

Alternative Income Must Be Ensured Before Fishing Ban, All Fishermen Must Be Brought Under Ration Every Fishermen Should be Granted Taka 8000 Per Month During the Ban

Recent Ban on Fishing and its effects

The government has imposed restrictions on fishing in the Bay of Bengal for 65 days, from May 20 to July 23. Following the success of such ban to protect of Jatka (Hilsha), this decision has been taken to protect the fisheries and valuable marine resources in the Bay of Bengal.

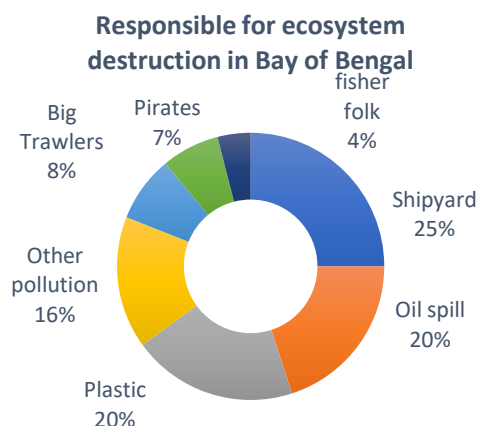
During the ban, the government has taken initiative to distribute rice for special assistance to the affected fishermen families, although it is inadequate and ultimately culminated in mismanagement. There are about 0.4 million fishermen registered in 12 coastal districts in the country, which is just one-third of the actual total number. That means, most of the fishermen are out of the registration. There are also a large number of fish workers, whose livelihood is completely dependent on sea-going fishing boats. They do not have any type of registration. There are only about 40,000 fish workers in Maheshkhali Island, who are employed as forced labor for the whole year, as a slave for whole year taking advance wages from the boat owners.

Even , all registered fishermen do not come under compensation or ration. For example, around 48 thousand fishermen are registered in Cox's Bazar district, but only 10 thousand of them will come under government ration program during the ban period. How will the families of this poor fishermen run if fishing is banned?

What is the main obstacle to protecting fisheries in the sea?

It is essential to take several reasonable and scientific initiatives to protect the country's fisheries and marine resources. However, first of all, we have to identify what are existing main obstacles towards protecting marine resources. The graph, attached later, says, the smallest obstacle behind the protection of marine resources is the fishing of smallscale fishermen, only 4%. On the other hand, the ship breaking industry and the disruption of large foreign ships in the outskirts of Chittagong and Mongla, the oil vessels in the seas and the adjacent river banks, plastic and other pollution in the Bay of Bengal, and the extraction of fish through big trawlers and illegal fishing of foreign fishermen contributed more to the destruction of marine natural resources and biodiversity in the Bay of Bengal.

In the last 3-4 years, 1.5 million liters of oil has spread in the Sunderbans (largest mangrove forest) due to the submergence in the Halda and Feni rivers which fell into the Bay of Bengal. In addition to the Karnafuli and Meghna estuarine, 6 thousand tonnes of plastic per year is being drained in the Bay of Bengal.



A recent study found that, plastic waste constitutes more than 60% of the litter found in the beaches of Bangladesh. In the 18.5 km area of Laboni and Inani Beach of Cox's Bazar and 18.5 km area of Chittagong's Ananda Bazar and Patenga area. Plastic bags were found to be the most common type of litter, at least 2,182 pieces of plastic bags were found on the beaches.

Large sized fishing ships are damaging the marine resources by using harmful fishing gear like bottom trawling. These trawl machines drag all type of fishes and plants from the bottom of the sea, including very small species of fish. During the ban or during normal times, large fishing boats of India, Thailand and Myanmar illegally infiltrated the Bangladesh border in the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh authorities often fail to stop them.

Examples of sanctions in India

Odisha and Tamil Nadu state governments of India also imposed a ban on fishing in the sea from April 15 to June 14, for two months. But in both states, artisanal, traditional and poor fishermen have been kept out of this ban. Moreover, during the ban in Tamil Nadu, state government provides financial assistance of Rs 5000 per fisherman. According to the information received so far, a section of fisheries registered in Bangladesh will be given 40 kg rice.

Amount of total marine resources must be determined first

Marine fish contribution is decreasing every year in the country's total fishing. In the 2001-2012 fiscal year, the total contribution of marine fisheries to the total fish production in the country was 21.77%. In 2005-06, it dropped to 20.6%. In FY 2008-09, it decreased to 19.5%, and in FY 2011-12 it was 17.74%, in FY 2014-16 it was 16%. We have no idea about what kind of fish are in our sea areas, what kind of stock we have. Before the activities of the MV Mean Sandhani, began survey in November 2016, the survey of marine fisheries in the country was closed for almost three decades.

Emphasize on increasing fishing in the deep sea: Stop the harmful Fishing Methods

Currently, there are only 247 ships using modern equipment, which have the capability of fishing from deep sea. On the other hand, 30200 mechanized and 27,700 non-mechanized boats are being used for fishing in coastal areas of the country. We need to utilize the economic zone of Bangladesh, largely after the 40 meters deep sea. Two types of initiatives are very important in this regard. Ensure the use of modern technologies, make arrangements for fisheries from the deep sea and ensure that large trawlers do not come in depth of 40 meters and cannot use harmful-prohibited mesh.

Foreign fishing vessels must also be stopped to illegal encroachment.

During the fishing ban, the fishing trawlers in our neighboring country come to our border and capture fishes. With the available resources and equipment our authorities are often fail to completely stop them from such crimes.

Recommendations

1. Poor and marginal fisheries, who capture fish from near the coast using small boats, must be kept out of such ban.

2. Identification of large threats to fisheries and natural resources, environmental impact assessment on shipbuilding, stopping foreign ship pollution etc. should be done and immediate action should be taken to prevent our marine resources from large polluters.
3. Effective measures should be taken to reduce plastic and other pollution.
4. During the ban on fishing, a minimum of 8000 taka per month should be allocated to the family for fishermen as compensation.
5. All fishermen should be brought under registration. The owners of large fishing boats, money lenders, small and marginal fishermen should be separately registered.
6. Participation of fishermen participants in the compensation payment process during the ban period should be ensured.
7. Like farmers, fishermen should get access to open a bank account with 10 taka and they should be provided cash support through bank or mobile phone payment.
8. Micro Finance Institutions (MFI) should be encouraged to provide special financial support for coastal fishermen communities and MFIs will need to provide necessary policy support.
9. Alternative income generating opportunities for the fishermen should be created. Not only chickens, goats and goats rearing, they should be provided with many backwards and forward linkage opportunities and technical supports, such as making ice, making and repairing nets, fishing equipment and marketing related business etc.
10. Insurance for fishers should be introduced. If there is any sudden death of any fishermen due to disaster, Taka 100,000 should be provided as cash support to the family.
11. All boats must be registered and they should be brought under license.
12. Grants should be made at least 15 days before the banning begins.
13. During the ban and the general time, foreign fishermen and foreign vessels must be brought under strict surveillance to stop the encroachment to the Bangladesh sea area. If needed, the diplomatic activities should be increased in this regard.