

MYANMAR

Myanmar detains over 120 Indonesian, Taiwanese fishermen

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YANGON: More than 120 mostly foreign fishermen have been arrested and detained in Myanmar's notorious Insein prison for illegal fishing, official sources told AFP Monday.

Most of the group were Indonesian and the rest were Filipinos, Taiwanese and Myanmar nationals, the official said on condition of anonymity.

"More than 120 fishermen were arrested and sent to Insein prison on Friday for their illegal fishing," the official told AFP.

He said authorities had discovered about 10 illegal fishing vessels but declined to give further details.

Another official confirmed the detention, saying they were likely to be charged under the immigration act.

The Indonesian and Philippine embassies in Myanmar's main city Yangon could not be reached for confirmation, but a Taiwanese fisheries official confirmed that about 40 fishermen from four Taiwanese boats were being held.

"We can confirm four fishing boats registered in (south Taiwan's) Pingtung county have been held in Yangon since last week," said Tsay Tzu-yaw, deputy director of Taiwan's Fishery Administration.

A few of the fishermen were Taiwanese, including the captains, while the crew consisted of mostly Filipinos and Indonesians, the Taipei-based China Times reported.

The newspaper said the four boats had left the Thai island of Phuket on November 18 and were chased by the Myanmar navy the following day, before radio contact was lost.

Tsay said the Taiwanese government was still gathering information on the arrests before beginning efforts to get the fishermen home.

Under the law of the sea, a nation has the right to outline an exclusive economic zone stretching up to 200 nautical miles from its shores and claim the right to exploit the resources within that area.

Myanmar possesses a 2,229 kilometre-long (1,385 miles) coastline along the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea.