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**Govt acts on dynamite fishing,
Jaffar Mjasiri in Bagamoyo, Daily News; Saturday, December 08, 2007**

THE government has resolved to adopt zero tolerance against dynamite fishing as it endangers human lives and eco system and environment.

Tourism and Natural Resources Minister Professor Jumanne Maghembe told fishery stakeholders here yesterday that intensive efforts were needed to tame the problem. The minister said that available statistics indicate that 110 people have died in the past one year in dynamite fishing-linked incidents.

"Dynamite fishing is a big problem in our waters and that makes it imperative for the government to solicit concerted efforts from all stakeholders to fight the problem," said the minister. He said a steering committee has been appointed to spearhead the zero tolerance resolution that is tasked to expedite the framework for investigation, prosecution and punishment of dynamite fishing offences.

Prof Maghembe said if zero tolerance was implemented the country will make a leap from its tourism collection from the current revenue of 840 million US dollars to 2 billion dollars in ten year's time. He added that despite the environmental degradation that dynamite fishing causes, there were serious security concerns which to a large extent have resulted into wide spread use of dynamite in most coastal areas.

The British High Commissioner Philip Parham echoed similar concerns and commended the government's move to adopt the zero tolerance, saying it is the step in the right direction. He said the current penalties do not commensurate with the gravity of the crime and he challenged Tanzanians to review the situation.

Mr Parham said the best way was to have a mechanism in place of cutting supply at source to ensure it is never used. He further said they should be severe legal penalties for failure by any institution to handle and deal with dynamites. He suggested that since Tanzania has treason and anti terrorism acts, it was high time that dynamite fishing offence should fall under one of the two acts.

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'Politicians have interests in dynamite fishing in coastal regions'
THE GUARDIAN, 11.12.2007, by Lusekelo Philemon

Politicians in the country's coastal regions have been alleged to be behind increasing incidents of dynamite fishing.

"This is the main impediment towards sustainable solution to over explosive fishing -the looming environmental tragedy in Tanzania" said the Fisheries's Department Executive Director, Godfrey Nanyoro.

Director Nanyoro said: "Armed forces which were deployed in the 1990s did a recommendable job and managed to reduce the scale of the dynamite fishing along the coast." in his paper at the just concluded Bagamoyo, Coast region meeting. Presenting a paper on the national meeting on illegal use of explosives in fishing over the weekend at the Bagamoyo meeting, Nanyoro said some politicians in the coastal strip were uncomfortable with the successful campaign and they interfered its success.

"In 2000, the Tanzania People's Defense Forces were forced to discontinue with the patrolling exercises" he said. He said most politicians in the areas were putting their own interests for political gains rather than the fate of the country's ecological and economical sustainability. According to some top fisheries' experts, explosives were being heard in the off shores of Indian Ocean ten times a day and in some pockets more than that on daily basis.

The increased dynamite incidents were allegedly due to poor participation of politicians in the campaigning processes. Apart from the existing Beach Management Units (BMUs), Nanyoro said that the problem was getting out of hand calling for urgent collective efforts from all key players, the government, state organs, NGOs, private sector and other stakeholders. It's said that, fish species were depleting in the Tanzania's seawaters due to dynamite fishing.

The trend is held to limit number of employment opportunities and shatters government's vision of reducing poverty levels and meeting MDGs. Tourism sector also was in danger, as tourists were not comfortable with the frequent explosives along the sea shores, it is further alleged. "This again reduces the income of communities living along the coast- from Mtwara to Tanga and the Isles."

Dynamite fishing, has been described as a new way of terrorism in the Tanzania's water bodies, which shelters several unique fish and coral reef species that are useful for tourism.

Prof. Jumanne Maghembe, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism explained the government's commitment to rescue the degraded oceanic environment. Commenting on the matter, Jamal Rwambow, Kinondoni Regional Police Commander, urged politicians

to change their mindset and be responsible for the national interests.

”To stop armed forces from operations against dynamite blasts is to slow down the government move towards prosperities. Let’s resume TPDF operations and play their role” said Abdul Aziz, Tanga regional commissioner. The RC said the set penalties weren’t enough to the culprits-because dynamite fishing was detrimental to the environment.

In their final deliberations, they formed a special task force that will help to trim down the alleged increasing number of explosives along the Indian Ocean Coast.

The meeting was sponsored by the British High Commission and hosted senior public officials, Regional Commissioners, Regional Police Officers from all coastal regions both from the mainland and Zanzibar.

<http://www.ippmedia.com/ipp/observer/2007/12/16/104432.html>

Dynamite fishing: Who is behind it?
Sunday Observer 2007-12-16 15:44:38, by Deodatus Mfugale

Hand grenades and bombs once exclusive weapons for the military are now applied to marine life as a way of getting bumper fish catch.

Although 110 people in the country lose their lives every year due to the illegal fishing method, more and more fishermen are attracted to the seeming money minter when only 20 percent of the dynamited fish is picked with the rest being wasted into the sea.

