

World oceans day celebrations at Chennai Kasimedu fishing harbour and Marina beach

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Network for Fish Quality Management and Sustainable Fishing – Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), Ministry of Commerce, Govt of India (NETFISH-MPEDA) has observed the World Ocean Day on 8th June 2013 in all major fishing harbour in India. In Chennai, NETFISH-MPEDA Chennai, has observed the world Ocean Day in collaboration with its member NGOs Gaia International Organisation (GIO) and Society of Occupational Health and Environmental safety & Social Security (SOHES), by conducting 2 programs, one at Kasimedu Fishing harbour and another program at Marina beach, Chennai. The focus for Kasimedu fishing harbour programme was to create awareness among the fishermen on the ill effects of juvenile fishing and the program at Marina beach was to sensitize the general public on marine pollution. The following 3 public awareness materials were released for the WOD program.

- (1) Round shaped sticker with a slogan (Today's Juveniles are Tomorrow's Wealth in Tamil Language.)
- (2) T- Shirts with a Slogan "Save our Seas" on front side and NETFISH-MPEDA on Back side
- (3) A two page hand out in Tamil which narrates the importance of ocean and the necessity to avoid marine pollution and Juvenile Fishing.

Awareness program at Kasimedu fishing harbour

This program was organized at the Chennai-Thiruvallur- Kanchipuram districts mechanized Boat Fisherman Welfare Association at Kasimedu fishing Harbour. The programme started at 8.00 AM. Mr. M.A. Sekar, Chairman, Society of Occupational Health and Environmental safety & Social security (SOHES), Chennai- 600 115, welcomed the gathering and elaborated the purpose of celebrating the World Oceans Day and the theme of the year "Stop juvenile fishing".

Dr.P.Nammalwar, Chairman, GAIA International Organisation, Chennai-600041 in his inaugural address explained on the importance of oceans and spoke that hundreds of millions of people rely directly on marine biodiversity for their wellbeing and livelihoods. But these vast ecosystems are under threat. The oceans are filling with the wastes produced by human activities and impacting biodiversity. Marine biodiversity suffers from overfishing and other unsustainable fishing practices. The impacts of climate change and ocean acidification are growing. These are grave threats but together we have the power to protect the oceans, which is the theme of this year's observance. It is here by emphasized that the mesh size regulation measures are to be implemented effectively by all the maritime states of our country so as to pave the way for controlling the juvenile fishing which is the need of the hour in this World Oceans Day.

Dr.V.S.Chandrasekaran, Principal Scientist, Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture, (*Indian Council of Agricultural Research*), Chennai - 600 028 the Chief Guest of the function mentioned in his address that the Oceans not only serve as the source of food, minerals, etc., but also act as stress remover providing a calm and soothing environment to the people who visit the beaches in the leisure time. He emphasized on the theme of the celebration of avoiding fishing of juvenile populations thereby sustaining the adult stock for fishing; by closing the fishing activities during the breeding season, as in vogue in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and other states in India; by complying to the fishing gear restrictions, particularly the mesh size regulations; and avoiding the breeding ground from intensive fishing activities. He also conveyed that the traditional knowledge and the practical wisdom of the fishers are to be considered while planning for conservation measures in marine capture fishing sector. He also spoke about Juvenile fishing and depletion of marine stock at our seas. He also

noted that lethrinus species were weighed about 7-8 kgs 10 years back and nowadays that size class is almost vanished. He also emphasized that adoption of suitable fishing methods to avoid Juvenile fishing since the export of seafood items increases due to farmed shrimps while the capture fisheries is in declining phase. He concluded his talk with a note that the joint efforts taken by the fishers in consultation with the fisheries scientists, government authorities, technocrats and other stakeholders will pave way for the development of sustainable fishing techniques and marine fishery resource exploitation in the years to come.

