

## Save the Ocean Save the Planet

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World's Ocean's day is observed every year on 8th June with ceremonies and festivities. This is the day we try to rediscover the importance of oceans on our life. We seek to remind ourselves through seminars, workshops, and awareness raising campaigns how vital the ocean's ecosystem is to our survival. While we involve ourselves in organizing various colorful events, it is imperative for us to ask what we have done collectively to protect the oceans, which is our life line. Similarly is it enough; remembering our life support system only for a day, that is on worlds ocean day? This is certainly not the case.

Unfortunately the oceans are being continuously threatened by pollution from people on land and by natural causes. Marine life is dying and as a result the whole oceanic eco system is threatened by different sources of

pollution resulting from oil spillage, toxic wastes disposal, littered plastic products and harmful chemicals discharges. Plastic alone is the most common element that is found in the ocean which is extremely harmful for environment as it does not get break down easily. Thousands of tons of trash in the form of oil, dirt, septic tanks, farms, ranches, vessel's spillage and plastics are dumped into the ocean on a daily basis.

While the world is waking up to this rude reality and is endeavoring to reduce the adverse effects of pollution, what are we doing in this region? Bay of Bengal is one of the worst affected zone for pollution. Bay of Bengal is prone to natural disaster like cyclone, storm surge, floods, soil erosion and salinity those causes pollution. In addition man made pollution is taking a serious toll. The pollutants that are carried by rivers

and canal ultimately end up at the Bay causing massive pollution. More than three thousand ships and oil tanker that are calling at our ports every year also dump liquid and solid waste regularly as there are no adequate antipollution laws in effect and very lax implementation of laws. Besides ship breaking industry located along the coast of Chittagong is dumping oils and solid waste unabated into the Bay. All in all, the scenario is pretty grim and we are need to response immediately.

Having spent nearly forty years at sea operating in the Bay of Bengal and voyaging many of the oceans I can confess with fairness that we have not done enough for the Bay of Bengal, our life support system. We need to act promptly as time is running out very quickly. If we do not act now, it could really be too late. It could attack the ecosystem of our county and strangulate our life.

Those of you have visited Patenga Sea Beach at Chittagong recently would remember that the color of water around that coast is always brown and muddy and remain same throughout the year. But evidently who have visited Patenga Beach fifteen twenty years ago would recollect that during winter season the water color would turn blue and stay the same for few months until the onset of monsoon. As young sailors in the late seventies we use to observe blue water around Patenga beach during the winter and spring season. This is not the case anymore. Now water remains brown and murky round the year. This is happening due to excessive man-made pollution. This is the monster

we created.

Let me share another of my personal experience in this regard. Saint Martin Island is the only coral island of Bangladesh. When we used to dive around that island in early eighties we used to see many live corals on the south eastern side of the island. Some of the corals were very colorful having multitudes of shades and shapes. Now a days, we hardly find any live corals in and around Saint Martin Island. This is highly damaging for the ecosystem of a coral island. These some of the damages that we have done to our sea resources which has caused pollution and adversely affected the ecosystem of Bay of Bengal. We really need to act responsibly before any further damage is done.

People need air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, medicine, a safe climate where we can live in safely and peacefully. We want a better future for those we care about. We need healthy oceans to survive and to prosper. The ocean is the largest eco system on earth. It is the planet's life support system. Oceans generate



half of the oxygen we breathe and at any given time the oceans contain 97% of the world's water. Ocean provides at least a sixth of the animal protein people eat. Ocean absorbs at least 50 times more carbon dioxide than our atmosphere and reduces impact of climate change. The ocean transport heat from the equator to poles regulating our climate and weather pattern. The diversity and productivity of the world's ocean of vital interest to mankind.

Our security, our economy, our very survival, all requires healthy oceans. It is for our own interest that we

protect the ocean. This should be our vow not only on world's ocean day rather for every day. Some of our little acts could make a huge difference in the long run. Let us think about our carbon footprint and reduce consumption of energy. Let us make use of fewer plastic products and take care of our beaches. Let us educate ourselves about ocean and marine life and influence change in our community. Let us be aware today and every day not only on 08 June. Let us save the ocean in order to save ourselves and our planet.