The illegal practice is now widespread along the whole of the Indian Ocean coast from Tanga region down to Mtwara region with main spots being in Tanga region. Notorious areas for the crime are Kigombe, Mwambani and Karage in Tanga region which between July and November this year recorded blasts every five to ten minutes while Dege, Sindandogo and Bamba in Temeke and Mkuranga districts in Dar es Salaam reported 146 blasts during the same period. Njao Gap and Manta Reef in Pemba have also been cited as areas where dynamite fishing is being practised with 54 blasts having been reported between July and November this year.

The illegal practice puts Tanzania in an awkward light, being the only country along the Indian Ocean coast that has failed to wipe out the crime. Neighbours Kenya, Mozambique, Seychelles, Comoro, Mauritius have all succeeded in stopping the illegal practice and look at Tanzania as the odd one out for failing to deal with the vice.

’The problem has now grown out of proportion as the criminals now use more sophisticated bombs which are used by the army. Some of these are also used in blowing up buildings, bridges and safes. We need to come up with a strategy that will enable us to deal with the criminals squarely,’ explained the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism Prof. Jumane Maghembe at a meeting held in Bagamoyo recently.

The meeting which was financed by the British High Commission in Tanzania drew participants from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, the Ministry of Public Safety and Security, Tanzanian People's Defense Forces, WWF, regional commissioners from coastal regions and the International Union of Conservation, among others.

He explained that the illegal practice has flourished recently because the criminals make handsome money from the illegal business. There are reports that dynamite for one blast is sold at between 6,000/= and 7,000/= which can kill between 150 kilogrammes and 400 kilogrammes of fish, sold at a price ranging from 3,000/= to 4,000/= per kilogramme.

'The criminals thus make between 500,000/= and 2,000,000/= and bearing in mind that a group of fishermen can undertake ten blasts a day, dynamite fishing has become a lucrative business,' the Minister noted.

Yet fishermen who use dynamite also risk their lives. According to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, about 110 people lose their lives every year due to dynamite fishing but the greed for big money spurs them on. However, while the fishermen make good money out of the illegal business, the country incurs heavy loss in term of environmental destruction and loss of revenue.

Dynamite fishing destroys coral reefs which are breeding grounds for fish and other marine life. Once a reef is destroyed by dynamite, it will take close to a century before a new one is formed and this is if all other things remain the same.

'But generally once a reef is dynamited, it will never come back,' explained Philip Parham, British High Commissioner, during the meeting.

There is also the threat to marine based tourism which has just begun to pick up. Investments are being made in snorkeling and scuba diving which are high value tourism that could have a positive impact on the economy of coastal communities in both the Mainland and Zanzibar.

According to the Zanzibar Association of Tourism Investors, coastal tourism accounts for up to 22 percent of Zanzibar's GDP and 17 percent for the Mainland. Marine based tourism also accounts for approximately 77 percent of Zanzibar's Foreign Direct Investment (DFI) which translates to about 139.555 million US dollars.

'If we allow dynamite to continue, we are likely to lose 100 million US dollars a year; 138,000 jobs will be at stake and 150 million US dollars spending by foreign visitors will be lost. This is to say the least about 80 million US dollars capital expenditure that we will have to forfeit,' explained Julia Bishop, the Director of Zanzibar Association of Tourism Investors. She added that while Tanzania is not taking measures to nurture her marine based tourism; other countries are protecting their resources and exploiting the full potential of their coastal tourism.

SMALL FISHERMEN SUFFER

Law-abiding small scale fishermen also suffer from dynamite fishing as the illegal fishing method kills indiscriminately, leading to reduced fish catches. With their livelihoods threatened, there is no way these families can lift themselves out of poverty. Besides, dynamiting of school of fish and pelagic fish, is a waste of resources because only about 20 percent of the dynamited fish is picked by the fishermen while the rest sinks into the sea.

However, with reef dynamiting, the fishermen can pick between 60 and 70 percent of the fish. Due to continued harassment from the blasts, eventually the fish move away in search of better feeding grounds. This reduces catches for small scale fishermen and many of them are already complaining about poor catches.

Even with the current state of affairs, various people have not lost hope and are taking measures to fight the crime. The Zanzibar Association of Tourism, Sea Sense and Sea Products Ltd are monitoring how the illegal fishing is conducted and recording the number of blasts everyday, in the hope that the information will help to highlight the magnitude of the problem and guide authorities in deciding what action should be taken against the criminals. Sea Products Ltd is spearheading the monitoring in Tanga region, Zanzibar Association of Tourism Investors mainly monitors the situation in Zanzibar and Pemba and Sea Sense is currently working in eight districts including Temeke and Mkuranga districts although the organizations share the information between them.

'In response to the escalating problem of dynamite fishing particularly in Temeke and Mkuranga Districts, we initiated meetings with village leaders from 12 villages in July this year to discuss the issue of dynamite fishing. We requested them to participate in monitoring blasts and they all agreed,' explained an official from the NGO.

The action taken by Sea Sense is in line with the thinking of the British High Commissioner who said during the meeting that community involvement can play a crucial role in fighting dynamite fishing because it destroys their livelihoods.

'But they need to know who to call with information about blasts or about people planning to use dynamite for fishing. And they need to be confident that their information will be acted on' he cautioned.