been repeated in the 1982 Convention of the Law of the Sea. Sovereignty would mean that the State exercises all powers and jurisdiction in respect of this Zone and has full dominants over the living and non-living resources of the area. The Right of Innocent Passage: Innocent passage which is a right which customary international law recognizes may be viewed as a right or privilege given 3rd states to travel within these waters, while at the same time recognizing the jurisdiction of the coastal states.

It may be viewed from the point of view of policy as a sensible form of accommodation between the necessities of sea communications and interests of the coastal states. In Sri Lanka the Maritime Zones Law specifically recognizes right of innocent passage, and states that ships of all States shall enjoy the rights of innocent passage through the territorial sea. In keeping with the 1958 Convention it categorizes the passage as 'innocent only so long as such passage is not prejudicial to the peace, good order or security of the Republic'.

The proviso to the section states that no foreign warship shall enter or pass through the territorial sea except with the prior consent of and subject to such conditions as may be specified by the Minister. The Act also provides for innocent passage of air craft through the air space above territorial sea which must be in accordance with the written laws in force. The Military aircraft must have the prior consent of the Minister as in the case of warship.

Criminal and Civil Jurisdiction in the Territorial Sea: The territorial sea being under the sovereignty of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka can legislate for this region and has civil, criminal and jurisdiction over foreign ships and shipping where they contravene such laws within this region. From early times legislation had been passed in respect of control of fisheries and implementation of custom regulations.

The first legislative instrument to protect the coast was introduced in 1865 titled; "An Ordinance to provide against the removal of stones and other substances from certain parts of the seashore" The Primary intention of introducing this law, empowering the GA of a province to prohibit the removal of stones or other substances from the seashore was the prevention of damage to roads

and thoroughfares adjoining the seashore. This Ordinance was repealed by Seashore Protection Ordinance No 12 of 1911.

Two ordinances were introduced in British period for the protection of Her Majesty's Chank fishery Ordinance No 5 of 1842) for the protection of Her Majesty's rights in the digging of dead chanks (ordinance no 4 of 1842) followed by the ordinance no 19 of 1866 which addressed the issue of unnecessary destruction of fish by the use of certain nets. The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1947 which repealed the Seashore Protection ordinance and provided for custody, control and management of the seashore has been partly amended by later sectorial statutes. Fisheries Act and the Fisheries (Regulation of Foreign Fishing Boat) Act No.2 of 1996. (Regulation of Foreign Fishing Boats Act No. 56 of 1979) provides that foreign fishing boats are prohibited from fishing in Sri Lanka waters unless they obtain a license.

Those fishing boats without a permit which passing through these waters must store their fishing gear away. Furthermore the Minister can prescribe areas of Sri Lanka waters which are to be reserved solely for Sri Lanka fisherman and local fishing boats. Authorized officers are given the power to stop boat and search any foreign fishing boat in Sri Lanka and when they have reasonable ground to believe that an offence has been committed, seize and detain any boat fishing gear etc., or arrest any person.

It must be noted here that the definition of Sri Lanka waters is very wide as the interpretation section states that it includes territorial seas, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone, historic water and all internal waters. So that in effect the operation of this Act applies not only to the territorial sea, but up to the limits of the Exclusive Economic Zone which extends up to 200 miles on the Southern and Eastern coasts, and up to the Indo-Sri Lanka Boundary on the Northern and Western coasts. Similarly under the customs ordinance as amended of 1970, the customs officers have power to board and search ships hovering within the territorial waters of Sri Lanka.

This is modeled on the Hovering Acts of the United Kingdom. Where the ship continues to hover despite being ordered to depart the customs officers can bring such ship into port and search and examine her cargo. Punishment can be imposed by way of fines and even forfeiture of a ship where it does not exceed a particular tonnage. The Ordinance provides that a customs vessel can even fire upon a vessel within territorial waters which refused to halt when required to do so. Similarly under the Immigrants and Emigrants Act, authorized officers have the power to enter or board any ship and to detain and examine any person arriving in or leaving Ceylon and to require production of any documents.

The Merchant Shipping Act (Merchant Shipping Act No. 52 of 1971, I.E. of Sri Lanka (1971)) which provides for the registration of ships provides that only Sri Lankan ships may trade in Sri Lanka waters, foreign ships may do so only under a license. Any person or body contravening the provisions of the Act can be punished by fine, and the ship involved may be detained. In this

Act, Sri Lankan waters is interpreted to mean territorial waters. Apart from these matters, it is mentioned that in relation to salvage and tonnage of ships, and damage to cargo, or damage to ships caused by collisions

Admiralty jurisdiction is vested in the High Court of Colombo. In 1981 three Acts were passed, an Act setting up a National Aquatic Resource Research and Development Agency (NARA), The Coast Conservation Act, and the Marine Pollution Prevention Authority was instituted. The titles of these Acts are self-explanatory but one may briefly explain their functions and the extent of their application.

Sri Lanka: UN Women's project boosts community role of females here

<https://island.lk/un-womens-project-boosts-community-role-of-females-here/>

"Lankan women carry the main burden of household work, and therefore they have knowledge and influence that could be channeled to improve community waste management, which is not only harming health and the environment but also causing disputes between different communities, says Asia and the Pacific branch of the UN Women. The government's Time-Use Survey of 2017 found that women spend 27.6 per cent more time than men doing housework each day. Yet while women are the ones handling all the household waste, they barely have a voice when it comes to deciding how to manage waste in the larger community.

In Sri Lanka, the local government councils have the primary responsibility for collecting and disposing of waste within their areas. But historically, very few women have held seats on these bodies because of institutional and structural barriers, and gender stereotypes such as that politics is unsuitable for women or that women should just stay at home. Before the last local elections, in 2018, women held only 1.9 per cent of these seats. A new 25 percent quota for female representation boosted that number, though today, women still hold only 23.7 per cent of seats.

To address the problem of women's representation and environmental management, UN Women, United Nations Office for Project Services, and Chrysalis, a local non-governmental organisation, are jointly implementing a project called Promoting Women's Engagement in Effective Solid Waste Management.

The 2020-2021 project, funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, is expected to directly benefit about 4,000 people in Puttalam and Mannar districts along the country's western coast. Most people in these districts work in fisheries and in agriculture. "Through this project, we are working with women to ensure their voices are heard and that they are fully involved in making decisions that impact them, their households and communities," said Ramaaya Salgado, Country Focal Point at UN Women Sri Lanka.

“Solid waste management was identified as the main community issue that this project addresses, but we are building their capacities so that this whole-of-community approach can be replicated in addressing other conflicts and community issues as well.” Because improper waste disposal harms health, the environment and inter-communal relations, the project brings communities together to develop sustainable solutions for their shared environment — with women at the forefront of that process. In April 2020, the project organized a series of local-level dialogues in which about 350 elected officials, public officials, women community leaders, members of civil society groups, religious leaders, young people and others in Puttalam and Mannar discussed common issues and solutions to waste management.

UN Women and Chrysalis then gave the dialogue participants training on collective leadership, peace-building and non-violent conflict resolution. Earlier this month, UN Women organized two town hall meetings that connected local authorities and women community leaders with experts in solid waste management, including environmental and civil engineers, local government officials and environmental activists.

The broader aim was to get more women into leadership positions and adopt best practices on solid waste management. The women participating in the UN Women project include Kaweeda Manohari, 48, a member of the Chilaw Municipal Council in Puttalam, and Dilushani Fernando, a social worker and community leader in Puttalam.

“Recently, I had to be a mediator to a conflict between two parties,” Manohari said. “Since it was fresh in my mind, I was able to use some of the techniques I learned at our training to help the two parties arrive at a compromise and push for a legal solution to their issue.” Fernando said: “I learned a lot about waste segregation and the economic benefits of upcycling while reducing waste. Now I always think twice before throwing away something. I use it to create something new instead. This is what I hope to teach young children in my community.”

Sri Lanka: Unresolved problems of our toilers

<http://www.ft.lk/opinion/Unresolved-problems-of-our-toilers/14-709436>

"1. The farmers There are two main problems which affect the livelihood of many farming families in the North Central Province (NCP) of Sri Lanka, namely rural indebtedness and the Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD). The farmers need a fair price for their produce. But floods and droughts cause poverty of the farmers not only in the NCP but also in other provinces where people eke out their existence out of farming. When they have a good harvest, they generally spend the money lavishly on consumer goods expecting abundance during the next harvest. But nature decides otherwise.

Hence the farmers are compelled to pawn their jewellery and/or borrow money from the money-lenders and from the banks and pay the interest. Rural indebtedness has become a major

economic problem among the farmers. It has got institutionalised. Therefore there is an urgent need to educate the farmers so that they too liberate themselves from this institutionalised way of life and provide hope for their children for better quality of life. In this endeavour, the government can also provide opportunities and facilities by appointing competent officers to create awareness of the problems and find suitable solutions by organising thrift societies. Medical research has shown that many families engaged in cultivation in the NCP have become victims of CKD.

A survey conducted in the schools had discovered that 10% of the 5,000 school children are suffering due to CKD in the District of Anuradhapura. This disease has been caused by excessive use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and weedicides for the cultivation of paddy, vegetables and fruits during the past several years and also through occupational exposure of the agricultural communities to herbicides. Non-availability of safe water for drinking and for the preparation of food is one of the main problems affecting vast majority of the people living in the NCP.

Dialysis is given to kidney patients in the hospitals but many patients are unable to find money to obtain this help due to poverty. Many families therefore are compelled to pawn their jewellery and mortgage their property. 2. The fishermen The continuous intrusion of the South Indian fishermen into Sri Lankan waters, crossing the international Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), using Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing methods, especially hi-tech bottom trawling which comb our sea bed, destroying also our marine resources and fishing gear of our Sri Lankan fishermen, goes on undeterred.

Bilateral meetings at the highest level between Sri Lanka and India have been held several times but to date, the issue remains unresolved. Our fishermen feel powerless to resist or prevent the movement of more than 300 big Indian trawlers poaching as close as 500 meters to our coastline. As a result, our Sri Lankan fisher-families, especially in the Northern Province, are made to suffer the consequences. Some have become unemployed or under-employed and they are unable also to assure quality education for their children.

In this situation, they are compelled to pawn their jewellery to buy nets destroyed by the Indian trawlers and to educate their children. Already in 2013, Bishop Rayappu Joseph had said: "Our fishermen have done all they can to urge the government to take action against this blatant robbery of our livelihood. They have taken a defiant stand against poaching by the Indians but to no avail. He said he had even raised this matter on numerous occasions at the Bishops' Conference. (Daily Mirror, 12 Oct. 2013).

Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda who hails from the Northern Province of Sri Lanka has already understood the plight of the fisher-families in the north and has said that a joint mechanism has been proposed to address the issue. I hope he will be able to arrive at a just solution on behalf of our fisher-families and our country without procrastinating. The closure of the Peliyagoda Fish Market, the Sri Lanka's main fish market, following a fresh cluster of

COVID-19 virus and secondly the falsely spreading news that virus can be contracted through eating fish had affected the fishing industry and the fisher-families.

It has also affected the companies and the individuals who export fish and the poor fish vendors.

3. The estate workers The estate workers need to improve their physical quality of life (PQL) in order to be healthy human beings and continue to toil and contribute to the Gross National Product (GNP) of Sri Lanka. Such a desired goal cannot be achieved right now with their meagre earnings (Rs. 750 per day).

As reported in the Editorial of Daily Mirror on 14 October, quoting UNICEF, more than 40% of children under the age of five on the estates are stunted. Under-nourishment will cause sickness and sicknesses will cause deaths. To get over this vicious circle, the Government must raise the daily wage of every tea estate worker, not forgetting their untiring efforts which account for 12 % of the total export earnings of Sri Lanka (Daily Mirror, 13 November). Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in his Budget speech has proposed a daily wage of Rs. 1,000 for estate workers from January 2021.

Every tea estate worker and his/her family have also an inalienable right to lead a life worthy of human dignity and in solidarity with other people in Sri Lanka. For this purpose, the tea estate worker needs a family wage, better housing, sanitary and medical facilities. The children need quality education in order to feel socially esteemed, be better integrated in Sri Lankan society and contribute to its progress. For this purpose, the trade unions and other welfare organisations must continue to find better strategies in order to enable the tea estate workers to become also architects of their own progress.

Sri Lanka: Vast global market for dried fish should be tapped

<https://www.sundayobserver.lk/2022/01/23/business/vast-global-market-dried-fish-should-be-tapped-entrepreneur>

"Sri Lankan entrepreneurs should make use of the huge potential for dried fish in the world market, a businessman in the dried fish industry, Danushka Karunaratne said. He said that there is a huge demand for quality dried fish in the local and foreign market. Therefore, entrepreneurs are welcome to this new sector, which hasn't been well used so far. Karunaratne said that young entrepreneurs, who see the future in different angles, should enter the industry since it will be the right solution for the foreign exchange scarcity in the country today. "The huge market share available in the world market can easily bring billions of dollars.

