

Use of harmful fishing nets alarming for marine biodiversity : Farida

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Online Desk : Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akhter today called for coordinated efforts by all concerned to conserve Bangladesh's marine fisheries resources, saying fish is not merely a commercial commodity but directly connected to the country's food security. She described the use of harmful nets as the most alarming threat to marine biodiversity. The adviser said this while speaking as the chief guest at the inception workshop titled "Healthy Ocean" in a city hotel, organized by Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and World Fish, said a press release.

She said the Coast Guard, Navy, Department of Fisheries and other responsible agencies are working to protect marine resources. It must be considered whether fish is being harvested solely from a commercial perspective, as ensuring food for people is far more crucial, she added. Describing the use of harmful nets as the greatest concern for marine biodiversity, Farida said prohibited and unauthorized nets like "fash jal" and "behendi jal" trap fish of various sizes which die inside the nets, ultimately decreasing the overall stock of fish.

Referring to the present situation of the Bay of Bengal, she said that according to the report of Dr Fritzof Nansen, the availability of fish in the Bay has decreased by about 78 percent in the last seven years. She added that many areas are witnessing marine oxygen depletion while plastic pollution is also rising alarmingly. However, along with these negative signs, there are positive indications as well. Recent surveys have shown that 65 new marine fish species have been identified, including five species that were previously unknown globally, revealed the adviser.

Putting emphasis on stricter enforcement of restrictions to control over-harvesting, she said large vessels must not be allowed to catch whatever they want in the sea and they must be brought under regulatory measures.

She also pointed out that many fish are caught that are not edible and are thrown back into the sea, causing severe environmental damage. Therefore, controlling mesh size and improving harvesting methods are essential, she added.

With Chief Conservator of Forests Mohammad Amir Hossain Chowdhury in the chair, Additional Secretary (Secretary-In-Charge) of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Mohammad Navid Shafiullah, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Commodore Sheikh Mahmudul Hasan, and Director General of the Department of Fisheries Dr Md Abdur Rouf addressed the programme as special guests. WCS Bangladesh Country Director Dr Md Jahangir Alam and World Fish Bangladesh Country Representative Dr Farook-Ul Islam delivered welcome address.