

## Economy of Boat Dwelling Sama Dilaut in Semporna

### **Abstract**

In Semporna there are few thousand Sama Dilaut, of which at least 500 reside in houseboats. In recent years there have been many assumptions that the nomadic lifestyle will cease to exist, which of course it can do if fish populations continue to decline. But there are reasons to think that the boat living Sama Dilaut are actually the big economic players among their kin. Many modern Sama Dilaut houseboats are much bigger than the traditional houseboats and they are run by big diesel engines. A fully equipped houseboat can cost 50 000 ringgit to construct - and they are still being built. House dwelling Sama Dilaut are often restricted to a certain island and rely on middlemen both for selling their catch and purchasing necessities. However, if a boat living family keep enough water, cassava, rice, oil and petrol they can stay for weeks on the ocean before returning to Semporna for another round of selling fish and buying necessities, which they do for much better prices than in the islands. In the long term their economic equation simply makes sense.