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Giant Mekong catfish off the hook



Thai fishermen have promised to stop catching the endangered giant Mekong catfish to mark the 60th anniversary of their king's accession to the throne.

Nearly 60 fishermen made the pledge at a ceremony in the northern city of Chiang Khong - one of several events to celebrate the King's long reign.

The men are being paid \$500 (£270) for each giant catfish net they surrender.

The creature was put on the World Conservation Union's critically endangered list three years ago.

It was found that numbers of the species had plummeted over a decade.

The giant Mekong catfish can grow to around 3m in length and weigh up to 300kg.

"This is a great commitment from fishermen," Chiang Khong senator Tuenjai Deetes told the Associated Press news agency.

"Every fisherman will stop fishing giant catfish forever."

Conservationists said the ban was a first step towards saving the catfish, but warned that more needed to be done to ensure their survival.

A Mekong catfish weighing 293kg was netted last year, believed to be one of the largest freshwater fish ever caught.