

News Round-up

Fish bowl

Kedah, **Malaysia's** rice bowl, is also working towards becoming the country's fish bowl, reports Sira Habibu in *The Star*. The State is now aggressively promoting the caged-fish rearing industry.

Minister Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid said there were plans to set up at least 1,000 fish cages in Merbok and Langkawi districts by the end of the year.

"We are aggressively pushing this business through joint ventures between subsidiaries of government-linked companies and fishermen associations," he said. Kedah is taking an integrated approach to promote the business. The private sector, fishermen associations, the Malaysia Fisheries Development Board, the Fisheries Department and individuals will be roped in, he said, after presenting 82 boats to Kedah

tsunami victims on behalf of Proton Holdings Bhd. The boats were presented to fishermen who did not receive any compensation for their boats which were totally damaged in the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

Biz plans

Three **Thai** companies plan to invest around US\$150 mn in the fisheries sector in **Indonesia**, Fisheries and Marine Resources Minister Freddy Numberi said. He said nine more foreign companies would follow suit soon.

The minister said the government had decided that any enterprise wishing to operate in fisheries, especially in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) had to set up a processing industry under its management.

"The policy is aimed at promoting the implementation of responsible fishing for the interest of the Indonesian people," he said.

He said the integration of fishing and fish-processing industry was expected to be able to increase the added value of fishery products, employment, foreign

exchange earnings and growth of other ancillary fishery industries.

The Indonesian government would only give fishing permits to foreign companies if they had industries in their countries of origin to process their catch. He said foreign companies who wished to set up an industry in Indonesia had to co-operate with local fishery companies and the cooperation must benefit the local companies.

Cancer scare

South Korea continues to have worries over contamination of imported farmed fish. The carcinogenic dye malachite green is still to be found in marine products imported from China and other nations despite a huge scandal over

contamination last year.

The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and the National Fisheries

Products Quality Inspection Service (NFPQIS) said that some 40 tonnes of imported live fish from China, including flatfish and sea bass, were sent back or destroyed this year alone because malachite green was detected in them.

Five tonnes of frozen shrimp imported from Thailand were also sent back in January for the same reason.

The NFPQIS says it performs frequent random checks for malachite green and antibiotics at fish farms around the nation.

Pirates ahoy!

Somali pirates still rule the seas, but there seems to be some hope. An official Yemeni agency has reported that **Somaliland** released 15 Yemeni fishing boats and their crew. According to Yemen's Saba News Agency, the boats were seized in the Barbara seaport on the pretext that they were fishing in Somaliland waters.

Yemen and Somaliland exchanged accusations last month when the independent breakaway republic accused Yemen of fishing in its territorial waters.

Yemen, for its part, said Somali pirates kidnapped the Yemeni fishing boats

and their fishermen on a fishing journey in Yemen's territorial waters.

Somaliland later confessed that its forces seized several Yemeni fishermen and their boats.

Somaliland's coast guard intercepted eight Yemeni boats—across the Gulf of Aden's rich fishing waters—under a campaign to enforce territorial sovereignty. Nine Yemeni boats were seized in February and their 84 crewmen deported.

Officials from Somaliland's capital, Hargiesha, visited Sana'a last month to discuss regional developments and solve the fishing dispute. A local newspaper reported on 26 March, that Yemen and Somaliland signed a cooperation agreement on the fishing industry and fishing rights.

The agreement includes deals on fishery co-operation, particularly regarding information exchange, investment, organizing fishing processes and offering training opportunities to Somali workers.

Meanwhile, Korea Times reports that the government has been stepping-up diplomatic efforts to secure the release of a South Korean vessel hijacked earlier this week off Somalia.

Turning turtle

March 1 marks the official start of the Year of the Marine Turtle within the Indian Ocean and South-East Asian region, reports Panda.org, WWF's website.

Today, six of the seven species of marine turtle—hawksbill, olive ridley, Kemp's ridley, leatherback, loggerhead and green—are classified

as "Endangered" or "Critically Endangered".

"Concerted conservation efforts have seen turtle populations recover in some areas, but without urgent global action the future of these animals looks increasingly grim," said Dr Sue Lieberman, Director of WWF's Global Species Programme.

Marine turtles have swum in the world's oceans for over 100 million years. They are the only widely

distributed marine reptiles and many species migrate for thousands of kilometres—and even across entire oceans—between feeding and nesting grounds.

Regional co-operation is essential to ensure that turtles are protected at different stages in their life cycles.

Marine turtles have also been fundamental to the culture of coastal societies for millennia.

Fiji has already joined the "Year of the Turtle" event with a renewed effort to protect endangered sea turtles within the country's waters. Fiji currently has a five-year moratorium which bans the commercial harvest and sale of sea turtles, but the sale and consumption of turtle meat is still common.

Other WWF activities to mark the Year of the Sea Turtle include: declaring Derawan Island, one of the the biggest green and hawksbill turtle rookeries in South-East Asia as a Marine Conservation Area; monitoring and protecting nesting sites in and around Kenya's Kiunga Marine National Reserve; satellite tagging of marine turtles in Vietnam; introducing circle hooks to tuna fleets in the Philippines to significantly reduce turtle bycatch; and

establishing a joint research partnership (between Madagascar, Switzerland and France) on marine turtles in the South-West Indian Ocean.

In jail

22 Filipino fishermen have been in jail in Pakistan since last week after allegedly being caught fishing in Pakistan's waters.

The **Philippines** embassy in Islamabad has not established the Filipinos' identities because Pakistan's Ministry of Interior has not allowed any embassy official to visit them, an official said.

Consul General Maria Agnes Cervantes said the 22 Filipinos were crewmembers of the Chinese fishing vessel Chen Shui Sung, which had reportedly strayed into Pakistan's waters on March 30.

The Pakistani navy brought the fishermen and their vessel to shore and detained 16 of them in Landi Prison. The rest were placed under heavy guard on their ship, Cervantes said.