

# News Round-up

## **Mobil billed**

Mobil, the US multinational which is now in talks with Exxon to grow into the world's biggest oil giant, is not everybody's hero. In **Nigeria**, thousands of claims for compensation have been flowing into Mobil for the environmental problems caused by a major oil spill at the company's offshore exploration rigs in Akwa Ibom State.

Mobil says that around 40,000 barrels of oil drifted west in an oil spill in January, after an underwater oil pipeline burst. The spill, about one-sixth of the notorious Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska, is the worst in Nigerian history.

Compensation claims began pouring in after Mobil offered to compensate all those affected by the spill.

One of them, Effiong Ikot, a fisherman and small business owner, has demanded 490,000 naira about US\$5,700

for the loss of fishing nets clogged by oil. Mobil, in response, has offered him US\$250, a

sum he considers insulting. Mike Maru, another fisherman in the village of Itafre, lost 350 bundles of nets and has claimed compensation of US\$3.4 million.

All claimants were expected to bring their nets to be inspected by Mobil officials and insurance agents. Once the inspection was over, the nets were burned. Many fishermen seeking compensation are angry with their nets being burned, since they find it difficult to survive in the absence of adequate compensation.

## **Illegally Japanese**

Sometimes, fishing can be a pain. Recently, fishermen in **Japan** were found working illegally aboard vessels operating under flags of convenience to overfish Atlantic and Pacific tuna, outside international agreements regulating their harvest.

In mid-September, the Federation of Japan Tuna Fisheries Co-operative Association announced that 58 Japanese fishermen, including 39 who worked as captains or chiefs of fishing operation, had worked on vessels commonly registered in Central American countries, like Honduras, Belize and Panama.

Japanese authorities are not amused. As of January 1999, the

Japanese Fishery Agency will ban Japanese fishermen from working on ships under flags of convenience. It will require Japanese fishermen to get government approval before working aboard other foreign-registered tuna vessels. About 200 tuna vessels operate under flags of convenience. More than half of them are owned by Taiwanese companies, while most of the rest belong to South Korean companies.

## **Salmon escape**

In what is believed to be a first-ever occurrence anywhere in the world, there has been a large escape of alien farm salmon, now invading the western coastal waters of Vancouver Island, **Canada**.

In October, 20 Atlantic salmon of two different age groups were found in a river on the eastern side of Vancouver Island—a strong indication that escaped Atlantics had spawned there.

Over 40,000 Atlantic Salmon escaped from a farm in Esperanza Inlet in Nootka Sound, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Scandic Sea Foods Ltd of Zeballos, British Columbia (BC) operates the fish farm from where they escaped.

"This is beginning to become a weekly occurrence," says

Howard Breen, the Habitat Campaign Co-ordinator for the Georgia Strait Alliance. "As the industry pummels the provincial government daily for not removing the fish farm expansion moratorium, their escaped fish threaten wild salmon," says Breen.

Over a million farm salmon have escaped on the BC coast since

the inception of net-cage fish farms a decade ago. Environmentalists fear B.C. may soon have to systematically poison rivers to eradicate diseases or parasites from escaped Atlantic salmon.

The fish farm industry says that Atlantics will never gain a foothold in BC rivers, pointing at failed attempts at the turn of the century to deliberately colonize the Cowichan River with Atlantic eggs and fry.

But scientists fear the habitat changes, weakened wild stocks and large escapes of adult farm salmon have changed the balance significantly in the rivers. This poses a real threat of colonization and disease transmission from escaped farm fish.

## **Rights booked**

In the International Year of the Ocean, a new book seeks to examine

how we can leave behind for future generations a more bountiful ocean full of fish. The book, *Property Rights, Management and Governance: Crafting an Institutional Framework for Global Marine Fisheries* is the work of economist and social activist John Kurien, Associate Fellow at the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Trivandrum, **India**.

The study looks at how the nature of property rights regimes affects the management and governance of natural resources.

Using the particular case of global marine fisheries, John Kurien analyzes the three most common regimes—private property, state property and common property. He introduces a fourth—the community property regime—for local management of property resources by ecosystem people.

The book is published jointly by CDS and the South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS).

Copies can be obtained from the Publications Officer, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum 695 011, Kerala, India (Fax: +91-471-447137. Email: krpeds15@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in [Attn:Publications Officer]) or from the

South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies at sifff@sifffs.org.

### **Probe Frobes**

A proposed US\$460 million investment by the American company Forbes in the offshore fisheries of **Pakistan** may not augur well, says the World Wide Fund for Nature(WWF).

It has potentially damaging environmental and social impacts. Reportedly, the Government of Baluchistan Province believes that Pakistan's offshore fisheries can not tolerate the levels of fishing that would result from the project.

However, according to Arif Ayub, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the FAO, the Government of Pakistan has kept in view the interest of small-scale fishermen as well as the sustainable use of fisheries resources.

The Government of Pakistan, says Ayub, is committed to the responsible management of fisheries and reaffirms its commitment to the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

### **World fishers...**

21 November 1998 was designated as the first 'world Fisheries Day' by the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF).

The date marks the anniversary of WFF, which came into being on 21 international meeting in New Delhi in which fishing representatives from 32

countries took part and resolved to stand together to save the fishing communities worldwide.

President Bill Clinton of the US, formally proclaiming the World Fisheries Day, called upon US officials, fishery professionals, scientists and environmental experts to recognize the importance of conserving fisheries and protecting marine life.

US delegates to the World Forum have suggested that US fishermen celebrate this occasion by contributing a portion of their catch to food pantries or charitable organizations in their communities.

According to Thomas Kocherry, General Co-ordinator, WFF, the day was observed with great fortitude and celebrations in various countries.

### **Net effect**

Meanwhile, on the World Fisheries Day, a new network was launched by the Instituto Terramar (EarthSea Institute) in Fortaleza, Ceara, **Brazil**. Called RESPFISHNET (International Network for Responsible Fisheries Management), its site on the World Wide Web ([www.fortalnet.com.br/fishnet](http://www.fortalnet.com.br/fishnet)) will feature examples from around the world of successful fisheries management

experiences involving community participation.

### **Asian talk**

Earlier, on 11 and 12 November 1998, a workshop on Fisheries and Globalization was organized as part of the Forum on Land, Food Security and Agriculture, organized during the Asia-Pacific People's Assembly (APPA), held between 10 and 15 November 1998.

The workshop was co-ordinated by two Philippines-based organizations, Pamalakaya (National Federation of Fisherfolk Organizations of the Philippines) and NACFAR (Nationwide Coalition of Fisherfolk for Aquatic Reform). It attracted participants from the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, South Africa and India.

Much of the discussion at the workshop focused on the impact of globalization processes on small-scale and artisanal fisheries in the Southeast Asian region. Participants felt that the livelihood base of small-scale and artisanal communities is being undermined by these processes. The workshop also acknowledged the vital role of women of fishing communities, especially in the Asian region, and the need to strengthen women's spaces in the fisheries.