



A fisherman holding a large tuna caught at the site.

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## Large-size tuna – thanks to UMS artificial reef

SEMPORNA: Universiti Malaysia Sabah's Malaysian Universities Voluntary Council's (Maskum) effort to place two payao (artificial reefs) in the sea off Pulau Sipadan last November is bearing fruit.

The artificial reefs have attracted large-sized tuna.

Assoc. Prof. Dr Ismail Ali, who is the coordinator of the Maskum UMS Semporna Payao Programme, said their inspection done on Feb 4-6 showed tuna and other deep sea fish species have started visiting both the artificial reefs and fishermen have started harvesting them.

He said using a hook method fishermen can get a tuna weighing between 150-300kg within three days at the payao, adding this is the only method permitted at the site to ensure sustainability of fish resources.

Mubin Parajah of Mabul Island, who acted as a payao monitoring representative, said prior to the installation of the artificial reefs fishermen had to go as far as the border waters of Malaysia- Philippines to catch tuna.

But since the presence of the artificial reefs they no longer have to do so as they can do it at the site, he said, thanking the university as this has saved them a lot in terms of fuel cost and also because their safety is guaranteed.

The artificial reefs were installed in a programme officiated at by Minister in the Chief Minister's Department, Datuk Nasir Tun Sakaran, on Nov. 7 last year, to increase the tuna population and the socio-economic standing of traditional fishermen in the district.