

ADB to study Philippine river pollution

16 Jan 2008, 1325 hrs IST, AFP

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MANILA: The Asian Development Bank said on Wednesday that it had launched a 10-month study into three Philippine rivers polluted by toxic heavy metals that could threaten the country's fishing industry.

Families of goldsmiths working upstream from the Marilao, Meycauyan and

Obando rivers had dumped the metals into the waterways, threatening thriving commercial fish farms, the ADB said in a document detailing the project.

The rivers flow into the already polluted Manila Bay. The heavily populated province where the rivers are located supplies freshwater fish to Manila but also tans leather and recycles lead, producing toxic waste.

The ADB said that water quality in areas where fish and shellfish were harvested failed to meet environmental standards.

"The country's position as a major international player, being the fourth largest producer of aquaculture products in the world and the largest in Southeast Asia, may not be sustained," it warned.

The ADB is funding a 10-month, 50,000-dollar pilot programme to survey the extent of the pollution and raise local awareness of the dangers of contaminating the food chain.

The study will also test cheaper local methods of reducing and possibly clearing up the heavy metal pollution.

The New York-based Blacksmith Institute, which specialises in identifying the most polluted places in the developing world, will undertake the study.

The institute estimates that 20 percent of deaths in the

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