

Saving Our Oceans: Some Thoughts on Fisheries Conservation

by Sarwat Chowdhury

It is interesting to note that Bangladesh is included in World Wildlife Fund's list of the top 20 fishing nations that account for about 80 per cent of the world's marine fish catch. India is the other South Asian country to make the list. Therefore, along with industrialised countries like the United States, the poor fishermen of Bangladesh share the responsibility to safeguard the fisheries environment and the future of global fisheries.

THE United Nations has declared 1998 as the International Year of the Ocean. In a previous article in *The Daily Star* (November 12), issues specific to oceanic pollution were discussed. This piece attempts to explore issues related to fisheries conservation including a look into the fisheries situation in Bangladesh. The Global Picture: Until fairly recently, very few people were concerned with the limits to marine resources. However, with the industrialisation of fisheries, there has been a tremendous rise in the world's total annual fish catch. In 1850, the total annual catch was only two million tons, whereas by the late 1960s, it reached 55 million tons. The trend in increased fish catch suddenly evened out in the early 1970s and remained at the same level through the decade. Nevertheless, with the upward growth of both human population and the number of fishing vessels and improvement of technology, the catch per unit of fishing efforts, and the catch per unit of dollar invested in fisheries declined on a steady rate.

The term 'overfishing' has been described by the environmental group Greenpeace as 'taking more fish from a stock than can be naturally replaced.' In a recently released report, this group claims that in stark contrast to the trend in fisheries depletion, the world's industrial fishing fleet has increased 22 per cent since 1991. In addition to overfishing, other problems that lead to the depletion of living resources in our oceans include bycatch, habitat loss, industrial pollution and runoff from the land. The latter three problems were touched upon in the previous DS article.

The problem of bycatch (fish and wildlife caught unintentionally by nets, lines, hooks etc) also remains a major cause in fisheries depletion. Statistics show that on a global scale, fishermen discard 25 per cent of their catch each year because their fishing methods and fishing gear do not discriminate between commercially important fish and those without commercial value.

Role of Subsidies in the Global Fisheries Depletion: In a recently published article (June 3) in *The Guardian*, Norman Myers of Oxford University underscored the distorting effects of subsidies in the global fisheries crisis. His article reports that the global marine fisheries catch is annually worth more than \$ 100 billion at dockside, and it is sold for about \$80 billion.

Another example of fisheries management can be drawn from in Alanya, Turkey. This fishing village in Turkey came up with their own solution to conserve their fisheries resources. By drawing lots for fishing locations at the beginning of each season, and then rotating to a new position each day, the number of fishermen in each spot is controlled. If anyone crosses into another site or violates their agreed upon rules, the fishermen notice and report that immediately. No outside enforcer is required in the process (almost like the peer pressure effects of the Grameen Bank loan approach). Since every fisherman

has a vested interest in their 'spot of the day', this automatically provides them with the incentive to monitor. Through this entire process, limited entry and effective enforcement remains local and low cost.

Wetlands and the Case of Bangladesh: Geographically most of Bangladesh lies in the Bengal basin. This vast lowland contains the largest delta in the world formed by the Brahmaputra and Ganges river system. It is thought that this lowland basin was once one of the largest wetlands in the world. However, during the past few thousand years, the vast wetlands have been converted into rice growing areas, with a few remaining wetland areas.

Wetlands in Bangladesh can be divided into two principal regions: the Ganges-Brahmaputra flood basin and the Haor basin of the north east region. The haor basin is a wetland eco-system of remarkable national and international significance with rare and vulnerable species of plants, animals including endemic species and large number of migratory birds. Unfortunately, the gradual loss of many of the perennial water bodies have resulted in a severe loss of fresh water fisheries and the associated loss of biodiversity.

Simmering Inside



Many Asian mothers manage to combine a happy family life and successful career. But there are those who are unfulfilled, dissatisfied and simmering inside, reports Prangtip Daorueng from Bangkok

ASIAN mothers are masters of multi-tasking, managing to look serene while performing their various roles as wife, mother, career professional and household manager-worker.

But these women are simmering within, says new research by an international advertising agency. It is not resentment, though, that they are keeping bottled inside, says a research team of Ogilvy & Mather, which did the study.

One Japanese mother told the researchers: 'I want the courage to be able to say I want something for myself.'