What we have to do is to produce high quality dried fish for foreign markets aiming to create a brand name," he said. According to him it is necessary to impose certain criteria for the dried fish industry as there are no such regulations. Therefore, it can be seen that fish are kept drying

in open areas in sunlight even at dusty places. It is very important that dried fish be processed in a controlled atmosphere in covered huts, which get enough sunlight.

Dried fish prepared in such places under controlled parameters has a huge potential both in local and foreign markets. He said that quality dried fish including sprats has a huge demand in the local market also. Due to the import tax on dried fish, imports have come down. This situation has also created a positive impact for local producers to meet local demand.

Danushka said that he has undergone practical and theoretical training in quality and hygienic dried fish production and uses that knowledge in his production process. Besides, he has developed his own methods for quality improvement. "I am ready to share the knowledge I gathered in dried fish production with new players, willing to take the plunge," he said.

Sri Lanka: Vietnam to assist Sri Lanka to develop fisheries and aquaculture industry

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20B/Oct18_1603045444CH.php

"Vietnam has agreed to enter into a bilateral agreement for the development of fisheries and aquaculture in Sri Lanka. The decision was taken at a discussion between Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda and Vietnam's Ambassador to Sri Lanka Pham Kieu Thu in Colombo yesterday (17). The discussion focused on joint ventures to develop the fisheries and aquatic resources in Sri Lanka. It was decided to sign this bilateral agreement for fisheries projects to be launched from 2021 to 2025.

The agreement covers the exchange of modern methods and experiences in the field of aquaculture, including sea cucumber farming and freshwater aquaculture, as well as the development of expertise between the two countries. The agreement also mentions financial assistance from Vietnam to develop the country's fisheries industry.

The agreement also includes the possibility of inviting Vietnamese experts to Sri Lanka to conduct workshops on shrimp farming and aquaculture in collaboration with NARA. The Minister also informed the Vietnamese Ambassador that a similar agreement was signed between the two countries in 2005 and a number of successful projects were completed between 2010 and 2013.

Sri Lanka: Voluntary international cooperation to present illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing which promotes sustainable fisheries governance

<https://www.lankabusinessonline.com/foreign-minister-underscores-importance-of-economic-partnership-with-indonesia/>

"Ambassador of Indonesia in Colombo I. Gusti Ngurah Ardiyasa paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena at the Foreign Ministry recently. During the discussions, the two dignitaries emphasized the need to further enhance trade ties in a mutually beneficial manner. While reiterating the long-standing, multifaceted ties between the two countries, Minister Gunawardena appreciated the strong friendship and assistance rendered by Indonesia during the difficult times faced by Sri Lanka in the past.

The Ambassador acknowledged the bonds of friendship and cooperation that exist between the two countries at bilateral, regional and multilateral platforms and expressed hope that the current ties would further expand and deepen into sectors of contemporary importance. He underscored the need for enhanced cooperation in the areas of illicit trafficking, cooperation against trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and marine and fisheries cooperation and on voluntary international cooperation to prevent illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing which promotes sustainable fisheries governance.

Ambassador Ardiyasa expressed his gratitude towards the Government of Sri Lanka for the assistance rendered towards the repatriation of Indonesian nationals in the recent past, during the height of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sri Lanka and Indonesia have been long standing trading partners. The total trade turnover between Sri Lanka and Indonesia has been increasing since 2017.

In 2019, the value of Sri Lanka's exports to Indonesia increased by 9.54% on year on year basis. The value of imports which account 427.55 US\$ Mn in 2018 increased marginally to 428.27 US\$ Mn in 2019. Indonesia was the 45th export market for Sri Lanka with a share of 0.33% in 2019. Apparel was the dominant export item from Sri Lanka to Indonesia, which accounts 19.56% of total exports to Indonesia in 2019. Indonesia was the 9th import partner of Sri Lanka with a share of 2.2% in 2019.

Cement was the major import item from Indonesia to Sri Lanka which accounts for 11.05% of total imports from Indonesia in 2019. In terms of the growing demand pattern in Indonesia and considering the sustainable supply capacities of Sri Lanka, products such as cinnamon, cloves, black tea, tea, rubber tyres can be further expanded in Indonesia. Sri Lanka has signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty with Indonesia on 10 June 1996 and it entered into force on 21 July 1997. Sri Lanka signed a double taxation avoidance agreement with Indonesia on 03 February 1993 and it was implemented in Sri Lanka from 1995/1996.

Indonesia ranked as the 34th investment partner of Sri Lanka in 2019. Sri Lanka shares an extensive relationship with Indonesia which goes back in time when recorded history commenced. Pre-colonial historical records note that Vijayotunga, King of Sri Vijaya Empire, had close connections with the Sri Lankan King Vijayabahu (1055-1110) particularly during invasions by Chola in the line of establishing trade links between the two regimes. History further refers that Sri Lankan Kings Kasyapa and Mahendrahad had close connection with Java.

The religious link was much greater and the influence of Sri Lankan craftsmen is clearly visible in the sedentary Buddha images found in Java and in Celebes and Borobudhur in Jogjakarta particularly in their simplicity, and the dignified elegant evocation of the concept of the Samadhi Buddha Statue. Special religious connections were maintained by the Sri Lankan King Parakramabahu VI (1411-1466) during the Kingdom of Kotte. The Ambassador was accompanied by the First Secretary of the Embassy of Indonesia. The Meeting was attended by officials of the Southeast Asia Division of the Foreign Ministry.

Sri Lanka: Where mangroves were destroyed, fishing yields plummeted: Fishermen and their families faced starvation

<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/02/06/asia/sri-lanka-mangroves-c2e-scen-intl-hnk/index.html>

"On December 26, 2004, a cataclysmic tsunami struck the coasts of countries in South and Southeast Asia. Sri Lanka was one of the worst affected nations -- the wall of water devastated the island's southern and eastern coasts. However, the tsunami's impact was uneven with some places suffering far more damage than others. Scientists assessing the landscape after the disaster discovered that some areas which emerged relatively unscathed were protected not by sophisticated warning systems or barriers -- but by their ancient mangrove forests. Mangroves are trees which -- unlike almost all other plants -- thrive in saltwater.

Sri Lanka is a mangrove hotspot with 22 species flourishing along its coasts, deltas and lagoons. In 2015, Sri Lanka announced that it would protect all of its mangroves -- the first country to make that declaration. The tsunami experience wasn't the only factor in the decision. Mangrove forests help to create healthy seas because they act as nurseries for fish, prawns, crabs and other marine animals that breed among the trees' stilt-like roots. They also play a role in combating the climate crisis because they have carbon-storing superpowers, locking down more carbon than a terrestrial forest the same size.

But the importance of mangroves wasn't always recognized. They typically occupy prime coastal real estate -- as a consequence, two-thirds of the world's mangroves have been lost. In Sri Lanka, one-third of the mangroves have been uprooted since 1990 to make way for expanding cities, coastal development and shrimp farms, says Anuradha Wickramasinghe -- chair of Sudeesa, a nonprofit that oversees mangrove conservation and replanting projects. ""People were only looking at short-term profits,"" he says. ""They destroyed the environment.""

Where mangroves were destroyed, fishing yields plummeted from around 20 kilograms (44 lbs) to around four kilograms (nine lbs) a day, says Wickramasinghe. Seafood is the major source of animal protein in the island nation. Fishermen and their families faced starvation, says Wickramasinghe. The Sri Lankan government took action by partnering with Sudeesa and US-based conservation group Seacology to implement a program of mangrove preservation and replanting that covers 35,000 hectares.

Jeewanthi Perera is one of Sudeesa's 38,000 volunteers. The 34-year-old lives in Kalpitiya, a small fishing village on the shore of Puttalam Lagoon on Sri Lanka's west coast. Perera says the mangroves saved her family from a desperate situation. Her first husband died in 2004. She remarried in 2014, but the relationship did not work out and Perera found herself living as a single mother with no income and four children to raise.

All Sudeesa's volunteer groups are headed by women because ""they can influence the men,"" says Wickramasinghe, adding that in his opinion, women are better at organizing the finances. Hard at work on Kalpitiya's beach, planting a row of fragile mangrove saplings in gloopy black mud, Perera says the restoration of the mangroves has been pivotal for her. Alongside its mangrove work, Sudeesa give microloans to women to help them establish small businesses.

Perera borrowed 15,000 Sri Lankan rupees (\$83) and bought material to make fishing nets. Her eldest son, who is 16, now earns up to 500 rupees (\$2.80) a day catching fish, shrimp and crabs, ensuring the family has enough to eat. ""Mangroves are good for us because they help prawns grow"" says Perera. ""This project is empowering women in this community. I'm proud of what I've done.""

Sri Lanka: Why country's artificial reef plan for fish breeding is 'toxic' in India

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/why-sri-lankas-artificial-reef-plan-for-fish-breeding-is-toxic-in-india/>

"A recent Sri Lankan government initiative to dump discarded buses into chosen spots in the sea, to help create artificial reefs for fish breeding has come under criticism from across the Palk Strait. Fishers and experts in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu have dubbed the initiative as 'disastrous', 'unlawful', and 'irresponsible'. They claim that the practice would affect the trade and consumers alike in the coming months and years, thus, adding a new dimension to the intractable 'fishers issue' involving the two nations.

The low-intensity row began earlier this month, when the Sri Lankan government, with the help of its navy, dumped close to 20 discarded buses off the waters of the Deft Island, called Needuntheevu in Tamil, declaring that it would help fish breeding and restore the fast depleting marine life.

The nation's Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda, a Tamil political leader from Sri Lanka's northern Jaffna Peninsula, claimed that the dumped vehicles would act as artificial reefs, and help the growth of slow-moving fish species and also provide them safety from faster varieties that otherwise fed on them. In a more recent news conference in Jaffna, the Minister pooh-poohed the suggestions that the practice was 'unscientific'.

Artificial reef making has been in practice in the US since the 17th century and in Japan for over a century-and-a-half, the local Tamil newspapers quoted him as saying. According to the Minister, such practices had helped fish breeding and increase fish yields. According to the newspaper reports, Minister Devananda also said that this was not the first time Sri Lanka was trying out this method. Earlier, the government had done it in southern fishing waters.

The local fishers reported an increased yield, he claimed. Devananda also declared in context that if needed they would dump discarded train bogies and even ships, if it would serve the purpose. Other Sri Lankan media reports said that the practice had helped breeding for deep sea fishing, which the nation's southern Sinhala fishers have been very successful at. In India, if only to avoid mid-sea clashes between the fishing communities from the two countries and to discourage Indian fishers from crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), the Tamil Nadu government has implemented a joint programme with the Centre's aid, to develop deep sea fishing as an alternative.

It is yet to catch up in full swing. Not everyone is pleased. In neighbouring India's southern Tamil Nadu (TN), where local fishers have been at daggers drawn with the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) chasing them, and at times shooting and killing them, for crossing the IMBL; fishers and experts differ with the Sri Lankan position. Some of their arguments require detailed consideration and may require the Centre's intervention. The TN fishers say that their large and costly trawl nets could get caught in the dumped buses and get destroyed. Some of them stick to their known position that Indian fishers continued to enjoy fishing rights across the IMBL.

Despite the changes in government and leadership over the past decade, the Centre has been consistent in its opposition to such a position. According to the Centre, Indian fishers lost their traditional right to fish across the IMBL after the two nations delineated the sea borders through the bilateral pacts of 1974 and 1976. Citing a clause in the 1974 Accord, permitting the Indian fishers to dry their fish in the Katchchativu, which fell within the Sri Lankan side of the IMBL, the former continue to hold that there would be no need for them to dry their nets unless they had become wet—through fishing.

Yet, the question remains what may be applicable, even for argument's sake, to the waters near the Katchchativu islet that is closer to the Indian shores; if it could be extended to cover the Palk Strait near the Sri Lankan shores. It is in this strait that the Sri Lankan government has now dumped the buses. However, fisheries experts in Tamil Nadu have since pointed out how during the 2004 Tsunami, a lot of such other debris drifted towards the Indian shores from under the Sri Lankan waters and had to be removed at this end to make the seas safer for the fishers' boats.

They also pointed out that debris of the kind could add toxicity to the marine life in the region. Considering that the fish schools keep traversing across waters, with no respect for the man-made IMBL, this for instance, could increase the possibility of the fish that would be eaten by the Indian consumers to have become toxic. The implication is that India has the right and

responsibility to protest against such ‘unscientific’ methods. As may be recalled, Indian institutions, both in the government and the private sector studying fish breeding methods, have adopted near-similar methods to create artificial reefs to help in fish breeding. Experts in Tamil Nadu, however, point out that in all such cases, they had lowered heavy concrete blocks on to the sea-bed, from where underwater currents cannot displace or otherwise disturb them.

