

A LIFELINE FOR FISHERMEN AHEAD OF MONSOON

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THIS year has been a roller-coaster ride for fisherman Zairi Zainal Abidin from Kampung Kempadang near here.

When the east coast monsoon season came to its tail-end in February, the 35-year-old started to net a good income from his catch but the Covid-19 pandemic and the Movement Control Order (MCO) changed things almost overnight.

Compounded by uncertain sea-food prices and supplies, fishermen here face a challenging situation. Now, the year-end monsoon is just around the corner.

Zairi, a father-of-one, said the

majority of fishermen who were badly hit when the Covid-19 pandemic reached the country's shores were thus grateful for the Bantuan Prihatin Nasional 2.0 (BPN2.0) under the government's Prihatin Supplementary Initiative Package (Kita Prihatin).

"It has been a challenging year and we are certainly thankful to the government for the handout. Our catch has dropped and sales has been slow. During the good times (before the MCO) I earned about RM500 a day. Nowadays, I struggle to even bring home RM100.

"The state government also provided cash aid and essential items. The BPN aid certainly brought some relief to the fishermen and the payout allowed us to make necessary preparations to face the rainy sea-



Zairi Zainal Abidin and his mother Noraini Mat Noor with their catch. PIX BY FARIZUL HAFIZ AWANG

Kita Prihatin

son," he said when met at the village.

Zairi described the cash aid as timely saying that once the monsoon season struck, fishermen would be forced to remain on-shore to take up odd jobs in the village or collect mud crabs and "lokan".

Meanwhile Luqmal Hakim Abdullah, 75, said he would set aside

some of the cash aid from BPN2.0 to help his son open a small foodstall in the village to support the family.

Luqmal Hakim said his son, Mohamad Safuan Luqmal Hakim, 32, had been helping him at sea but due to uncertain times, it was better for his son to venture into something new.

"The aid will be useful for Safuan to set up his business.

"These are certainly tough times for many fishermen but we are grateful that the government is providing cash aid. It helps those of us from low-income households to weather the impact of the pandemic to a certain extent," said the father-of-six.

The BPN 2.0 payments will be distributed in two stages — the first was paid out this month, while the second will be disbursed in January next year.