

31/05/1997

1.7-metre-long fish catches attention of villagers

BIG CATCH ... Two boys Helmi Apong, 16, and Mahathir Abdullah, 15, had a shock of their lives when they chanced upon a fish, measuring 1.7m long, while taking a bath at Sungai Batu Kawa yesterday.

The fish, known as arapaima, was dead but its size caught the attention of the villagers of Kampung Sinar Budi near here.

A village committee member Tuah Awang Lani said the boys had not decided whether to sell the fish or give it to the Sarawak Museum.

He said several businessmen had expressed an interest to buy the fish which weighed about 80kg.

A zoologist at the Sarawak Museum, Dr Charles Leh, said the arapaima was a native of the Amazon River in South America.

He said the museum already had this specie of fish in its collection, which is much longer than this morning's find.

"I went to look at it (the fish) and can confirm that it was not from the river (Sungai Batu Kawa).

"It must have been frozen for quite sometime and someone threw it into the river.

"This is because the fish was not fresh and yet not smelly," Leh said.

Arapaima is considered a pet or aquarium fish and it can grow to a length of about five metres and weigh up to 200kg.

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