

News Round-up

New terminal

A new fisheries terminal will be critical for the sustainable growth and development of food security in the Federation of **St Kitts and Nevis**, said Prime Minister Dr Denzil Douglas at a ceremony at which documents were signed with the Trinidad-based Ambassador of Japan, Shigenobu Kato, for the construction of the US\$5.6-mn facility.

It will be the second fisheries terminal financed by the Government of Japan.

The project calls for the establishment of a community fishery centre building, boatyard, jetty, slipway, ice machine, lockers and other facilities.

Construction starts in January next year.

“We believe that there is tremendous potential within this sector, especially when viewed as a

business,” said Prime Minister Douglas, who stressed that the intention of his St. Kitts-Nevis Labour Party Government is to expand the fishing sector so that it can contribute significantly to the national economy.

He urged fishermen attending the ceremony to use the financial resources provided by the St. Kitts-Nevis Labour Government through the Development Bank.

“It is because we understand the present and future importance of a fishing industry, that we have joined with our member partners of the Caribbean Community to delve into the issue of marine resource management and explore and pursue bilateral and international agreements on fisheries,” said Prime Minister Douglas.

He added that the establishment of the Caribbean Common Fisheries Policy is indicative of the seriousness of the region to benefit from its marine resources.

Unwanted AIDS

Alarming high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in **Ugandan** fishing communities are threatening the

lucrative fishing industry, which brought some US \$105 million into the country in 2004, a new government survey has found.

“Chronic illness and death destroys livelihood and incomes, undermines the skills base in the fishing workforce, and reduces productivity.

This is a threat to sustainable fisheries, poverty elimination and economic growth,” the report said.

It added that the productivity of the fisheries sector makes up 12 per cent of Uganda’s Gross Domestic Product.

It also accounts for nearly 20 per cent of total exports, which could witness a decline with the impact of HIV/AIDS.

Recorded HIV/AIDS cases up to the end of 2002 showed that the highest prevalence in the country was in districts located along the shoreline of Lake Victoria.

Tsunami sounds

The Dec. 26 Sumatra-Andaman megaquake did more in the Indian Ocean than make tsunamis—it made a lot of undersea noise that was audible to sea creatures and undersea sound sensors for thousands of miles, reports *Discovery News*.

Five hydro-acoustic sensor stations, designed to listen for clandestine nuclear bomb testing, ring the Indian Ocean and picked up the rumbling of the rupturing sea floor—loud and clear.

The sound created by the long rupture has been used by a California researcher to confirm seismological data. The hydro-acoustics show the rupture propagating along the major plate boundary in the Sunda Trench for 400 miles at 5,760 miles per hour, then slowing to 3,350 miles per hour for the last 100 miles of rupturing.

The initial sound was actually from a seismic wave that quickly crossed the ocean in the sea floor and caused the ground around the sea-bottom sensors to growl—so it was not

the direct sound of the rupture at all, de Groot-Hedlin explained.

The next, much louder and longer signals were the actual sound waves of the rupture that had traveled through the water to the stations, she said.

Because the quake unzipped such a long fault zone, the sea floor rupturing was picked up by the hydro-acoustic stations as a moving source of noise, like the sound of an unseen train moving in the distance.

Fishy quotas

US Representatives Tom Allen (D-Maine), William Delahunt (D-Mass.), and Robert Simmons (R-Conn.) today introduced the bipartisan "Fishing Quota Standards Act of 2005," H.R. 3278, to ensure that quota systems, often touted as the management solution to our declining fisheries, would give fair and equitable opportunities to small fishermen and fishing communities and would responsibly protect marine environments

"I am pleased to introduce this bipartisan bill to create national standards for fishing quota programs. Ensuring that standards are in place prior to the development of quota systems is an important part of

sustainable fisheries management. Local, coastal fishing communities and family-operated fishing businesses are integral to Maine.

With the likely reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act by this Congress, I

want to be sure that the voices of Maine fishermen are heard in the national debate over these standards," said Congressman Allen.

Individual fishing quota (IFQ) systems use quota shares to give fishermen exclusive access to a fixed percentage of the total annual quota in a fishery.

The Bush Administration promoted these systems in its U.S. Ocean Action Plan released in December as the primary way to stop declining fish populations.

Documented research has shown that IFQ systems without strong national standards often create multiple economic and environmental problems.

These include an unfair advantage to

large corporations who have more capital to buy out other quota share holders and creating incentives to throw less valuable fish back—dead or dying.

Better safe

Malaysia has made it mandatory for fishermen to carry safety equipment on board fishing boats. It is an offence under the Occupational Safety and Health Act if fishing boat operators or fishermen go out to sea without adequate safety equipment.

The offence carries a fine of RM50,000 (US\$13,159) or two years' jail.

"I also find that they do not have first-aid kit on the boats. They should care about their safety, too, not only about getting a big catch," Malaysia's Deputy Human Resources Minister told reporters after presenting fishing gear to fishermen in Marang.

Abdul Rahman, who is Marang MP, said fishing boats should be equipped with, among other things, safety jackets, radio and a good radar system.

"From information received, most cases of accidents involving fishermen at sea are due to the absence of safety equipment," he added.

He urged the Fisheries Department

and fishermen's associations to take steps to ensure the regulations on safety were adhered to.

On foreign fishermen being employed on deep-sea fishing vessels in the country, Abdul Rahman said it happened because locals could not do the job.

He added that 500 local fishermen were trained by the Fisheries Department in 1988 under the Skipper Development Programme but all gave up because they could not adapt to the working conditions.

Rescued!

Three fishermen from Holyhead, UK have been involved in a dramatic rescue off Anglesey. Their trawler was sinking because of engine failure and they had

to scramble on board their life raft. A rescue helicopter from RAF Valley managed to tow the men to safety just before the *Morning Spray* sank.

The men, who are all aged between 40 and 55, were winched aboard the helicopter and taken safely to land.