

# D-G: Malaysia's marine resources may be wiped out

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Poaching by illegal Vietnamese trawlers is threatening to deplete Malaysia's fish stock. Worse still, the country's billions of ringgit in marine resources and the eco-system may be wiped out.

Fisheries Department director-general Datuk Munir Mohd Nawawi warned that if the situation was left unchecked, there could be nothing left in Malaysia.

"This is a very serious issue as our seabed is being stripped and the country's resources are being plundered.

"We are losing billions of ringgit, with RM6 billion in fish (RM4.2 billion from territorial waters and RM1.8 billion in deep sea) alone stolen, annually. The time has come for us to come down hard on these illegal fishing activities conducted mainly by foreigners," said Munir.

The *New Straits Times* learnt that an estimated 11 million to 26 million tonnes, or 15 per cent, of the global catch was reportedly taken illegally each year.

Munir said preventive and rehabilitative measures had to be implemented through a fisheries management plan to overcome the effects of global warming, climate change and pollution.

Studies on 7,800 marine species around the world's ecosystem by global marine experts concluded that nearly 90 per cent of global fish stocks were either fully fished or over-fished.



*Datuk Munir Mohd Nawawi*

"And by 2048, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has forecast a total seafood depletion in the world, despite an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development forecast of a 17 per cent rise in fish production by 2025," he said

Munir called for stricter control, supervision and management of marine life to

avoid dire consequences in the coming years.

Munir said that Malaysian fishermen caught nearly one million tonnes of seafood annually, with about 40,000 tonnes kept as frozen reserves.

"The situation is more challenging during the monsoon season when small-vessel fishermen are hindered from going out to sea, thus, depleting supplies.

"But we manage somehow by importing seafood to meet local demand, especially for restaurants, for premium fish like salmon, red snapper and mussels."

Alternately, he said, there were efforts to improve enforcement against illegal fishing, especially by foreign vessels which destroy marine life using trawling nets.

One of the measures, he said, was to prevent the use of trawling nets within 12 nautical miles inshore to protect the productive zones comprising corals and reefs at marine parks, and fish breeding grounds.

"International ecologists and economists discovered that the loss of biodiversity has impaired the ability of oceans to feed the world's growing human population, which was expected to rise by 50 per cent to nine billion in 2050.

"The studies showed that more people were eating fish as a protein source," he said.