

# MACC begins clean-up

**BUSTED:** 4 from Pahang Land and Mines Dept, including a senior officer, nabbed for alleged bribery in bauxite-mining ops

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**T**HE Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) arrested four civil servants from Pahang on Wednesday for allegedly accepting more than RM100,000 in bribes from illegal bauxite miners.

MACC investigations division director Datuk Azam Baki said the four, aged between 30 and 38, were from the Pahang Land and Mines Department (PTG).

He said the employees, including a PTG senior enforcement officer, were picked up from their homes here between 6pm and 9pm.

"The raid team seized a substantial amount of cash at the officer's house, some of which was stashed in a washing machine," he told a press conference at Pahang MACC headquarters here yesterday.

Azam said the four had been remanded for seven days and would be charged as soon as investigation papers were completed.

He said he had requested for the deputy public prosecutor to complete the investigations quickly.

He said the modus operandi of the corrupt practices involved the sale of "dockets" (Form 13D issued by PTG) by the errant PTG employees to illegal operators.

For legitimate mining companies, he said the docket could be bought for RM1 each but it was sold for between RM150 and RM200 each to illegal mining operators.

"With the docket, illegal operators can transport bauxite from the mines to the collection point without hassle as they are provided with protection by the errant PTG enforcement staff.

"Each docket is good for a single transfer of bauxite. Imagine how

much the errant PTG staff can collect if the lorries make several illegal transfers of bauxite in a day."

The *New Straits Times*' Special Probes Team had, on Wednesday, exposed that the state government had found that, in the last three months when its bauxite export hit more than 10 million tonnes, only RM8 million, instead of RM40 million, had gone into its coffers.

Fingers were pointed at the state agencies managing the industry.

Azam told NST that the team's findings were consistent with the MACC's, adding that the state's earnings last year should have been at least four to five times more.

Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob had, in August, said that from January, the state had earned RM37 million from royalty.

On Wednesday, five months after the last count, he said the state had registered a total earning of RM46.7million from bauxite export.

He had, in an earlier statement, blamed illegal bauxite miners for the state's massive shortfall in earnings.

Azam said more individuals, including civilians and civil servants from other agencies, could be arrested for corrupt practices in the mining sector.

He said investigations into corruption in the bauxite-mining operations started about 2½ months ago, based on information from the public.

"We had to send our men into the mining operations to gather evidence as there was almost no witnesses to provide leads into corruption in bauxite-mining activities."

He said MACC had not mounted any probe earlier as reports against the mining activities only revolved around pollution, which was outside its jurisdiction.

Azam said fraud, weak enforcement and leakages may have cost



**Datuk Azam Baki** showing the 'docket' issued to lorry drivers for ferrying bauxite, during the press conference at Pahang MACC headquarters in Kuantan yesterday. Pic by Zulkepli Osman

the state government massive losses in revenue from bauxite exports last year.

"This is a huge loss to the people of Pahang," he said.

Meanwhile, Transparency International-Malaysia commended the MACC's proactive action that led to the arrests.

Its president, Datuk Akhbar Satar, said MACC's swoop was timely as the poorly-managed bauxite activities in Kuantan posed serious health risks and environmental threat.

"The culprits should be punished with maximum penalties as a deterrent to others.

"With the arrest of the four, the commission will be able to investigate the matter further and find out whether there are others involved in corruption.

"No one should be spared from the law, regardless of their position."

He called for a review of the industry's standard operating procedure (SOP) and issuance of the relevant permits.

"The health of the people is far more important than profits from the mineral's export.

"We are exposed to too many health risks, besides particles of bauxite being the cause of air and water pollution," he said.

## Lorry drivers plead for time to make trips

**KUANTAN:** Bauxite lorry drivers and operators here have called on the enforcement agencies to be cooperative and to leave them undisturbed to move and transport the mineral to the port before the three-month moratorium begins on Jan 15.

Operator Khor Chin Keat, 31, who has 20 lorries and has been involved in the transportation of bauxite for over a year, said they had no problem adhering to the ruling, but said ample time and space should be given to enable them to earn as much as they could to cover their expenses and support their families during the moratorium period.

"If they want us to stop operations for three months, we will. But, give us a chance to take out as much (bauxite) as possible during the remaining time. Don't make it harder for us, like the 'disruption' by enforcement officers from the Pahang Land and Mines Department today (yesterday)," he said, at Felda Bukit Goh here.

He said such "disruptions" affected the lorry drivers' livelihood as what they earned depended on the number of trips made, at RM60 per trip.

Lorry driver Zul Ahmad, 41, said some of his colleagues had resorted to borrowing money from the operators after their trips were reduced due to enforcement operations.

"We have to drive the lorries into the bauxite storage area at 4am and wait, sometimes until 6pm, before we can take the mineral to the port.

"At the port, we have to wait for a few more hours to unload the bauxite. So, in a day, we make one or two trips, or if we are lucky, three."

Zul said six months ago, he earned RM7,000 a month, but of late, it had been difficult to earn even RM1,500.

On the announcement about the moratorium period, he said he was planning to head to his hometown in Penang to find another job.

K. Siva from Ipoh, Perak, said the monthly instalment for his 18-tyre lorry had been in arrears for the past two months. **Bernama**

## Land Dept is head coordinator

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Pahang Land and Mines Department will act as head coordinator of the newly-established joint-enforcement team for bauxite mining in Kuantan.

Natural Resources and Environment secretary-general Datuk Seri Azizan Ahmad said the state Geoscience and Mineral Department would act as co-chair for the team, while other agencies, including police, Road Transport Department, Land Public Transport Commission, Kuantan Municipal Council and the People's Volunteer Corps (Rela), will be involved in enforcement activities before the moratorium which

comes into effect on Jan 15.

This was following the three-month suspension on bauxite-mining activities in Kuantan, which was announced by Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar on Wednesday.

Azizan, in a statement made before the moratorium period, said bauxite-mining companies were required to clear and transport the minerals from their respective sites to the designated stockpile area.

"As such, immediate enforcement action will be in place to ensure that the movement of lorries transport-

ing bauxite is in accordance with the law to prevent inconvenience to residents in affected areas.

"During the moratorium, enforcement action will be carried out to ensure there would be no lorries transporting bauxite," he said.

Azizan had chaired a closed-door meeting with representatives from agencies in Putrajaya yesterday to coordinate joint-enforcement efforts to address issues relating to transportation of bauxite involving both federal and state authorities.

It was reported that the companies were required to clear the bauxite at mining sites before Jan 15.



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