

VIETNAMESE BOATS FISHING DAILY

Boats off Sabah are transferring their loads to bigger vessels mid sea, says source

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V IETNAMESE fishing vessels operating off the coast of Sabah have the means to catch tonnes of fish each day, but it is still unclear where they are landing their catches.

One of the requirements for foreign vessels to be licensed to operate in local waters is that they land their catch at jetties in Sabah.

According to statistics from the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), 55 Vietnamese boats have been licensed by 11 local companies to fish 30 nautical miles from the shore in Sabah waters.

Based on the huge size of Vietnamese fishing vessels, which have better equipment than local fishing boats, it can catch up to 60 tonnes every time each boat goes out to sea.



Some of the Vietnamese boat crew detained in an operation near Mengalum Island recently.

PIX BY JUNAIDI LADJANA

A source said Vietnamese boats could be seen almost daily, but it was unclear whether they were registered vessels.

"There is a possibility that the boats are transferring their loads to bigger vessels mid sea. We don't know if the catches are being landed in Sabah or sold in other countries.

"Most of the licensed Vietnamese vessels are only allowed to use long lines, but the foreign

fishermen we detained were found to be using illegal fishing methods."

The New Straits Times Press on Sunday reported that Vietnamese fishing boats were robbing Sabah and Labuan of their marine resources.

The NSTP team, which recently joined an MMEA operation off Mengalum Island, saw two boats being detained, each laden with what looked like a "mountain" of

marine life.

This year, Sabah and Labuan MMEA seized 11 Vietnamese boats found fishing illegally and detained 21 people.

The seizures of the boats and their catches amounted to RM22 million.

The source said some Vietnamese vessels were found to have come with mother ships, the latter stopping just outside Malaysia's international mar-

itime borders.

The smaller vessels, he said, would move into Malaysian waters to trawl, then head back to the bigger boats to land their catches.

He said the local fishing community was able to identify the foreign vessels due to their sizes.

"The vessels are unidentifiable as their numbers are painted by hand and do not conform with specifications."