



Lorries transporting bauxite parked by the side of the road at Kuantan Port yesterday. The government is issuing a stop-work order on bauxite mining. Bernama pic

Federal govt to freeze bauxite mining

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STOP-WORK ORDER: Ministry and Pahang govt to make official announcement soon

KUALA LUMPUR

THE government has decided to issue a stop-work order on bauxite mining in Kuantan, Pahang.

Sources confirmed that the decision was made at the recent cabinet meeting.

"The notice (for the stop-work order) will be issued (to the operators) once the state government is informed of the decision," he told the *New Sunday Times* yesterday.

It is learnt that the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry and Pahang government would make an official announcement on the matter soon.

Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob said his government was taking heed of all the statements being made on the matter.

"I'm taking it positively. In the final analysis, the welfare of the people must prevail," he told the NST yesterday.

On Friday, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar was reported as saying that he would meet Adnan to resolve the bauxite mining issue, which had raised health and environmental concerns because of the likely release of radioactive materials.

He had said while the issuance of mining and extraction licences was under the purview of the state government, the Federal Government would discuss the matter with Pahang because it involved pollution.

Residents had voiced their fears after the sea turned red on Tuesday following heavy rain

near Balok in Kuantan.

Following this, the Department of Environment had been ordered to take samples of the water on alternate days, during and after floods, should they occur.

Bernama reported that Jalan Pintasan Kuantan heading to Kuantan Port, which was used by heavy vehicles transporting bauxite, was almost deserted yesterday.

Lorries were seen parked on the roadside near a petrol station at the Gebeng industrial area and in Jalan Pintasan Kuantan.

The government is facing growing calls to stop bauxite mining because of air and water pollution fears.

The NST had in August uncovered the unregulated mining of bauxite in the state.

This was followed by independent laboratory tests that revealed water samples taken contained high levels of heavy metals and traces of radioactive elements which are hazardous to humans.

'State govt supports decision'

KUALA TERENGGANU: The Terengganu government supports the cabinet's decision to temporarily stop bauxite mining in Pahang, said Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Razif Abdul Rahman yesterday.

He said the cabinet decision was the best way to stop the pollution caused by bauxite mining which had also affected Terengganu.

"On our part, we have initiated several measures, such as increasing surveillance and enforcement,

and sending a protest note to the Pahang authorities, urging them to use another route to ferry their bauxite instead of using our roads.

"This is to minimise the damage on our roads and pollution to our environment," he said after attending a "Back-to-School" programme at his constituency of Seberang Takir here yesterday.

Razif said the state government was studying the possibility of ban-

ning the export of bauxite through Kemaman Port.

Unregulated mining of bauxite in Pahang has been wreaking havoc on the environment, polluting the air and water.

On Tuesday, the sea off Kuantan turned red after heavy rain.

It was believed that the downpour had washed bauxite residue from stockpiles near Kuantan Port into the nearby river, which flowed into the sea.

The Kuantan Bauxite Disaster at a Glance

Oct 14, 2014 - Felda settlers in Bukit Goh discover large bauxite deposits in the area's oil palm plantations.

Jan 12, 2015 - Indonesia bans the export of key mineral ores, including bauxite, unless they are processed in the country.

May 14, 2015 - Tanjung Gelang waters in Kuantan turns red.

July 13, 2015 - The Pahang government says it is revoking mining ore licences of 34 contractors involved in the transportation of the minerals, and that from Aug 1, only 11 operators will be allowed to mine, transport and export bauxite.

Aug 3, 2015 - NST Special Probes Team commissions an independent laboratory analysis of water samples taken from Sungai Pengorak and Pantai Pengorak, near Kampung Selamat. Results show that the uncontrolled mining had resulted in the areas being contaminated with heavy metals. Early stages of radiation was also detected.

Aug 5, 2015 - Another independent laboratory test on live fish samples from Pantai Pengorak and Sungai Pengorak finds that the mean reading for arsenic in the three samples was 101.5mg/kg, much higher than the permissible level. The Food Regulation 1985 states that the permissible level for arsenic in fish and fishery product is only 1mg/kg.

Aug 6, 2015 - Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob said a shutdown order could not be issued as 'issues like loss of income for landowners, mining workers, including lorry drivers, needed to be considered, too'.

Aug 7, 2015 - Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya says shutting down all bauxite mines in Pahang is the most effective solution. The ministry's findings from numerous samples (fish, vegetables) tested find heavy metals and arsenic in some of them.

Aug 18, 2015 - Following the NST expose, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar says a revision and tightening of existing Federal Government's Mineral Development Act 1994 and various state mineral enactments are underway to deal with the present situation.

Sept 17, 2015 - Adnan says mining operators will be required to use a special type of sack to transport bauxite ore to Kuantan Port.

Oct 8, 2015 - Laboratory analyses conducted by the Fisheries and Chemistry Departments confirm that bauxite mining have led to various environmental contamination. The test results of water samples taken from Sungai Pengorak and Pantai Pengorak show levels of aluminium, silver, cadmium, iron (ferum), lead, chromium

and mangan that exceed the limits of Class III of the National River Water Quality Standards (in the same class as water in irrigation), among others.

Oct 20, 2015 - The Pahang government introduces Adherex 120, a biochemical formulated dust control agent developed by Canada-based Kam Biotechnology Ltd. It is 100 per cent biodegradable and is said to be more effective and economical compared with the existing method of using high-pressure water to wash roads to prevent dust from being blown around.

Nov 26, 2015 - Adnan says there are no plans to stop bauxite mining as it is a lucrative source of income. Low-income earners, such as lorry drivers, can earn up to RM8,000 a month by transporting bauxite from mines to collection points.

Dec 8, 2015 - Terengganu vows stricter enforcement on lorries ferrying bauxite from Pahang to Kemaman Port, as they are damaging roads and causing air pollution.

Dec 17, 2015 - The Department of Environment detected a mercury level of 0.0093 mg/L in Sungai Riau which is a source of raw water for the Bukit Goh Water Treatment Plant. According to WHO, naturally occurring levels of mercury in ground and surface water is usually less than 0.0005 mg/L (WHO, 2005). The level detected in Sungai Riau is 18.6 times higher. This is also more than nine times the allowable level of mercury in raw water of 0.001 mg/L.

Dec 18, 2015 - A team of experts says their sampling of treated water from Felda Bukit Goh and Felda Bukit Sagu show traces of aluminium that they believe could have come from the bauxite sediments in run-offs from heavy rain.

Dec 23, 2015 - Health director-general says treated water in Kuantan is safe.

Dec 28, 2015 - Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Razif, irked by illegal bauxite mining activities in his state, wants MACC to investigate enforcement authorities which are supposed to keep the scourge at bay. He sends a protest note to Pahang regarding bauxite mining companies there using a 5km stretch in Kemaman to transport the ore from Bukit Goh to Gebeng Port.

Dec 30, 2015 - Residents living along the beach near Balok discover the waters between Sungai Pengorak and Pantai Batu Hitam had turned murky red.

Dec 31, 2015 - State Fisheries Department advises the public against consuming shellfish, such as cockles and mussels, from the waters near Balok, as they may cause food poisoning.

Jan 1 - State Public Amenities and Environment Committee says the department has yet to determine the cause of the red sea phenomenon.