This group of women, they say, believes they can survive alone if they have to, in contrast to the traditional attitude that men are supposed to be the breadwinners in the family.

Indeed, the team says in 'Simmering Within: Asian Mothers and Their Rising Expectations', Asian women go through each day with sadness and dissatisfaction, conscious that life could be better.

Across the region, Asian societies continue to favour men in many respects, from schooling to salaries to sexual misbehaviour, they noted. 'Society expects women to be quiet and submissive (although less so in places like Hong Kong and the Philippines).'

Mothers themselves know that to satisfy the demand of their roles, they must make numerous sacrifices, the researchers added.

At one point in the research, participants were shown pictures from which they were made to choose one that they thought communicated happiness. Majority picked images related to more freedom, spare and independence, report the researchers.

Millions Will Flock to See Midnight at Midday

The country of Cornwall in southwestern England is already preparing for next August when it becomes the best spot in Britain to view a total solar eclipse. Gemini News Service reports on what's expected to be a huge invasion of visitors Colin Gardiner writes from Cornwall, Britain

AT precisely 11.11 am on 11 August 1999, Cornwall — the southwestern peninsula of England will be plunged into darkness.

When doomsday comes to Cornwall — some predicting the end of the world, others desiring to dance naked among the country's famous standing stones — everyone will be rooted to the spot as the eclipse blocks out the sun.



against an exodus that could turn Cornwall's winding lanes into one massive traffic jam. Nobody in, nobody out, except under the most controlled conditions, is likely to be the byword in Operation Eclipse.

Children are Innocent Victims of Economic Crisis

Ron Corben writes from Bangkok

"When the interests of the global financial markets are at stake, tens of billions of dollars are readily found to bail them out. But when it comes to the relatively modest amounts of money for basic services in countries where the need is greatest..... the world's response is far from adequate,"

EAST Asia's financial crisis has set back the region's march towards economic prosperity and stability, unravelling the 'economic miracle' that has made it the fastest growing region in the world.

Malnutrition in the region, where some 33 million children 'suffer from severe to moderate' levels of hunger, will remain even if there were rising incomes, the assessment report said.

But a lack of access to adequate amounts of nutritious food is still a major cause of malnutrition in Indonesia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it added.

More people who need help but cannot find it, he said at the conference.

Garfield



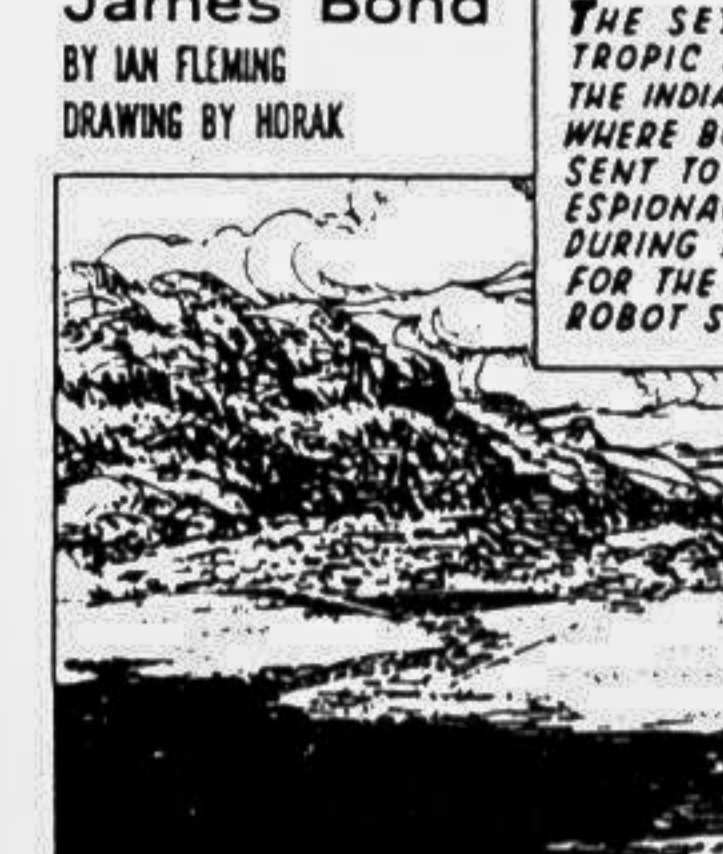
James Bond



by Jim Davis



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