As they point out, stable reefs, natural or artificial, alone could sustain fish breeding through the medium and long-terms. Sri Lanka’s methods, thus, will not hold. Not far away from southern Tamil Nadu’s port town of Thoothukudi, experts have since ensured the safety of the Vaan islet, through scientifically-proven conservation measures, leading to an increased fish-presence. Going by degradation caused by unacceptable levels of reef mining for making lime for the construction industry, conservationists had anticipated the islet going under, like a few others before it, by next year.

Now they say, the Vaan islet will remain here for a much longer time. Adding teeth to the Indian experts’ submission is a more recent Sri Lankan media report on how hospital waste and other debris, possibly from the south Indian state of Kerala, has washed up on the nation’s northern shores, not far from where the buses were dropped using cranes. The Island newspaper reported that the recent rains and floods might have carried the hospital waste into the sea and from there, to the Sri Lankan shores. Interestingly, a delegation of parliamentarians from the main Opposition Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) met with Colombo Archbishop, Malcom Cardinal Ranjith, and appealed to him to intervene and save the southern (Sinhala) fishing community from the multiple threats they face.

The Cardinal has been coming out openly against government policies over the past few years, like his Buddhist counterparts in the country. One of the issues where his intervention was sought was related to the recent sinking of a foreign-registered vessel, X-Press Pearl in Sri Lankan waters, as there is apprehension that the debris could damage fishing boats and destroy fishers’ livelihood. Licensed fishing Even granting that sinking old buses as artificial reefs may be a Sri Lankan government policy for some time now, Minister Devananda got into an avoidable controversy in March this year, when he made seemingly ‘contradictory statements’ on permitting Indian fishers to fish in Sri Lankan waters.

First, he said that they would permit ‘licensed fishing’ by identified Indian fishers, arguing that it would bring substantial revenues to the government. When fishers from his Jaffna, who are the worst affected by ‘Indian poaching’, protested, the Minister reportedly said that they would instruct the navy not to let Indian fishers to cross the IMBL. It was not unlikely given the pending formal decision on his suggestion, a suggestion made not long after he became Fisheries Minister in 2019; Devananda was only indicating the continuance of the existing ban on Indian fishers and bottom trawling. It still remains to be seen if Indian fishers, even if they were to be granted license, would be interested in fishing without bottom trawling, which is globally accepted as a ‘destructive practice’, banned in Sri Lanka and discouraged in India, too.

Devananda then said that they could not move forward with the ‘agreement’ reached with India when he accompanied Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa during the latter’s meeting with counterpart Narendra Modi, owing to the intervening pandemic. It is against this background that the new controversy over the Sri Lankan way of artificial reef making has surfaced. The more recent turn in events is related to Colombo media reports that Indian Navy personnel had physically attacked Sri Lankan fishers.

However, for long, Indian fishers have been victims of SLN personnel attacking and firing at them, and often arresting them and their boats for violating Sri Lankan waters and poaching. The Indian Coast Guard and Navy have often looked the other way at ‘innocent’ Sri Lankan fishers ‘poaching’, especially for tuna in their waters. Where the fishers came too close to ‘strategic installations’ like ports and naval bases, they are purposefully shooed away. Occasionally, they are also arrested, produced before local courts in states across south India – and later released through diplomatic interventions, as has been the case with arrested Indian counterparts.

In the current case, the Indian High Commission in Colombo has since denied the charge as ‘blatantly false’. A High Commission spokesperson denied “any such incident”. The spokesperson reiterated that the “Indian Navy is a highly disciplined and professional force which discharges its responsibilities in an impeccable manner”. India, as may be recalled, is “firmly committed to addressing all fishermen-related issues with Sri Lanka in a humanitarian manner through established bilateral mechanisms and understandings”.

It cannot be otherwise as many more Indian fishers are arrested and otherwise harassed than the other way round – given the ground realities, which commences with New Delhi’s respect for the IMBL under the 1964-66 accords.

Sri Lanka: X- Press Pearl fire – Has the polluter paid yet?

<https://www.newswire.lk/2021/09/25/x-press-pearl-fire-has-the-polluter-paid-sri-lanka-yet/>

"The X-Press Pearl fire; the worst-ever marine disaster to occur in Sri Lanka’s territorial waters is being swept under the carpet with the rise of the health emergency in the country. Environmental rights activists have consistently shed light on the issue to seek compensation for the damage X-Press Pearl caused to the country’s ecological balance. Calls have mounted to expedite the investigations, produce the necessary documents to avoid any delay to avoid defeated justice so victim communities don’t bear the burden of not upholding the Polluter Pays Principle (PPP).

The X-Press Pearl, a Singapore-registered cargo ship carrying chemicals and plastic pellets was burning off Sri Lanka’s western coast for nearly two weeks before it sank in June 2021. The hazardous goods, chemicals and oil released into the water have destroyed ecological systems, marine lives and their breeding grounds. It has contaminated water, caused coastal pollution,

affected weather cycles and caused dogmatic impact on the fisheries and tourism sectors. Livelihood was impacted as fishing was prohibited in the immediate aftermath.

A fear-induced drop in seafood consumption made matter worse. Foreshore is always of attraction for many seeking mental and physical relaxations. This too became an obstacle with access restrictions in certain coastal areas. This depicts direct or indirect subjugation of human rights. Especially, the right to a clean and healthy environment, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to enjoyment of favorable conditions of work, the right to food, the right to freely pursue one's economic and social development, the right to water, the right to access natural resources, the right to physical health and the right to the continuous improvement of living conditions.

The incident is a long running disaster and reiterates the interrelation, interdependence and mutually responsive nature of environment and human rights. Justice C. G. Weeramantry in his book titled *Tread Lightly on the Earth* (2009) emphasizes the ancient native Australian wisdom which links every human being by an umbilical cord to Mother Earth. It stated; if Mother earth prospered, the community prospered, but if Mother earth was sick and afflicted, the community would wither perish. It accentuates the damage to the environment can impair and undermine all human rights spoken in the Universal Declaration and other human rights instruments.

Therefore, it is the utmost duty of the polluter to rectify the damage caused to the environment by his actions or inactions and to help revamp the conditions of the victims whose rights the polluter violated in the process. This analysis underpins the established environmental Principle – the Polluter Pays.’’ (PPP). This was developed in the 1920s as an economic principle in environmental management and was intended to resolve issues of improper allocation of costs resulting from environmental pollution.

An improper allocation of costs arises when polluters escape liability and passes on the cost burden to communities which had no role in causing the pollution. Known also as externalizing the pollution the general community bears the burden by paying the price of reduced environmental quality or increased taxation which aims to mitigate the environmentally degrading effects caused by the polluter.

The PPP holds polluters responsible for the environmental degradation and pollution by getting them to compensate to repair the harm they cause. The European Council identifies three classes of polluters. (a) a person who directly damages the environment; (b) a person who indirectly damages the environment; and (c) a person who creates a condition leading to such damage. To achieve the above desired goals, the PPP is embodied in major environmental regulations, statutes and instruments. India's judicially recognizes the PPP.

The Sri Lankan Courts extensively discussed this principle in the famous Eppawela Case where it reiterated the importance of internalizing pollution to ensure polluters are held accountable to restore environmental pollution as well as to compensate the victims. The Sri Lankan

Constitution does not embrace the fundamental right to a safe and healthy environment and hence the lacuna is successfully filled by creative and wide interpretation of other articles through judicial activism.

Article 12 (1) of Constitution which states that ‘all persons are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection of the law’ is the provision frequently subjected to wide interpretations for environment related issues either on its own or in conjunction with other rights and fundamental duties provided under Article 28 (f) and Article 27 (14). The essence of Article 12 (1) depicts that the failure to apply environmental laws of the country to a particular project or a particular geographical area would amount to an unequal treatment of persons affected, or a violation of right to equal protection of the law.

The X Press Pearl fire contributed to an unequal situation in Sri Lanka where certain social sectors were economically deprived and people from certain areas were placed at a significant disadvantage compared to residents elsewhere in the country. The negligence of the polluter has indirectly damaged the environment. The full damages resulting from the accident is still being assessed.

Local media reported that the government of Sri Lanka has sent an interim claim to the operator of the burnt-out container ship, requesting \$40 million for response costs accrued through June 1 – the day before the vessel partially sank off Colombo. However, the procedure to fully rectify the damage has had significantly slow progress, pushing Sri Lanka to the brink of being deprived justice.

Sri Lanka: X-Press Pearl sinking shines a light on seafood safety

<https://news.mongabay.com/2021/08/x-press-pearl-sinking-shines-a-light-on-seafood-safety-in-sri-lanka/>

"Sunitha Rathnayake, a homemaker in southern Sri Lanka, was down to the last of her salt and planned to order some more from an online grocery service at the end of June. But she soon found out that salt was out of stock at the main supermarkets, with shoppers panic-buying the condiment; they were apparently fearful that future supplies of salt would be contaminated by pollutants from the sunken X-Press Pearl container ship. Sunitha had to cook without salt for several days until the suppliers had restocked, but now she says she’s fearful about buying fish in light of the maritime disaster in May.

Like many Buddhist households in Sri Lanka, the Rathnayake family doesn’t eat meat, so fish is the only animal protein available at home. Fears about seafood being contaminated by the plastics and toxic chemicals that were on board the Singapore-flagged X-Press Pearl when it caught fire and sank off Colombo have affected a wide swath of Sri Lankan society. “As my regular buyers stop consuming fish, I had to pedal extra kilometers trying to sell the daily quota

of fish I bring to sell,” says Asoka Sumathi, a fishmonger who goes door to door by bicycle. He says he often had to return with unsold fish during the weeks soon after the ship’s sinking, and his business hasn’t fully recovered yet.

Fish vendors at Sri Lanka’s main fish market in Peliyagoda, northern Colombo, say prices have dropped due to decreased demand. In an attempt to prove that the fish is safe to eat, some vendors ate raw fish in front of the media. At the same time, there’s been neither confirmation nor reassurance from the government on the issue. Susantha Kahawaththa, director-general of the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR), says that no mass fish deaths have occurred due to the accident.

However, following the sinking, DFAR and the National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA) are still collecting dead fish samples to test for possible contamination linked to the incident, and have so far not found anything to establish the link. “There can be short- to long-term impacts to fish due to the pollution caused by the sunken ship,” says Ruchira Cumarathunga, emeritus professor of fisheries at the University of Ruhuna. He says the sinking coincided with the spawning period for fish species.

“As the ship was carrying a large number of chemicals, we do not clearly know how they would react and the chemicals can pass through small to larger fish through the food chain, and this requires vigilance and monitoring of fish for several seasons,” Cumarathunga tells Mongabay. Experts say some fish species may be more vulnerable to the pollution than others. Large quantities of plastic beads, or nurdles, fell off the X-Press Pearl and into the sea after it caught fire. Another threat comes from the sinking of the vessel, whose carcass may affect bottom-feeding and grazing fish such as some coral fish species, Cumarathunga says.

While many worry about the possible contamination of fish due to the ship accident, researchers say some fish species already have chemicals such as mercury, lead, cadmium and arsenic, along with microplastics, in their bodies due to oceanic pollution in general. A 2018 study by NARA showed that swordfish and yellowfin tuna had high levels of mercury and cadmium, and dried shark meat had very high levels of pollutants, says Kolita Jinadasa, a senior scientist. Another study has shown that pollutants from industry and other sources have impacted seaweeds in some sites in Sri Lanka.

The pollution caused by the X-Press Pearl’s sinking may have future impacts, but this shouldn’t deter people from consuming fish, as it still offers high nutrition value, experts say. Jinadasa recommends setting safe limits for the consumption of fish through a risk-benefit analysis. He says Sri Lanka should establish guidelines for provisional tolerable weekly intake (PTWI), to allow the consumption of potentially harmful contaminants in certain foods at low enough levels that can be sustained over a lifetime without health risks. At the same time, however, Sri Lanka should take urgent measures to monitor its marine pollution levels and set up a periodic monitoring mechanism, Jinadasa tells Mongabay.

Without baseline data, he says, it's difficult to quantify the impacts of an accident like the X-Press Pearl sinking, and thereby take informed decisions. Other studies have identified the prevalence of microplastics in fish species consumed in Sri Lanka. A recent study done at an estuary in southern Sri Lanka found microplastics in the gut and muscles of Commerson's anchovy (*Stolephorus commersonii*), a small fish widely consumed across Sri Lanka. A marine environment survey conducted by the Norwegian government research vessel Fridtjof Nansen also found microplastics in Sri Lankan waters.

An April 2021 study shows that more than 1,000 rivers account for 80% of the plastic waste that reaches the ocean via rivers. It also names Sri Lanka as among the top 20 ocean polluting countries. Experts say the chance of chemicals leaked from the X-Press Pearl contaminating salt production is low, as the long manufacturing process would tend to mitigate that risk. However, microplastics have already been found in commercial salt in Sri Lanka, according to a recent study, which indicates that some salterns are more prone to microplastic contaminants.

