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Illegal turtle hunt off Miri foiled, 88 men held

MIRI: Enforcement agencies foiled an illegal turtle-hunting expedition by a group of foreigners and seized more than 40 turtles and tortoises, some 120km off the coast here.

Various other types of sea creatures were also seized from six trawlers - two from China, three from Vietnam and one from Thailand, over the past 48 hours.



Big haul: Turtles rescued by the maritime enforcement agencies.

Twenty-five live turtles were rescued from huge tanks.

Turtles, some believed to be the endangered leatherback species, which had been slaughtered were found in a frozen compartment. Dried turtles and shells were also recovered.

The authorities involved in the operation comprised the Marine, Fisheries, Customs, Maritime departments and marine police.

They towed the trawlers into the Miri River.

The 66 Chinese and 22 Vietnamese crew have been detained for questioning.

Northern Sarawak maritime chief Muhammad Abdul Basar said the live turtles have been thrown back into the sea so that they could survive.

“This is the biggest seizure of its kind this year off Sarawak. We will actively patrol our exclusive economic zone to prevent further incidents of illegal encroachment,” he said.

Available online:

<http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2008/4/8/nation/20878715&sec=nation>