

23/07/2000

Hi-tech Sarawak fisherman wins top award

BUKIT JALIL, Sat. - Having only a Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia qualification did not stop fisherman Morni Saibi from exploring new technology to build a boat equipped with sophisticated equipment to increase the catch.

Morni, who won the nation's "top fisherman" award this year, read about fishing gear from books, magazines and the Internet to have some knowledge about fishing equipment and boats using modern technology.

Using this knowledge, the 39-year-old fisherman built the boat equipped with equipment like echo sounder, radar and satellite navigation worth RM450,000 from his savings as a fisherman since the age of 12.

"I am convinced that the country's fishing industry can remain competitive if local fishermen explore new technology," he said after receiving the award from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the launch of the Malaysia Agriculture, Horticulture and Agrotourism Show 2000 (MAHA 2000) today.

Morni, who hails from Dalat, Sarawak, intends to go into deep-sea fishing with the new boat by the end of the year.

"I was inspired to go into deep-sea fishing after visiting my friends in Thailand three years ago.

"I was amazed at how they managed to export a lot of fish to other countries. And I discovered that they used a lot of modern equipment. That's how they do it."

He expects to increase his production to between 50 and 100 tonnes a day with the modern boat as opposed to only 10 to 20 tonnes using his old boat.

The "top farmer" award went to Darus Ibrahim, 59, of Alor Star, Kedah, who has 11.47ha planted with padi, rubber, durian, pomelo and vegetables.

Darus, who also has a fruit and vegetable stall, began with an investment of RM1,606. He now earns at least RM1 million a year.

Khairuddin Mohamad, 26, of Dungun, Terengganu, won the "top young farmer" award, has a 13.5ha vegetable farm, 4.5ha durian orchard and two fishing ponds.

He has been involved in commercial farming since 1996 with encouragement from the National Farmers Association in Jerangau.

Khairuddin plans to concentrate on vegetable farming before venturing into mixed farming.

The "best farmers association" award went to Pertubuhan Peladang Tiga Daerah, Kelantan, while the "best fishermen's association" award was given to Persatuan Nelayan Kuala Perlis.

The winner of the entrepreneurship in the fishing industry award was Esa Su, 53, of Tumpat, Kelantan, while the winner of the entrepreneurship in livestock industry award was Mohd Jalaluddin Ahmad, 37, of Pekan, Pahang.

Peladang Kelapa Parit Farmer's Unit in Alor Star was judged the most successful farmers unit; Kelompok Sayur Kampung Tanggai in Kuala Pilah, the best cluster project; and Kumpulan Pengembangan Wanita Kampung Sungai Kelambu, Selangor, the best women's development group.

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