

# Bangladesh: Exempt fishermen from 65-day ban on sea fishing

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**Right activists yesterday urged the government to exempt poor and marginalised fishermen from a 65-day ban on fishing at sea and pay each of them Tk 8,000 per month as compensation during the ban.**

The demands were made at a human chain, organised by COAST Trust and Bangladesh Fish Workers' Alliance (BFWA) at Jatiya Press Club.

The government should not impose such a ban without taking rehabilitation measures, right activists added.

While presenting a keynote paper, BFWA General Secretary Mujibul Huq Munir said marginalised fishermen, who catch fish in sea on their small boats, cannot harm the fish reserve or ecosystem of Bay of Bengal.

"The big polluters, who are the real threat to the sea and its biodiversity, are hardly held accountable," the BFWA general secretary claimed.

At the human chain, he proposed a 13-point recommendation, which include exempting poor fishermen from the ban and compensating them; holding polluters accountable; stopping foreign vessels from entering country's maritime territory during the ban and registering fishermen.

Mustafa Kamal Akanda, assistant director of COAST Trust, said 40kg rice per family during the ban as compensation is not enough.

He claimed that fishermen of Odisha and Tamil Nadu are given 5,000 Indian rupees per month during this kind of ban. Rehana Akter, vice president of Bangladesh Krishak Federation (BKF), emphasised the need for registering fishermen so that they can be properly monitored and assisted.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, chief moderator of EquityBD and executive director of COAST Trust, said the country needs a poor-friendly policy.

Among others, BKF members Badrul Alam and Barkat Ullah Maruf spoke at the human chain.

Meanwhile, our Barishal correspondent talked to some fishermen, who expressed their dissatisfaction over the government policy.

Delwar Gazi, 40, of Bheduria village in Sadar upazila, said the government's support of 35kg rice during the ban for his six-member family is inadequate.

Mamun Majhi of the village alleged that there are over 1,200 fishermen in the village, but 535 of them are getting the rice support.

Amid such circumstances, Eid will not bring any joy to them, said fishermen.

To ensure smooth breeding of sea fish, the government, for the first time, imposed a 65-day ban on fishing in the sea from May 20 to July 23.

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