Pollution of seafood also has severe trade implications for Sri Lanka, which exported some \$300 million worth of fish in 2019, according to DFAR. Many export markets have strict regulations in terms of level of pollutants such as mercury and cadmium, and if the current rate of marine pollution continues, Sri Lanka risks losing this source of foreign exchange.

As the country grapples with ocean and river pollution, and the X-Press Pearl incident adding a new layer to an increasingly complex problem, experts have reiterated the need for long-term action plans to ensure seafood safety. The maritime disaster should be the impetus to drive such a program with set targets, Jinadasa says.

Sri Lanka: X-Press Pearl wreck oil leak can create long-term environmental damage to coastal habitats, especially to the coral reefs and fish populations

<https://island.lk/x-press-pearl-wreck-leaking-oil-environmentalists-appeal-to-president/>

"A group of concerned Sri Lankan environmentalists has appealed to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to intervene to stop the oil leak from the X-Press Pearl wreck. "We strongly believe that Your Excellency's intervention is vital at this stage. We hope you can access all of the relevant videos, photographs and daily reports which are in the hands of the Insurer, Caretaker Company, and Oil Response Team to understand, for yourself, the gravity of what has happened, and of the greater catastrophe that could happen, if this wreck is not made safe soon," the team has written to the President.

Experts are Ven. Pahiyangala Ananda Sagara Thera of Protect Sri Lanka, Ravindranath Dabare, Chairman, Centre for Environmental Justice, Hemantha Withanage Friends of Earth Chairman, who is also Senior Advisor to CEJ, Yohan Weerasuriya, Federation of Environmental Organisations, Thilak Kariyawasam- FIAN Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka Nature Group, Herman

Kumara – National Convener-National Fisheries Solidarity Organisation, Vincent Bulathsinhala – Janawabodha Kendhraya, Negombo, Dilena Pathragoda – Executive Director, Centre for Environmental Justice, Chinthaka Rajapaksha- Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform, Sajeewa Chamikara- Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform and Jehan CanagaRetna– Wildlife and Nature Protection Society (WNPS).

“We see only the lethargic responses of the relevant Government agencies in taking any meaningful action. For the last one and a half months, we have received information that the oil leak has spread to Negombo. We have learned that this oil comes from the air vent connected to the oil tank which is located not far from the deck,” Attorney-At-Law Ravindranath Dabare, Chairman, CEJ, has said.

Resolve Marine, the ITOFF (the Emergency Response Team), Oil Spill Response Ltd. (OSRL) and the McLarens Group understood the seriousness of this oil leak, but they have not taken any steps to stop it, the environmentalists have pointed out. Ven. Pahiyangala Ananda Sagara Thera has said that the Sri Lanka Coast Guard and the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MPPA), despite being aware of the situation, has not taken any meaningful action so far.

“According to our information, this oil leak can be prevented by merely placing a cap on the vent. The precise location of this vent could be pinpointed by placing an unmanned underwater vehicle or a simple underwater camera, or just by asking the shipping company for a plan of the ship.

We are particularly alarmed as this oil leak can create long-term environmental damage to coastal habitats, especially to the coral reefs and fish populations,” Environmental Scientist Hemantha Withanage has said. The ship contained 81 containers of hazardous materials, and many others contained chemical products including lubricant oil, gear oil, brake fluid, lithium-ion batteries, and a number of other such goods.

Some of these containers have heavy metals such as lead and they have the potential to destroy marine life. The environmentalists have informed the government that the agencies responsible for preventing the oil leak are more interested in calculating compensation instead of tackling the oil leak. “We also agree that compensation to fishermen, and to others whose livelihoods have been affected by this accident, should be considered as a high priority, but the environmental damage must also be mitigated, they have said. “We do not believe that the Insurer, who seems to control every aspect of this operation, has Sri Lanka’s interests at heart.

Therefore, the government, instead of depending on the insurer, should get a local team of experts to handle the matter. The location of the wreck is of prime importance as the Gas Terminal and Oil Terminal are in the same area. Therefore, it is important to remove this toxic wreck, and its chemical containers, as soon as possible,” Withanage has said.

Sri Lanka: X-Press Pearl: Debris removal commences

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/01/03/x-press-pearl-debris-removal-commences/>

"A salvage operation is underway to remove the X-Press Pearl wreck and the debris that settled in the ocean floor, said Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority. Florida-based salvor Resolve Marine has mapped out the debris spread and has identified 180 target locations, from where the debris will be removed. According to MEPA, the debris will be brought ashore and will be moved to a temporary facility in Wattala.

The debris removal process will be monitored 24/7 by MEPA officials from the MMA Prestige vessel. Shanghai Salvage, a division of China's Ministry of Transport, won the contract to remove the wreck of the sunken container ship X-Press Pearl from waters off the coast of Sri Lanka. The Singapore-flagged vessel first reported smoke in a cargo hold after arriving at a Colombo anchorage on May 20th with 1486 containers, including 81 Dangerous Goods Containers and 25 tonnes of Nitric Acid.

Despite firefighting efforts, the fire spread and set off a series of explosions that resulted in the entire vessel being engulfed by flames. Despite best efforts to save the ship, the X-Press Pearl eventually started taking on water and sank as salvors were attempting to tow it to deeper waters. As of early June, the ship's aft portion was sitting on the seabed at a depth of about 21 meters while the forward area remained partially afloat.

Although the ship's operator has reported that no noticeable fuel oil has spilled from the vessel, chemicals and small plastic pellets have been released into the environment and spread to nearby beaches and fishing grounds. In the aftermath of the fire, it was revealed that a container with nitric acid was discovered to be leaking prior to the ship's arrival in Sri Lanka.

While the X-Press Pearl called Hamad Port in Qatar and Hazira Port in India for discharge and loading operations, they were unable to offload the leaking container as the ports lacked the facilities and expertise to handle the cargo. The ship was also reported to be carrying 297 tonnes of Heavy Fuel Oil and 51 tonnes of Marine Fuel Oil.

Sri Lanka: X-Press Pearl: Sunken, but still deadly

<https://www.nation.lk/online/x-press-pearl-sunken-but-still-deadly-107719.html>

"More than two months have passed since the destruction of the MV X-Press Pearl. An interim grant was received and distributed to the affected fishermen. Many investigations are apparently taking place. However, let us not be complacent about this, and in turn, observe the current state of affairs for a better understanding. As expected, people are slowly losing their interest, the media is focusing on other eventful broadcasts, and the bitter memories of the Pearl are gradually

fading away from the collective mindset. Therefore, the question remains as to whether we, as citizens, are duly exercising our duties in dealing with the aftermath of the incident.

The most recent updates Plenty of discussions and webinars were held, in which both foreign and national academics, environmentalists, scientists, attorneys, and various other speakers discussed about the destruction that has happened and how the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) can claim compensation for the damages that have been caused to the fishing community, and marine and coastal environments, and for the extinguishing of the fire, towing, and coastline cleaning missions that were carried out for days. Sri Lanka sought relief from international and national legislative frameworks.

Accordingly, the applicable international framework can be summarised as follows: International maritime laws – the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Annex I – VI, the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC), the International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage (BUNKER), and the International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-Fouling Systems on Ships (HAFS)

The law of the seas – the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) International environmental law related concepts and principles – the polluter pays principle, State sovereignty, State responsibility, the public trust doctrine, the precautionary principle and Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14): Life Below Water on conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas, and marine resources The national statutory framework includes the Marine Pollution Prevention Act, the Merchant Shipping Act, the Sri Lanka Ports Authority Act, the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act, the Coast Conservation and Coastal Resource Management Act, the National Environmental Act, the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance and the Penal Code.

Therefore, it is certain that if supported with strong evidence, Sri Lanka can claim significant remuneration for the damages caused by the X-Press Pearl. On 12 July, The Morning reported that the Justice Ministry had received the initial interim claim of \$ 3.6 million, of which \$ 2 million (approximately Rs. 420 million) would be distributed among the fishermen who were directly affected due to the disaster. The relief is supposed to cover up their loss of income and the harm caused to any equipment and boats following the incident, due to the debris. There is also a Fundamental Rights petition which seeks an order from the Supreme Court for the Government to use at least 70% of Sri Lanka's compensation for the protection of the Ocean affected by the incident.

Fortunately, the fishing community faced damages which can be remunerated, unlike the marine creatures that lost their lives. It was reported that on 30 July, the Attorney General informed the Court of the most recent number of animal deaths, including 417 marine turtles, 48 dolphins, and eight whales which had died and washed ashore. The number is not definite, and there is a

possibility that more dead animals will be found in the days to come. It is also expressed by the experts that the actual fatalities could be tenfold of the discovered number, since all the dead marine animals do not reach coastlines.

Therefore, it is challenging to assess the damages that have been caused to the marine ecosystem in Sri Lanka. The Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) is of the opinion that the deaths of marine animals could be due to burns, harm caused by exposure to chemicals and asphyxiation owing to experiencing difficulties in breathing. There were dead fish which had many nurdles stuck in their gills and in their stomach. These nurdles are considered to be non-toxic. However, consuming them in considerable quantities could be life threatening to species of fish.

Observations made on the deaths of the turtles indicated that the initial deaths were caused by burns while the current deaths are likely to be caused by difficulties in breathing. This could be as a result of exposure to the chemicals that were mixed with the water. There are only seven types of sea turtles in the entire world, of which five species are found in Sri Lanka, and all five species are listed as endangered on the national red list. Hence, 417 dead turtles is an alarming number and leaves a question as to how the loss of their lives can be recovered. Destruction caused to marine ecosystems is not limited to wildlife, but also includes the coral reefs and aquatic environment.

The coral reefs are considered to be highly sensitive ecosystems. Therefore, the chemical spill and the debris of the Pearl, are most likely to have caused considerable harm to the marine ecosystem, which must be properly ascertained. Damages can be demanded for civil liability specified under Section 34 of the Marine Pollution Prevention Act No. 35 of 2008 for the pollution that has resulted due to this incident.

Accordingly, as per Section 34(1), any damages caused by the discharge, escape or dumping of any oil, harmful substances or other pollutant, and the costs of any measures taken for the purposes of preventing, reducing, or removing any damage caused by the discharge, escape or dumping of any oil, harmful substance or pollutant into the territorial waters of Sri Lanka can be claimed. Section 34(2)(d) specifically refers to the protection and conservation of living marine resources and wildlife. First and foremost, the major responsibilities are now held by the Government officials and any other person who represents Sri Lanka in any platform or media to discuss the consequences of this incident.

The common responsibility of both these parties is to ensure that they do not hinder the attempts of claiming damages for the destruction that has been caused. Their failure to discharge their duties properly, whether it is related to causing an undue delay in disclosing information, tampering with evidence, or making unwarranted statements, could prove to be heavily disadvantageous at this stage. A few such instances are mentioned as follows: The necroscopies

of the dead animals are still not released even after two months, which is clearly a hindrance slowing down the entire legal process.

Whether this delay is deliberate or not is a question which is yet to be answered. Some parties also claim that the necessary technology is not available in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the Justice Ministry has already said that international assistance is sought to investigate the matters. Once again, it cannot be determined as to how long this process will take. The authorities will have to first select the intuition they are seeking help from, followed by the actual investigation and data finalisation procedures. Nevertheless, the ultimate disadvantage might be for the claim for damages, since it would take an unreasonable period of time just to determine the exact cause of death of these marine animals.

There were also allegations that committee members who were supposed to analyse data and submit to the Governmental authorities, had disappeared after collecting such data. If people who are answerable to the Government fail to discharge their duties, it would only end up harming the country. They must be required to strictly adhere to their duties and responsibilities in assisting Sri Lanka without creating further problems.

Moreover, as The Morning reported on 18 July, communication data from 1 May to 10 June, exchanged between the Captain of the MV X-Press Pearl and the Harbour Master, is apparently lost. It is not yet revealed as to whether the data had been deleted deliberately or out of sheer negligence, since the investigations are still taking place. Either way, this conversation undoubtedly contains important evidence that is required for the claims related procedures and losing such crucial information is absurd.

While waiting for the official reports, there were also instances where irresponsible parties made several premature statements. One example is that there is no harm caused to the marine ecosystem of the country from the X-Press Pearl destruction. If any person states that dead turtles, dolphins, and whales found in the coastline after the incident is a usual phenomenon which absolutely has nothing to do with the MV X-Press Pearl, then they are trying to undermine the efforts of the authorities who are making a claim about the damages caused by the ship, in particular, the MEPA. Such unwarranted claims made by any person or representative could be counter-productive to the GoSL.

Therefore, the Government and speakers who are discussing this incident must ensure that they do not make such comments before the official documents are released. Furthermore, such gratuitous declarations are completely against the expert opinions which claim that the fire and the subsequent chemical spill from MV X-Press Pearl is undoubtedly the cause of deaths of the marine animals. It was evident that some irresponsible parties argue otherwise. One such argument is that only the larger sea mammals and turtles have been reported to have died. But such arguments are completely illogical.