Mr. Mohamed Ninar, Assistant Director of Fisheries, Fishing Harbour Management Committee, Kasimedu Fishing Harbour released the Sticker printed with the Slogan of *Stop Juvenile fishing and Today's Juveniles are Tomorrows wealth* in Tamil Language and received by Mr. P. Kuppan President, Chennai-Thiruvallur-Kancheepuram (CTK) mechanized fishermen welfare Association, Kasimedu. When AD fisheries (FHMC) spoke he addressed the problem of open defecation at Kasimedu FH and how it affects the quality of fishes. He also emphasized that stop juvenile fishing is need of hour and it should be curtailed in a phased manner.

Deputy Director of MPEDA RO Chennai distributed the plastic baskets at free of cost to boat owners on the occasion of WOD celebration at Kasimedu FH. As part of NETFISH –Training programs, NETFISH MPEDA has supplied 660 plastic baskets at free of cost to the boat owners through the association. Deputy Director MPEDA RO Chennai in his speech explained the role of NETFISH in improving the hygienic handling of fishes and sustainable fishing practices and he mentioned about the importance of fishery products as one of the important export commodities from India to earn foreign exchange for our country. He also quoted that the fish production from capture fisheries is getting reduced year-by-year and aquaculture is one of the best options to compensate the reduction in fish production; quoting that the total shrimp production for export is being increasingly contributed by aquaculture in India, in the recent years. He also announced that the upcoming MPEDA subsidy schemes on Green Toilet construction in the boats, Toilet Blocks in the Fishing Harbour complex etc.

Mr P. Kuppan, President, CTK Mechanized fishermen welfare Association enlightened the gathering how the fishery wealth was 40 years back and how it is dwindling as apparent from the reduced quantum of fish catch and reduction in size of the fishes. He also expressed that his Association was very proud in participating the WOD celebration at its premises. According to him, though open defecation is a major issue here, coastal water is heavily polluted by domestic wastes (Coovam river in Chennai) and industrial effluents. He also urged that Government should take strict action against pollution by industrial effluents. He also affirmed that juvenile fishing is taking place at Kasimedu FH and several occasions they have banned on juvenile fishing but failed to control because section of fishing fleets at Kasimedu FH with low engine power fishing in the near shore waters primarily depends on by-catch to meet out the operational costs and he suggested that government should arrange alternative for them to curb juvenile fishing.

Then the floor was opened for interaction. Mr. Kattandi, Executive President of the Association expressed his view that only mechanized boats are banned during the banperiod where as FRP boats with double engines are heavily fishing the spawning stock during the ban period and he urged Complete Ban on fishing crafts irrespective of size and power of fishing fleets during the Ban period.

Another Boat owner expressed his view that during the ban period, Sri Lankan and other state fishing vessels are fishing in our waters and asked about Government action against this illegal fishing. To reply this, Assistant Director (FHMC) told that already few SriLankan boats were seized in our waters during the ban period and it will be fully curbed with the help of coast guard.

Another boat Owner pointed out that they are going for gill net fishing in the deep seas and they want ban period during the winter season. (October and November). Another boat owner asked about how foreign vessels are permitted to exploit our tuna resources in Indian waters. DD MPEDA RO Chennai replied that these vessels are permitted by Ministry of Agriculture and it has stopped issuing the letter of Permit and also not renewing all the existing LOP vessels so that the foreign vessels will not be fishing in our waters in future.

One of the boat owner asked how the ban period was fixed for each coast and they want ban period in different period. At this Juncture, State coordinator intervened that the fishing ban was introduced in 2001 in Tamilnadu based on the scientific research findings and it is believed that spawning of commercially important fish stock are taking place during April – June in the east Coast and there are other factors also considered for fixing the ban period. He also added that MPEDA has taken this matter at right time. Since introduction of seasonal fishing ban period in Tamilnadu in 2001, there are lot of changes in landing season, landing

pattern and there is a need to rethink about seasonal fishing ban period. Hence NETFISH – MPEDA is going to arrange series of Stake holders meeting at different fishing harbours and State level work shop. With the feedback from stake holders meetings and State level work shop, the National level work shop is going to be arranged by MPEDA by inviting all Fisheries secretaries from maritime states.

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