

MMEA PERSONNEL GO UNDERCOVER

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They disguise themselves to protect local fishermen from foreign authorities

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MALAYSIAN Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) personnel are going undercover by disguising themselves as fisherman.

This is to resolve problems arising from local fishermen being nabbed by enforcement authorities from neighbouring countries while they are fishing in Malaysian waters, especially near Pulau Pisang.

MMEA director Datuk Abu Bakar Idris said it had to use the approach after four fishermen were arrested last year and two earlier this year.

"We increased monitoring along the waters of Batu Pahat, Kukup and Pontian after receiving complaints from fishermen in the area.

"They claimed to have been harassed by foreign enforcement authorities personnel, who were deterring them from fishing and were also extorting money," he said in Pulau Pisang waters here on Monday.

He said the agency was concerned about the issue as some of the fishermen were threatened and had their boats taken to neighbouring countries.

The location of such incidents extends beyond 12.8km from Pulau Pisang to Karimun Island, Indonesia.

"Hence, we had placed enforcers on fishermen's boats near the waters to monitor these occurrences.

"We need to monitor using local fishing boats because if we use MMEA boats, the culprits will run away," he said.

Abu Bakar said the agency had to curb the activity to ensure that the livelihood of the fishermen were not affected.

"Most importantly, this is done



Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency director Datuk Abu Bakar Idris (front row, second from left) receiving a #HMKotakRezeki box, which contains food, from New Straits Times Press journalist Mohd Sabran Md Sani at a breaking of fast event in Pontian on Monday.
PIC BY HAIRUL ANUAR RAHIM

to ensure that our fishermen can fish safely in the waters of Pontian, Batu Pahat and Kukup.

"So, by utilising the fishing boats, enforcement efforts can be carried out.

"The personnel involved are armed," he said.

On the extortion issue, Abu

Bakar said "we (the agency) are not sure the amount involved, but it is huge and the compensation is paid by their boss".

Abu Bakar said by going undercover, the agency could identify whether the fishermen were hounded by foreign enforcement personnel or other individuals.