Firstly, the species of the marine animals that were found dead are the species that are found in the shallow waters. Secondly, when smaller fish die, there is the possibility that their bodies decompose in salt water. Thirdly, as it was already mentioned, all the dead marine animals are not washed up onto the beaches. Therefore, any person sharing such illogical opinions must be mindful of what they are conveying.

Most importantly, it is up to the Court to decide whether the post-mortem reports show that this unusually large amount of deaths of marine creatures is due to the pollution caused by the ship. The duty of the authorities is to lead the necessary evidence including the post-mortem and other evidence while the technical people including the scientists, should assist the process rather than hinder the process by making unwarranted and premature claims based on whimsical ideas.

While some individuals get involved in the matter more than required, stoic silence is exhibited by certain segments of the scientific community, existing legal persons and the technical persons with the scientific knowledge who can actually assist in these procedures. It was also noticed that some counter claims made by certain people posing as scientists denoting that this is not a serious environmental crisis, can be used against the Government in a claim. It is also advised that the claim for damages must not be concluded depending on the events that have taken place so far.

On 22 July, The Morning reported that an oil sheen was visible around the debris of the MV X-Press Pearl. This means that further damages will be sustained to the marine wildlife and ecosystems, since the oil leak is still continuing. Therefore, it is still premature to conclude the damages, and the relevant authorities must continue to observe the damages in their short-term, medium-term, and long-term effects, in this kind of instance.

Accordingly, a major responsibility lies with the media, who should continuously give updates on current affairs relating to this matter. For instance, updates on the oil spill, dead marine animals washed up ashore, updates on whether the Government authorities are duly fulfilling or neglecting their responsibilities, etc.

They have the obligation to keep the public updated on the harm caused in the aftermath of the incident. Furthermore, the public must show their interest in knowing what is taking place, since this destruction has caused irreversible damages to the environment and there is a possibility that it would take decades to restore these ecosystems. They must demand explanations as to how the reliefs are distributed and how the Government is planning to make amends for the pollution in the environment.

The environment and the wildlife cannot represent themselves or communicate. Therefore, it is the responsibility of each and every member of the society to act beyond their capacity to ensure that the environment and wildlife survive for the years to come, for the sake of our own future generations.

Sri Lanka; A multi-day fishing vessel monitoring system from Australia

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_21A/Jul16_1626455280CH.php

"Sri Lanka received a multi-day fishing vessel monitoring system that contributes to ensure maritime security, under a financial grant from Australia, President's Media Division announced. Australian High Commissioner David Holly said the monitoring system would help in preventing illegal fishing, ensuring border protection and security in Indian Ocean Region, preventing human and drug trafficking and rescuing fishermen in distressed vessels.

The monitoring system consisting of 4,200 transponders, equipment for a monitoring center and satellite facilities is valued at 5.38 million Australian Dollars. The monitoring center will be set up under the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. The first set of transponders was symbolically handed over to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa by Australian High Commissioner David Holly at the Presidential Secretariat this morning (16).

A total of 1,250 such transponders were installed at multi-day fishing vessels in 2015, but most of them are currently inactive. The High Commissioner drew the attention to the request made by Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda to assist in updating these transponders. Sarat Dash, Chief of Mission at International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Sri Lanka, said that this monitoring system would go a long way in strengthening the people-centric economic policy and enhancing the fish and fisheries export process in line with international standards.

The President emphasized the importance of the monitoring system to Sri Lanka's maritime security, which is situated at a unique geographical location. The President extended his gratitude to the Government of Australia for its continued and unwavering support to the Sri Lankan Government. Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, State Minister of Ornamental Fish, Inland Fish & Prawn Farming, Fishery Harbor Development, Multi-Day Fishing Activities and Fish Exports Kanchana Wijesekera, Principal Advisor to the President Lalith Weeratunga, Foreign Secretary Admiral Jayanath Colombage, Secretaries to the Ministries, Heads of Defense Forces, Officials from the Australian High Commission and the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources were also present.

Sri Lanka's Galle Fisheries Harbour to institute a program to avoid congestion when purchasing fish

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/Apr15_1586965730CH.php

"A special program has been launched to ensure consumers, who arrive at the Galle Fisheries Harbour in Sri Lanka, will be able to buy fish without crowding, Galle Fisheries Harbor Manager, Neranjan Dissanayake said. The manager of the fisheries harbor said the consumers

will be given a number when they arrive according to the order they come and only 25 persons will be taken inside at a time in keeping with the instructions of the Public health Inspectors.

According to the manager, fisheries activities in the fisheries harbor were continued during the New Year and the wholesale trade were held yesterday as well as today (15). He said due to the prevailing situation in the country, fishermen requested to go to sea on the New Year's Day as well. "Multi-day fishing vessels left the Galle Fisheries Harbor for fishing on the 12th, 13th and 14th of this month as well as today.

A multi-day fishing trawlers arrived at the harbor with the catch. There is no problem selling fish. Wholesale traders had come to buy fish from the Sooriyaweva, Moneragala area. Harbor Manager, Neranjan Dissanayake said Customers will also be able to buy fish when the curfew is lifted tomorrow.

Fish vendors on motorbikes and bicycles can go to the auction hall to buy fish. There are 24 wholesale dealers in the Fisheries Harbor. The manager of the Galle Fisheries Harbor said they have been instructed to provide this service.

Sri Lanka's President advises to resolve fisheries industry issues while considering consumers as well

http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/Feb26_1582740315CH.php

"President Gotabhaya Rajapaksa has advised officials to protect the fisheries industry while providing the consumer with the opportunity to buy fish at reasonable prices. The President gave these instructions at a meeting with the multi-day trawler owners held at the Presidential Secretariat Wednesday to discuss the problems faced by the fisheries industry.

During the meeting, the President emphasized the importance of working with a committee that includes the exporter as well as the vessel owner when preparing new plans based on the export market policy. He also advised to take immediate steps to stop illegal fishing. Representatives of the Fisheries Association claimed that the export companies were only buying fish from their ships.

They pointed out that the lack of a proper market for their harvest is a serious problem as they are only engaged in export industry. The President advised the relevant authorities to address the issue through short and long term solutions and to take further action with the participation of exporters as well as the boat owners.

The President instructed the Fisheries Corporation Chairman to intervene to purchase their harvest with the help of the private sector as a temporary solution to the problem faced by the multi-day trawlers. Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Douglas Devananda, State Ministers Sanath Nishantha Perera and Kanchana Wijesekara, Secretary to the President Dr. PB

Jayasundera Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Economic and Policy Development SR Attygalle, Secretary to the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources RMI Ratnayake and officials participated in the discussion.

Sri Lanka's extension of GSP Plus to woo more FDI, increase fish exports

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2020/01/23/finance/209217/extension-gsp-plus-woo-more-fdi-increase-fish-exports>

"Extending of the GSP Plus concession to Sri Lanka until 2023, would not only increase fish exports to the European Union, but would also help woo more Foreign Direct Investments, said Minister of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development Douglas Devananda. Speaking to the 'Daily News' at the Lake House Board room after celebrating the anniversary of the publication of 'Oruwella,' a joint publication with the Ministry, Dinamina and the Thinakaran, he said that many EU investors would be at present keen to invest in boat building and fish processing industries.

The Minister said that he would visit the Olivil Harbour which is now closed due to Sand dunes depositing at the entrance and take measure to reopen it. Devananda said that it had an abandoned high tech Fish Processing Plant built to international standards and it must be activated as it could be used to export processed fish, which could be a major foreign exchange earner to the country.

Secretary General /CEO of the National Chamber of Exporters of Sri Lanka, Shiham Marikar, said that the extension of EU concessions would largely help apparel exports and bring in more revenue. He stressed the need for Sri Lankan exporters to invest more in research and development to enhance value addition and adopt sustainable and ethical practices in product manufacturing to cater to the international market.

"We at the National Chamber of Exporters of Sri Lanka, have always been encouraging our members to enhance the value in exports and invest heavily in R &D, to better garner more economic benefits, Marikar said. Acknowledging that the local apparel industry has performed well with a satisfactory growth last year, owing to its ability to manufacture world class premium products, Marikar added that Sri Lanka's apparel exports are designated to be more niche and fashion-oriented markets. "As a result, these foreign buyers would always opt to purchase Sri Lanka made products even if the GSP plus tax concession for Sri Lanka is withdrawn.

Strengthening Myanmar-Sri Lanka Bilateral Relations: A Primer

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/strengthening-myanmar-sri-lanka-bilateral-relations-a-primer/>

"Sri Lanka-Myanmar relations date back to the 4th century through religious ties in the form of Buddhist monks visiting each other's countries to explore Buddhist orthodox traditions. In the modern era, diplomatic relations have extended to trade, diplomatic visits, and cultural tourism. Myanmar is becoming increasingly important to Sri Lanka as both countries face common security issues and share membership in various regional and international organizations such as Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Sri Lanka-Myanmar relations under new President Gotabhaya Rajapaksa can be extended to security cooperation and enhanced military ties to tackle a wide range of issues, including nontraditional security threats.

Myanmar, situated along the Bay of Bengal in the Indian Ocean, shares borders with Bangladesh, India, China, Laos, and Thailand. As a result, the country is engulfed in a geopolitical dilemma owing to regional power rivalries and international instability, requiring its leaders to work toward national interests with shrewd pragmatism. Sri Lanka is no stranger to this dilemma. Sri Lanka-Myanmar relations are underpinned through culture and tradition. Religious ties date back to the 4th century, and in the 11th century King Vijayabahu of Sri Lanka sent Buddhist scriptures (Thripitaka) to King Anawrahta Minsaw, the first king of Burma.

Thanks to these strong cultural ties, Myanmar was one of the first few diplomatic missions to be established in Sri Lanka soon after independence. The first official visit was recorded in 1966 when President Ne Win visited Sri Lanka and in 1976 Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimao Bandaranaike paid an official visit to Myanmar. Sri Lanka-Myanmar trade ties have been established since 1999, with Myanmar exporting rice, wood, pulses and beans, gems, jewelry, natural rubber, and fisheries products. Sri Lanka exports rice, maize, apparel, paints, rubber, porcelain products etc. Although the total numbers remain small, bilateral trade has grown rapidly, from \$2.8 million in 2009 to \$82 million in 2017.

Some key government-to-government deals that were negotiated in the past 15 years include MOUs between the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) and the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce in 2006; between the UMFCCI and Sri Lanka Gem and Jewelry Association; and a Ministry of Industry and Commerce MOU to import 30,000 MT of white raw rice from Myanmar. There have been delegation visits in both 2012 and 2018 to discuss the garment manufacturing trade and to find new openings for business development between the two countries.

Myanmar is vulnerable to nontraditional security issues and natural disasters spanning refugee crisis, illegal and irregular migration, trafficking of people and contraband, violent extremism, terrorism, droughts, landslides, floods, cyclones, and earthquakes. In 2019, Myanmar was ranked as the third most vulnerable to long-term climate risks in Global Climate Risk Index and 12th in the INFORM Index for Risk Management.

Sri Lanka's threat landscape is quite similar to that of Myanmar, with both facing issues related to transnational organized crime, trafficking, and maritime border security. Likewise, Sri Lanka ranked second in the Global Climate Risk Index's one-year risk index. Maritime security is quintessential to countries with access to the sea, and pertinent issues such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and illegal migration have cautioned coast guards to be more vigilant.

In addition, both Sri Lanka and Myanmar are geopolitically subjected to a triple sphere of influence: China, the United States, and India. Navigating ways to balance these three powers is nothing new. According to Ambassador Saurabh Kumar, “Myanmar is the only country where India's Act East Policy and Neighborhood First policy converge.

Strategic Indian investments include the \$484 million Kaladan multi-modal transit transport project of seaport and Inland water terminal. Meanwhile, China is Myanmar's largest investor and trading partner with six BRI projects in the country, including Kyaukpyu Port, the New Yangon Development project, and the now-stalled Myitsone Hydropower Project. In addition, the United States is also investing heavily in Myanmar.

130 U.S. firms are already registered in Myanmar, with total investment scaling up to \$250 million. Meanwhile, Chinese investments in Sri Lanka span Colombo Port City, Mattala Airport, Hambantota Harbor, Colombo Lotus Tower, and building Sri Lanka's highways. Despite insurmountable debt, the BRI is a source of pride in Sri Lanka and also an opportunity for growth. This has also been the case for Myanmar, with the China-Myanmar economic corridor shortening the route for oil and gas imports from the Persian Gulf to mainland China.

The United States is also a strong influencer in Sri Lanka, which is currently negotiating development assistance and defense agreements including an Acquisition and Cross Services Agreement, a Status of Forces Agreement, a \$480 million Millennium Challenge Corporation Compact, and \$39 million in Foreign Military Financing to enhance Sri Lanka's maritime domain awareness.

