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 [Life](#) | 
 [Asia](#) | 
 [Opinion](#) | 
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## NEWS

### Anglers call for greater enforcement of Zone 1 fishing ban

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BRUNEI-MUARA

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AN effective and more rigid enforcement of the temporary ban of any fishing activity in Zone 1 by the Fisheries Department, Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources is needed, according to Alfred Yong, owner of Fred's Fishing Store and certified captain of the International Game Fish Association (IGFA).

At the same time, fishing enthusiasts have called for proper and impartial enforcement of the temporary ban, which was imposed for conservation purposes as 40 per cent of Brunei's marine resources have been depleted.

Of concern are trawlers' destructive methods of bottom trawling or using blocks of wood and weights to hold their nets to the bottom and dragging them over the reefs, damaging natural reefs.

"We need to protect our reefs and resources against illegal trawlers," Yong stated.

He suggested the use of reef balls as artificial reefs that protect or reconstruct damaged and natural ones as a way to rectify this quandary.

Authorities have been taking action against local commercial fishing vessels that conduct fishing in prohibited zones. To show impartiality, the same concerted action should be taken against foreign commercial fishing vessels coming into Brunei waters to fish with impunity.

To this end, proper patrols and prosecution of foreign fishing vessels should be practiced for these illegal actions to ensure impartiality of the law enforcement.

Yong added that educating the public on the need for conservation will also be effective in enforcing the law and rejuvenating our natural resources.

"Educate people to be more caring about the environment and the sea," he said.

Pollution and cyanide poisoning of fish are some issues that should be raised and educated to the public.

Relevant authorities should also maintain mangrove swamps and watch for the destruction of mangrove areas, said Yong.

"Mangrove swamps are breeding ground for a lot of fishes and affect our natural resources in the sea," he stated.

Schools and sizes of fish would also increase if each fisherman's catch is limited in number or if the capture of undersized fishes which should be allowed to grow before being caught is controlled, he added.

This will ensure the breeding of more fishes and thus increase and rejuvenate Brunei's marine resources.

He also suggested lessening commercial fishing and sustaining more regulated sports fishing activities. Such activities can also make money, said the fishing expert.

"This is tied to tourism," he added. "The government can get revenue from sports fishing."

Fred's Fishing Store is one of the organisers for the upcoming Brunei International Fishing Competition 2007 and provides chartered fishing on their boat, the Apollo.

The Brunei Times

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