The Indian coast guard is currently in the process of negotiating an MOU with both the Myanmar and Sri Lanka coast guards on this front. India gearing up defense cooperation with both countries does not come as a surprise due to the Chinese footprint in both states, especially as New Delhi continues to see Beijing's String of Pearls Strategy as strategically encircling India. Analysts have speculated that Chinese investments in the Indian Ocean region, including in Sri Lanka and Myanmar, could be intended for both civilian and military use.

For instance, Keith Johnson, writing for Foreign Policy, argued that “Chinese legal directives ordering state-owned shipping companies to offer logistics support to the Chinese navy could turn China's huge shipping fleet and port operations into a potential adjunct of its growing navy. Amid their common interests and shared struggles, there are positive signs that suggest Myanmar and Sri Lanka could venture into new areas of cooperation. They already have a bilateral

Agreement on Tourism Cooperation and are exploring youth-led business opportunities, which was discussed by the Chamber of Young Lankan Entrepreneurs (COYLE) of Sri Lanka in 2019.

The Memorandum of Understanding for establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection is another great opportunity for subregional cross-border power exchanges and researching meaningful ways for sustainable use of energy resources. Another area of cooperation is to conduct joint research or comparative city studies on improving public and commercial transportation.

Myanmar's railroad and highway development is limited but public transport is improving in big cities. For example, the Yangon bus service recently announced that around 1,500 buses will get e-ticketing machines, replacing cash boxes with a card payment system. In addition, since both countries have similar economies and are developing nations, pilot studies on transportation and how best to yield economic return from Sri Lanka's inland-waterways would be highly useful in the future. Myanmar uses both ocean shipping and Inland waterways for commercial purposes; 25 percent of the country's inland waterways are navigable for commercial purposes.

Finally, Sri Lanka has an important lesson to learn from Myanmar: how to gain the most from foreign assistance irrespective of threat perceptions. The best example to draw from is the India-led construction of a seaport and the inland water terminal in Sittwe in Myanmar's Rakhine state, which has experienced attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and the Arakan Army as well as a controversial military crackdown.

Sri Lanka is still yet to mature in terms of receiving foreign assistance to develop its North and Eastern Provinces, which were once in the clutches of a separatist terrorist movement led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE). Although India assisted in the construction of the Palaly airport in Jaffna, more development is needed. Myanmar is committed to improve the Rakhine state economy and Sri Lanka should be similarly committed to improve the economy of war-torn areas in the country.

Sufficient fuel for Sri Lanka's fishing community, says Ministry

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/04/18/sufficient-fuel-for-the-fishing-community-ministry/>

"Sri Lanka's Ministry of Fisheries said that there is sufficient fuel for fishing activities, adding that all fishing harbors have been instructed to supply the required fuel stocks for multi-day vessels without any restrictions.

Secretary to the Ministry Indu Ratnayake speaking to News 1st said the fuel shortage in Sri Lanka has not had a major impact on the fishing industry.

The Secretary to the Ministry said that fishing harbors and fishermen are requested to inform the Ministry or the relevant Authorities if there is any problem regarding fuel."

Talks start to protect Indian Ocean's depleting tuna

<https://science.thewire.in/environment/talks-start-to-protect-indian-oceans-depleting-tuna/>

"Representatives of 30 nations met on March 9 to seek ways to save fast-depleting tuna stocks in the Indian Ocean as demand in Asia and the West soars for sushi and tinned fish. The Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), which groups coastal countries from Australia to Kenya plus major fishing region the European Union, was convening virtually over five days to debate yellowfin tuna quotas.

Environmentalists say the warm water species is at risk of depletion as over-fishing compounds other threats from climate change and pollution. There is corporate concern too: British supermarkets Tesco and Co-op and Belgian retailer Colruyt pledged last year to stop buying Indian Ocean yellowfin unless the UN-mandated commission adopts a plan to rebuild stocks. The International Union for Conservation of Nature has for nearly a decade had the species on its "Red List".

Yet the total global catch has risen by about a third, to nearly 450,000 metric tonnes annually, according to the London-based Blue Marine Foundation advocacy group. It estimates yellowfin tuna stocks could "collapse" – meaning they would go beyond the minimum size needed for recovery – within the next five years if the catch is not cut. French and Spanish fishing fleets take the majority of fish, using industrial methods such as "purse seine" with huge nets that often net juvenile yellowfin yet to begin reproducing.

Coastal nations want to limit Europe's distant-water fleets. Kenya and Sri Lanka, for example, want more curbs on devices such as fish aggregators: floating objects that attract tuna and other species towards nets. "They are the visitors," said Will McCallum, head of oceans at environmental group Greenpeace UK, of the European fleets. "They are fishing at a far larger capacity than anybody else, and it's not an equitable state of affairs."

The Maldives wants the yellowfin catch to be cut by 15% from 2015 levels, when IOTC scientists first agreed they were being overfished. The IOTC had last year recommended cutting the catch by 20% from 2014 levels, but rowed back in January, saying that was distorted by projections from the 2018 stock assessment. Given that a new stock assessment will not be ready until the end of 2021, the commission may postpone new measures, according to the Blue Marine Foundation.

"For a stock that is at risk of collapse, this delay could prove catastrophic," it said in a statement. The European Union proposes a total catch reduction from nearly 438,000 metric tons in 2019 to

around 380,000. Demand for yellowfin is booming as its light meat is widely used for tinned fish and in sushi in North America, Europe and Asia.

The global yellowfin market in 2018 was worth \$15.8 billion, the second-highest value of the seven tuna species, according to a report by the world's largest canned tuna company, Thai Union Group PCL. Greenpeace's McCallum said the over-fishing issue had stalled during the COVID-19 pandemic and drastic action was needed now to avoid irrecoverable damage to the species.

The Belt and Road project in Sri Lanka: Beyond the debt trap discussion

<https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/the-belt-and-road-in-sri-lanka-beyond-the-debt-trap-discussion/>

"While China's "Green Belt and Road has received considerable attention, the environmental impact of Chinese investment projects in Sri Lanka has been mixed. According to environmental advocates, early infrastructure projects, including the construction of Hambantota Port and Norochcholai Power Plant did not meet international environmental standards with respect to feasibility studies and domestic legislation processes.

Similarly, some sources reported that construction of Colombo Port City (a commercial and residential project on reclaimed land near the Colombo port) resulted in a decrease of fish stocks, severely impacting the livelihoods of local fishermen. Sri Lanka has comprehensive domestic environmental legislation, encompassing a wide range of regulations and standards. The detail and implementation of such legislation, however, is wanting.

For example, although Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) are legally required for development projects, the Colombo Port City appears to have been initiated without a comprehensive study and subsequent EIAs for the project were criticized for lacking specificity, transparency, and due consideration of project alternatives. More recently, however, Chinese investments have shown positive environmental signs.

Colombo Port City has committed to a long-term Sustainability Master Plan, setting standards and protection measures for pollution, waste control, and biodiversity. The Colombo International Container Terminal (CICT), a Chinese-built and operated terminal of the Colombo port, has prioritized green technology, becoming the first terminal of the port to convert its regular cranes to zero-emission electric cranes, minimizing air pollution and carbon emissions.

The CICT terminal is the most profitable terminal of the Colombo port, demonstrating that Chinese investments can simultaneously pursue commercial success and environmental responsibility. Two common perceptions about Chinese investment projects in Sri Lanka are that they rely on Chinese labor, displacing local workers, and that among this labor force there

are many illegal migrants.

The X-Press Pearl fire – A disaster of unimaginable proportions

<https://groundviews.org/2021/06/03/the-x-press-pearl-fire-a-disaster-of-unimaginable-proportions/>

"After 12 days, the ship MV X-Press Pearl finally sank about 9.5 nautical miles from the Colombo harbour. It has not sunk fully because it is touching a coral bed. The ship had been burning from May 20; an explosion six days later brought disaster in the form of small white plastic pellets spread around almost one third of the coastline from Galle to Kalpitiya. The pellets are low density polyethylene plastic nurdles.

The busy East-West shipping route passes six to ten nautical miles south of the country. More than 60,000 ships ply this route annually carrying two thirds of the world's oil and half its container shipments. Although there are thousands of ships passing by Sri Lanka every day, major ship accidents are rare. However, the fire on X-Press Pearl is the second accident during the last 10 months.

The Singapore-flagged cargo vessel was carrying a consignment of hazardous chemicals including nitric acid, ethanol, lead ingots, dust urea, frilled urea, high density and low density polyethylene (46 containers), epoxy resins (349 containers), sodium methoxide, caustic soda (42 containers), aluminum processing byproducts, raw materials for cosmetics, food items and general cargo from Qatar and Gujarat to the Colombo port. The ship also had 300 tonnes of bunker oil. With the sinking of the ship, the release of the chemicals is a serious risk to the ocean and the coastal ecosystem.

Nitric acid will damage the corals and ocean life as it is a highly corrosive chemical. It is a very dangerous acid. The burned plastics are polluting the air. But spreading of plastic pellets is the most disastrous impact we have seen so far. While cleaning efforts could remove half the plastic beads, rest will stay mixed with sand and in the coral beds, continuing to kill ocean life for many more years. Heavy metals in the environmentally harmful substances and possible oil spill will bring disaster if we don't act fast. According to the list of goods, the container had many flammable liquids and solids such as sulfur.

When sulfur is burned, poisonous gases are produced including hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide and sulfur trioxide. Although there may have been some acid rain, that possibility is over now. Sodium methoxide reacts with water to form sodium hydroxide, a corrosive material, and methyl alcohol, a flammable liquid. The heat from this reaction may be sufficient to ignite surrounding combustible material or the sodium methylate itself if the water is present even in small amounts. Therefore, using water for fire control was a wrong procedure.

Nitric acid reacts with water releasing large amount of heat, which was the cause of the accident as revealed in media reports. We have no report on how the ship controlled the fire at the initial stages. Vinyl acetate is a clear, colorless liquid. It is very flammable and may be ignited by heat, sparks or flames. It is a carcinogen and flammable. The ship caught fire 9.5 nautical miles from the coast. Sri Lankan authorities who tried to manage the fire failed and there was an explosion on the morning of May 26.

The fire was only controlled after Indian emergency support joined the mission on May 27. The Sri Lankan effort failed due to the lack of an emergency response system, lack of safety procedures, relevant expertise and lack of tools and equipment. Failure of other countries to assist Sri Lanka seems part of the negligence. There is a clear violation of the International Convention for Prevention Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention), which Sri Lanka ratified in 1997, that seeks to handle harmful substances.

The extent of environmental damage has not been assessed yet; the National Aquaculture Research Agency (NARA) and Marine Environment Protection Authority will conduct an assessment on the quality of sea water and the diversity of planktons. Thousands of fishermen have lost their livelihoods after the government banned fishing from Panadura to Negombo. Fishermen who are allowed to go fishing can't sell their catch because people are afraid to eat seafood due to chemical poisoning.

The areas under direct impact are the western coast harbours from where there is offshore fishing, near shore fishing and lagoon fishing. The Dikowita Fishing Harbour is located less than 10 km from Colombo. About 349 boats, 272 rafters and 33 multi day boats ply out of this harbor. Over 6,000 fishermen live along Uswetakeiyava to Negombo coastal stretch. About 2,000 boats go for fishing in the ocean. The Negombo lagoon has 3,000 fishermen and 1,300 boats and fishing crafts.

Dead fish have washed up on the shores with plastic pellets trapped in their gills. They will continue to ingest the pellets, which will be accumulated in their digestive systems, posing a health hazard for fish consumers. Even though the pellets are being collected, a considerable part will be left behind; it is impossible to do a total beach cleanup. Colombo and Gampaha are two most populated districts in Sri Lanka where many of the people, including tourists, use the beach for recreational purposes.

The accident has caused significant damage to the visual quality of the beach that will last for years, affecting the tourism industry. Although the impact on biodiversity is yet to be assessed, there are several reefs located in the area and the fauna and flora associated with the reefs will be seriously affected. Turtles, moray eel and sting ray have washed up on beaches. The coastal belt consists of several important and sensitive ecosystems such as coral reefs, seagrass beds, estuaries, lagoons and beaches where turtles frequently nest.

The ocean around Sri Lanka is a rich habitat for marine mammals such as whales and dolphins, so the impact of an oil spill will be disastrous. When analyzing the environmental hazardous chemicals and other chemicals found on the ship, the air pollution during the fire would have been very toxic and the water contamination would also be very toxic. Leaking containers were found about 1,000 miles away from Sri Lanka.

According to the media, Port Hazira on the west coast of India and Hamad in Qatar had denied captain's request to offload containers with leaking nitric acid. If the ship's authorities had acted more responsibly, the disaster could have been avoided. They are also responsible under the precautionary principle in international environmental law and they should have taken measures to prevent this happening or to reduce the harm. The country is paying a high price in terms of environmental, social and economic costs.

Under the polluter pays principle, polluters and responsible parties are required to pay for the damage they cause to the territorial sea and its ocean life, water quality, air quality and the other interests such as damage to livelihoods and fisheries in addition to the cost of emergency response, clean ups and compensation to the victims of pollution. However, our experience is not very positive.

In September 2020 a crude oil carrier chartered by Indian Oil Corporation, the New Diamond, set off from Kuwait to the Paradip Port in India with 270,000 metric tons of crude oil that started spilling into the ocean on Sri Lanka's east coast following a fire on board. Sri Lankan authorities have filed charges against the captain and a claim for \$2.4 million from the ship's owners for the firefighting and pollution prevention efforts. A team of experts, tasked to assess the comprehensive environmental damage, came up with a compensation of around \$17.38 million but this has not yet been paid.

Sri Lanka has not signed the Hazardous and Noxious Substances Convention. Had Sri Lanka become a signatory to the convention and incorporated it into the domestic law, the country would have been in a better position to claim compensation for the damage done. We need to remedy the environmental damage to the rich ecosystem associated with ocean environment including coral reefs, mangroves and lagoons that will be there for years to come.

We need justice for the fishing community who have been affected due to the contamination of sea areas and loss of fishing grounds. We need justice for the public who use the beach for recreation purposes. The Centre for Environmental Justice will file a fundamental rights application in the Supreme Court for this purpose.

More importantly, we need to learn from the disaster and correct our emergency response mechanism. There should be a dedicated unit with facilities at the Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) including a ship facilities to engage in ocean incidents. It is important to sign and ratify necessary international conventions before next disaster.

Scientific decision making should be respected and scientific bodies such as National Aquatic resources Agency (NARA) should be given necessary infrastructure and facilities including a research ship to study our ocean and bring the benefits of science to prevent future disasters.

Towards improved livelihoods and higher revenues from sustainable fisheries in Sri Lanka

<https://www.ft.lk/agriculture/Towards-improved-livelihoods-and-higher-revenues-from-sustainable-fisheries-in-SL/31-731373>

"Sri Lanka has 1,620 kilometres of coastline and exclusive rights to fish, drill and conduct other economic activities in a 517,000-square-kilometre exclusive economic zone in the Indian Ocean. However, this does not mean that there are limitless fish resources waiting to be harvested. In fact, an important portion of the fisheries harvested by more than 50,000 Sri Lankan fishing vessels are already overfished and require rebuilding. Catches are declining; so, increasing the boat and gear capacity would only lead to more degradation.

Improved management offers opportunities for increasing revenues from capture fisheries and create skilled jobs, while complying with the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission yellowfin tuna rebuilding plan, which calls for reduced catch. "This approach is also in line with the World Bank's green, resilient, and inclusive development framework for recovery from the ill effects of the COVID-19 pandemic," says World Bank Country Director for Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka Faris Hadad-Zervos.

Tropical Cyclone Burevi heads to southern India after ramming Sri Lanka

<https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/international/2020/12/03/592567.htm>

"The Burevi tropical cyclone is headed towards southern India, authorities said on Thursday, after it slammed Sri Lanka's east coast earlier this week but caused little damage. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a "red warning to parts of the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala and said the cyclone is expected to hit on Thursday or early on Friday. Another tropical cyclone killed at least 23 people in Tamil Nadu last week.

"Very to heavy rainfall is expected in southern Kerala and southern Tamil Nadu, the IMD said. India's weather office said it expects damage to thatched huts, and that power and communication lines could be affected due to breaking tree branches. It also expects the storm to hit paddy crops, banana, papaya trees and orchards.

The warning comes after Burevi's packing winds of up to 90 kph (56 mph) hit Sri Lanka late on Wednesday but with little fallout. "District disaster management units are reporting that no

major damage has been caused by the cyclone, said Pradeep Kodippili, assistant director at the country's disaster management center.

Authorities in Sri Lanka had evacuated more than 75,000 people, most of them from the Trincomalee area, before the Burevi cyclone hit. But Kodippili said cyclonic conditions were still prevalent in the north with heavy rains and strong gusts of wind and that naval and fishing communities had been asked not to go out to sea.

Troubled waters: On India-Sri Lanka fishing conflict

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/troubled-waters-the-hindu-editorial-on-india-sri-lanka-fishing-conflict/article65084884.ece>

Fishermen from Tamil Nadu keep getting caught with alarming regularity in the territorial waters of Sri Lanka for “poaching”. Yet, the stakeholders concerned have yet to demonstrate the alacrity required for well-known solutions. In the latest development, the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 22 fishermen who are from Nagapattinam and neighbouring Karaikal, on Wednesday. There are already 29 fishermen in custody in Sri Lanka, as pointed out by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in his letter to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar a few days ago.

As per an estimate, Sri Lankan authorities have also impounded 84 boats. The frequency with which Tamil Nadu’s fishermen allegedly cross the International Maritime Boundary Line, despite being aware of the consequences, highlights their level of desperation driven by livelihood concerns. This is, however, not to absolve them of their culpability in endangering Sri Lanka’s marine biodiversity, which is of vital importance to Tamil fishermen of the Northern Province, who suffered in the civil war.

The vexatious problem has also been aggravated by events over the past month — the reported death of two Jaffna fishermen following “mid-sea clashes with their Tamil Nadu counterparts” on January 27 and 29, subsequent protests by northern Sri Lankan fishermen, and the reported auctioning by Sri Lanka of 140 impounded boats even before a Tamil Nadu government team and fishermen’s representatives could visit Sri Lanka to finalise modalities on the disposal of unsalvageable boats. There has been no word from Colombo on permitting fishermen-devotees to attend, in March, the annual festival of St. Anthony’s Church at Katchatheevu.

Apart from getting the arrested fishermen released, the governments of the two countries should fix a date for an early meeting of the Joint Working Group, last held in December 2020. They should also facilitate the resumption of talks at the level of fisherfolk, especially from Tamil Nadu and the Northern Province. Sri Lanka should be proactive as its citizens in the North bear the brunt of the alleged acts of transgression.

Besides, its positive actions would be in tune with what the Prime Ministers of India and Sri Lanka agreed at the virtual summit in September 2020 to “continue engagement to address the issues related to fishermen through regular consultation and bilateral channels”. New Delhi should also consider providing additional incentives and concessions to fishermen of the Palk Bay districts of Tamil Nadu to elicit a better response from them for its deep sea fishing project.

It could also propose assistance for the fishermen of the Northern Province as a gesture of goodwill. There is no paucity of ideas in the area of the Palk Bay fisheries conflict, but adequate action on the part of the stakeholders is found wanting.

US\$4.5 bn worth marine resources pillaged by Indian fishermen annually, say Sri Lankan fishermen

<https://www.newsfirst.lk/2021/04/14/rs-900-bn-worth-marine-resources-pillaged-by-indian-fishermen-annually/>

"Indian fishing vessels illegally fishing in Sri Lankan waters pillage around Rs. 900 billion worth of valuable marine resources in the northern seas of Sri Lanka. The Chief of the Northern Province Fisheries Association M. V. Subramaniam speaking to News 1st said that the proposal to offer permits to Indian fishermen to fish in Sri Lankan waters is unacceptable. “This has not happened anywhere else and we are not ready to give up our resources,” he said while alleging that every Indian fishing boat entering Sri Lankan waters is connected to Indian politicians and most of these boats belong to Members of the Legislative Assembly in Tamil Nadu who are sponsoring these illegal acts.

On Tuesday (13), News 1st exposed how Indian fishing vessels illegally enter Sri Lankan waters not far from the Island of Delft, under the cover of darkness to pillage our marine resources. The Indian fishing vessels were using a fishing method banned in Sri Lanka, which is called Bottom Trawling. Bottom trawling is an industrial fishing method where a large net with heavy weights is dragged across the seafloor, scooping up everything in its path, from the targeted fish to incidentally caught, centuries-old corals.

These nets are dragged by two large trawlers, equipped with powerful engines, larger than any fishing vessel used in Sri Lanka. Indian fishermen forcing their way into Sri Lankan waters is not something that happened overnight, it is an issue that has been growing over the years. It is in such a backdrop, Sri Lanka’s Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda proposed to allow Indian Fishermen to enter into Sri Lankan waters by offering them a pass.

Sri Lankan fishermen, especially those in the north are outraged by this proposal. “Indian fishermen are already destroying our valuable marine resources, and now there is an attempt to

offer passes for them to come here. We oppose this move. If this situation continues, the word 'FISH' will be limited to text on paper," warned one fisherman.

Sri Lankan fishermen say that Indian trawlers come very close to the Sri Lankan mainland under the cover of darkness and in the process of pillaging our seas, they destroy the valuable fishing nets of local fishers. "They destroy the nets that we purchase at a high cost, sometimes valued in the hundreds of thousands. If permits are offered to them, why do we need a maritime boundary," said another fisherman. However, Sri Lanka Fisheries Minister Douglas Devananda said the issue needs to be solved diplomatically.

World News: 25 Organizations supporting sustainable fishing

<https://foodtank.com/news/2020/11/organizations-supporting-sustainable-fishing/>

"Demand for fish is on the rise worldwide fish consumption has spiked 122 percent in the last three decades, according to the United Nations. At least 3 billion people rely on seafood as a primary source of protein, according to the World Wildlife Fund. And the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that nearly 60 million people make a living fishing or farming fish. But the world's fisheries face various threats.

Overfishing, illegal fishing, climate change, habitat loss, and pollution have halved the world's fish population since 1970. The FAO says that today 90 percent of the world's stocks are currently overfished or depleted. Meanwhile, unsustainable fish farming systems can leach chemicals, waste, and uneaten fish feed that harm marine ecology and sometimes infect fish. "It's easy to ignore our oceans, Mark Zimring, Director of Large Scale Fisheries at The Nature Conservancy, tells Food Tank. "So much of what happens, happens underneath the water. But, he continues, "we have got to invest in managing these systems for resilience because they are critical, ultimately, to our wellbeing and the global biodiversity.

Mark Kaplan, the founder of (en) visible which uses technology to trace sustainable seafood supply chains says industry reform is well within reach, and hinges only on a demand for change. "We know that there is nothing preventing the conversion of non-traceable supply chains to traceable, other than the people involved not being willing to do it, he tells Food Tank. Fortunately, groups across the globe from international agencies to local fisheries are fighting to keep waters clean and bountiful, while also bolstering local economies, empowering marginalized communities, and helping feed the world.

In celebration of World Fisheries Day, Food Tank is highlighting 25 of these organizations. 1. Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust, United States The Alaska Sustainable Fisheries Trust (ASFT) is a nonprofit based in Sitka, Alaska on a mission to support local fishers, promote sustainable practices, and revitalize fishing communities. In a joint effort with Alaska Longline Fishermen's

Association, ASFT has provided nearly 490,000 free seafood meals to families through children's programs, food pantries, women's shelters, and tribal organizations since March 2020.

And ASFT subsidiary Alaskans Own recently partnered with Northline Seafoods to donate 45,000 pounds of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon to Alaska Native villages experiencing record-low salmon harvests. 2. Catch Together, United States Catch Together is a Massachusetts-based grant program that supports local fishers in Maine, the Gulf of Mexico, Alaska, and more. The organization hopes to bolster fishers' businesses and communities by restoring fish stocks, offering fishers direct financial support and financial lessons, and building a nationwide network of permit banks which give small-scale fishers the right to harvest a fair number of fish. Catch Together plans to invest between US\$25 and US\$50 million over the next three years.

3. Center for Oceans, International Center for Oceans is an initiative by the nonprofit Conservation International that works to encourage sustainable fishing practices, inform global policy, restore coastal ecosystems, defend human rights in the seafood industry, and provide communities with nutrient-rich foods. Center for Oceans partners with 150 global organizations to protect 2.3 million square kilometers of the sea, and has helped implement sustainable fishing practices across 25 coastal fisheries in 13 countries. 4. Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, United States For more than 35 years, the Indigenous-led Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission in Portland, Oregon has supported fishers in the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla, and Nez Perce tribes.

The commission is guided by four goals: to restore the populations of salmon, lamprey, and sturgeon in the Columbia River Basin, protect tribal fishing rights, share cultural traditions, and provide fishers in its four member tribes with the tools they need to make a living. The commission has helped restore more than 660 miles of stream in the past decade. 5.

Confédération Africaine des Organisations de Pêche Artisanale, Africa Confédération Africaine des Organisations de Pêche Artisanale, or the African Confederation of Artisanal Fishing Organisations (CAOPA), is an association representing fisheries in Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mauritania, and Senegal.

CAOPA advocates for policies that support sustainable fishing in Africa, as a means to eradicate food security and poverty, and pushes for international initiatives that address climate change and climate-related disasters, which tend to be concentrated in fishing regions. 6. Coastal Culinary Academy, United States The Maine-based Coastal Culinary Academy is a seafood-specific culinary school founded by sustainable seafood expert, educator, and former chef Barton Seaver. Seaver's online course, Seafood Literacy, takes a deep dive into sustainable seafood practices from fishing to dining. Seaver has also authored seven seafood-centric books and delivered a great number of lectures, seminars, and interviews.

7. Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores, Brazil Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores (CPP), or The Fishermen's Pastoral Council, seeks to preserve the economic, cultural, and social benefits of

artisanal fishing in Brazil. CPP's grassroots movement Movimento de Pescadores e Pescadoras Artesanais, or Movement of Fishermen and Artisanal Fishermen, networks fishers across the country, and the group's Campanha pelo Território Pesqueiro, or Fishing Territory Campaign, safeguards community fishing territories. Additionally, CPP's Nem um Poço a Mais!, or Not a Well Too Many, lobbies against the expansion of offshore oil infrastructure, like pipelines and wells.

8. (en)visible, United States (en)visible uses blockchain and other technology to let businesses and consumers track seafood across every step of the supply chain from producer to grocer and ensure seafood is responsibly-sourced. The company's founder, Mark Kaplan, says traceable, sustainable seafood comes as a cost-benefit to conventional seafood as consumers continue to look for more information about their products. 9. Global Salmon Initiative, International Global Salmon Initiative (GSI) is a coalition of CEOs committed to upholding sustainable salmon farming practices. The coalition's Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) certification is lauded as one of the world's most comprehensive certification programs.

To receive ASC certification, fish farmers must adhere to more than 500 compliance standards, spanning from sustainable fish feed and disease management to social responsibility. GSI has certified over 200 members to date. 10. HATCH, Hawai'i, Norway, Singapore The venture capital firm HATCH invests in innovative, sustainable aquaculture startups. Through its accelerator program, HATCH offers companies US\$130,000 in funding and access to more than 100 mentors. The company has provided seed funding to startups in multiple sectors: nutrition, marine health, biotech, technology, production, and alternative seafood. 11. Marine Stewardship Council, United Kingdom Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is a nonprofit certification organization that works with fisheries, grocery stores, and restaurants to set sustainable fishing standards. MSC certified companies are independently assessed and rated by where they fish, how much unwanted fish they catch, how they're impacting marine habitats, whether they can trace their products to their source, and more.

12. National Family Farm Coalition, United States The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) mobilizes family farmers, fishers, and ranchers to advocate for fair wages, environmental reform, food sovereignty, and an end to corporate control of the food system. NFFC aims to elevate local communities and support a safe, healthy environment. The grassroots organization represents 300 member organizations and 400,000 fishers across Rural America. 13. Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance, United States The Massachusetts-based Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA) is a fisher-led organization that advocates for fair wages and working conditions, equitable access to nutrition, healthy ecosystems, racial equality in the food system, and an end to corporate takeover in the fish market.

NAMA also supports the Fish Locally Collaborative, a network that connects more than 400,000 fishers, fish workers, seafood processors, and organizations across the United States, Canada, Latin America, and Europe. 14. NutriFish1000, Africa and Asia The NutriFish1000 initiative

gives low-income women in rural Asia and Africa the tools they need to farm a diverse array of small, indigenous fish. The goal of the campaign is to provide reliable, macronutrient-dense food for women and children in their first 1,000 days of life, while keeping women in control of food production. Backed by the World Bank and United Nations, NutriFish1000 projects have been launched in six countries, including India and Bangladesh.

15. Oceana, International Oceana is an international nonprofit dedicated to ocean restoration. Oceana conducts its own research and makes policy recommendations to nations around the world. Since its inception in 2001, Oceana has protected nearly 4 million square miles of ocean and won more than 225 policy victories from stopping bottom trawling in sensitive habitats to protecting sea turtles from commercial fishing gear. 16. Port Orford Oregon Sustainable Seafood, United States Aaron Longton co-founded Port Orford Oregon Sustainable Seafood (POSS) in 2009 on a mission to pay local fishers fair prices for their catch.

The company now sells Consumer Supported Fishery (CSF) boxes based on the concept of Community Supported Agriculture to customers in Western Washington. POSS fishes hook-and-line year-round and fillets its own salmon, Dungeness, albacore, halibut, and more right on the docks of Port Orford. 17. Recirculating Farms Coalition, United States The Louisiana-based Recirculating Farms Coalition helps build hydroponic, aquaponic, and aquaculture farms that recycle clean water and fish waste to grow fresh, local greens. The organization also advocates for local, regional, and national policies that support sustainable agriculture and fair farming. Recirculating Farms' local initiatives, Growing Local NOLA and Growing Local On The Geaux, build community gardens and green spaces, and offer New Orleans residents free classes and events. 18. Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, International The nonprofit Sea Shepherd protects marine wildlife by helping to quell habitat destruction, ocean pollution, and poaching.

Through its Operation Treasured Islands, the organization patrols two million square kilometers off the coasts of Central and South America to investigate illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. And through Sea Shepherd's Operation Virus Hunter, researchers collect data to shine light on the impacts of open net-pen salmon farms in British Columbia, Canada. 19. Seatopia Collective, United States Seatopia is a farm-to-table cooperative in Southern California that sources antibiotic and hormone-free seafood from sustainable aquaculture farms. Aiming to mitigate pressure on wild-caught fish, the co-op connects restaurants and consumers to a vetted list of small-scale, regenerative farms that raise responsibly fed, non-GMO fish.

Seatopia also donates to 1% for the Planet, a nonprofit that puts 1 percent of the company's earnings towards funding Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). 20. Sociedad de Historia Natural Niparajà, Mexico Sociedad de Historia Natural Niparajà, or Niparajà Natural History Society, is a nature conservation organization based in Baja California Sur. The group educates local fishers on responsible harvesting practices and helps establish refuge zones to restore fish populations in the San Cosme to Punta Coyote Corridor. Sociedad de Historia Natural Niparajà also pioneers initiatives to conserve water and protect local water sources from mining. 21. Stop Illegal

Fishing, Botswana Stop Illegal Fishing partners with governments, law enforcement agencies, and other organizations to eliminate illegal fishing across Africa.

The nonprofit spreads awareness across local, regional, and national platforms, and deploys task forces that crack down on illicit practices like smuggling, trading illegal products, and using explosives to kill fish by monitoring vessels and ports. 22. Sustainable Fishery Trade, Peru Sustainable Fishery Trade (SFT) is an initiative overseen by the Nonprofit Enterprise and Self-sustainability Team (NESsT) that sources fish from small-scale Peruvian fishers to sell to restaurants and retail stores at a fair price. SFT also educates local fishers on sustainable harvesting and fish farming. The organization has trained more than 200 fishers to date, and boosted fishers' incomes by 30 to 50 percent.

23. The Bay of Bengal Programme, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Sri Lanka The Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) is an intergovernmental organization and agreement between Bangladesh, India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka working to establish environmentally and economically sustainable fishing practices in The Bay of Bengal. BOBP educates fishers on responsible practices and new technologies, monitors the progress of its member countries, and institutes transnational policies to conserve fishing stocks.

24. WorldFish, International WorldFish is an international nonprofit that highlights sustainable fishing and aquaculture methods through its research, as a way to reduce poverty and bolster food and nutrition security across Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. WorldFish researches how to best breed and feed fish, prevent diseases, protect marine ecosystems, and increase the availability of fish as a food source.

25. Xpert Sea, Canada Canadian technology company XpertSea uses Artificial Intelligence to help fishers farm more efficiently and sustainably. Xpert Sea's systems can track the growth and health of shrimp and fish, identify disease, predict the best times to harvest, and monitor for poor water management and excessive feeding. The company currently serves customers in more than 50 countries.

X-Press Pearl cargo spill off Sri Lanka is “the oil spill of our times”, says study

<https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/study-x-press-pearl-cargo-spill-is-the-oil-spill-of-our-times>

"A group of environmental advocates have carried out a lab study on samples of the plastic debris from the wreck of the X-Press Pearl, which burned and sank off Colombo, Sri Lanka last year. The vessel was carrying nearly 1,700 tonnes of plastic pellets, or nurdles, and it released a substantial quantity into the environment when it sank. According to a UN assessment team, it was the largest plastic spill event in history.

Some of the plastic washed up on shore intact, and other components arrived in burned or partly-burned form. The small size and massive number of the particles has made cleanup extremely challenging, and burned pieces - which often look like organic matter - have proven exceptionally difficult to remove.

With financial support from the Swedish government and the Rockefeller Foundation, two groups - Sweden's International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN) and Sri Lanka's Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) - have analyzed samples of intact and burnt plastic debris from the ship for potentially hazardous pollutants.

The advocates found concerning results in the debris, particularly in partially-burnt lumps. Lead and cadmium were detected in the burnt debris, along with elevated levels of polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). In many of these samples, PAH concentrations exceeded EU limits for consumer products.

X-Press Pearl compensation: Priority for fishing community

<http://www.dailynews.lk/2021/07/13/local/253828/x-press-pearl-compensation-priority-fishing-community>

"Another discussion on the impact from the MV-X Press Pearl fire off Sri Lanka and receiving compensation covering all areas related to the damage was held under the patronage of Justice Minister Ali Sabry, PC, Minister of Ports and Shipping Rohitha Abeygunawardena, State Minister Kanchana Wijesekera, Leader of the Opposition Sajith Premadasa and Attorney General Sanjaya Rajaratnam, PC, at the Ministry of Justice yesterday.

Subsequent to the discussion, Justice Minister Ali Sabry addressing a media briefing said that they had discussed the compensation received so far and the rest of the compensation to be obtained. He also said that in the compensation process, priority would be given to the fishing communities affected by the incident, adding that they are currently identifying the locations of the containers that sank.

He noted that the assistance of the Indian Navy would also be obtained for this purpose. However, he said that the process has been delayed as a result of the inclement weather. As the compensation process is being carried out with international insurance companies, it has been decided to obtain the assistance of an international legal firm. He said that this legal firm would be chosen based on the recommendations of the Attorney General and with the approval of the Cabinet.

Out of the compensation due for the damage, Rs. 720 million has been received so far and based on the directions of the President, Rs. 420 million from that has been allocated for the compensation of the fisheries communities. He said that those affected by the incident could still

submit their claims and upon evaluation of the extent to which they have been affected, the compensation claims would be paid.

X-Press Pearl: Data recovered as fire-ravaged ship with chemicals sinks off Sri Lanka

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/world/asia/300326580/xpress-pearl-data-recovered-as-fireravaged-ship-with-chemicals-sinks-off-sri-lanka>

"Experts recovered the data recorder of a fire-ravaged ship carrying chemicals that is slowly sinking off Sri Lanka's capital, as salvage crews stood by to head off a possible environmental disaster, officials said Sunday. The Singapore-flagged MV X-Press Pearl started sinking Wednesday, a day after authorities extinguished a fire that raged on the vessel for 12 days.

Efforts to tow the ship into deeper waters away from the port in Colombo had failed after the ship's stern became submerged and rested on the seabed. Sri Lanka Ports Authority said experts, together with the navy on Saturday recovered the ship's voyage data recorder, or VDR, commonly known as the black box. The authority said on its website said that the VDR, which contains vital information related to the operation of the vessel, would be handed over to local law enforcement agencies investigating the fire.

Both the authority and the ship's operator said the vessel's aft portion remains on the seabed at a depth of about 21 metres, and the forward section continues to settle down slowly. Operator X-Press Feeders said salvors remain on the scene to deal with any possible spills. It has apologised for the disaster. The port authority and the operator said there were no signs of oil or chemical spills.

They said that Sri Lanka's navy, Indian coast guard, salvage crews and local authorities were capable of responding to any signs of oil pollution or debris, and were monitoring the situation around the clock. The fire has destroyed most of the ship's cargo, which included 25 tons of nitric acid and other chemicals. But there are fears that remaining chemicals as well as hundreds of tons of oil from the fuel tanks could leak into the sea.

Such a disaster could devastate marine life and further pollute the island nation's famed beaches. The disaster has already caused debris – including several tons of plastic pellets used to make plastic bags – to wash ashore. The government has banned fishing along about 80 kilometres of coastline. Officials say there had been about 300 tons of oil on board and that experts believe it could have burned off in the fire.

A ship manifest seen by The Associated Press described the X-Press Pearl as carrying just under 1,500 containers, with 81 of those containers described as "dangerous" goods. Environmentalists have warned that there's the potential for "a terrible environmental disaster" as hazardous goods,

plastics, chemicals and oil could be released into the water and destroy marine ecological systems.

The fire erupted on May 20 when the ship was anchored about 9.5 nautical miles (18 kilometres) northwest of Colombo and waiting to enter the port. The navy believes the blaze was caused by the vessel's chemical cargo, which it was carrying from the port of Hazira in India. Sri Lankan police are investigating and a court in Colombo has banned the captain, the engineer and the assistant engineer from leaving the country. The government has said it will take legal action against the owners of the ship to claim compensation.