

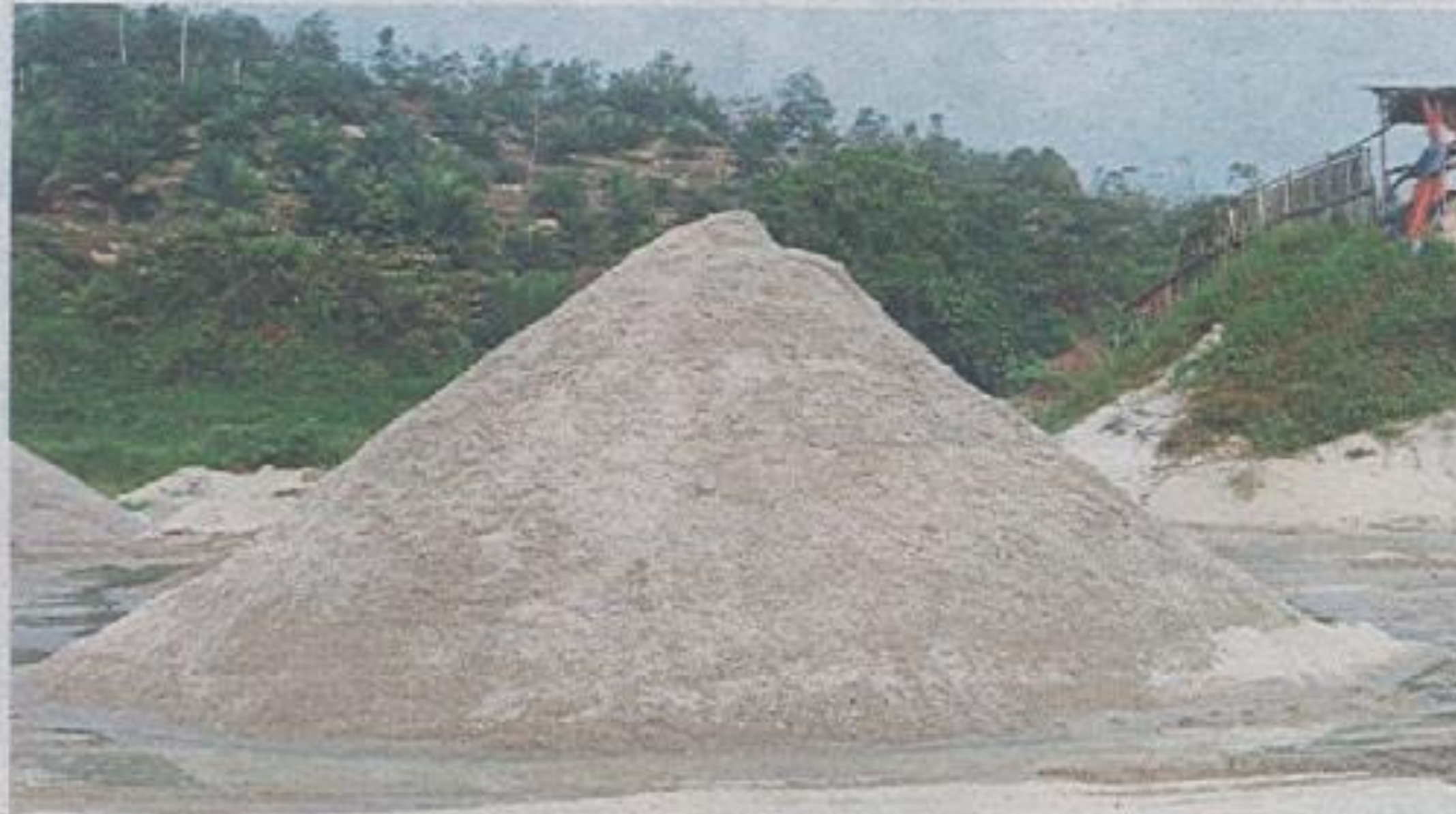
Time to stop sand exports

WE refer to the recent media reports on the Energy and Natural Resources Ministry issuing 11 approved permits (APs) for river sand exports. It was stated that the AP holders are allowed to export river sand and other minerals to Brunei, China, Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, Hong Kong, India, Japan and the Maldives.

Concerned about the impacts of sand mining on the environment and people, the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is calling for a total ban on sand exports and revocation of all the approved permits.

Data for sand exports from the United Nations Statistics Division – Commodity Trade Statistics Database (Comtrade) reveals that in 2017, total sand (HS 2017 code 2505: sands of all kinds other than metal-bearing sands) exports from Malaysia amounted to 1,879,233,138kg, with about 95% sent to Singapore.

In 2018, sand exports from Malaysia saw a slight reduction to 1,693,640,785kg and Singapore was also the largest importer, with 94.7% of Malaysian sand sent there. Malaysia decided to ban the



export of sea sand to Singapore in 2018.

River sand, however, is still being exported through the APs. It is indeed disconcerting to find that our natural resources are exploited without a care for the environment no matter who is in power.

CAP is worried that sand extraction rates from the rivers would exceed the natural replenishment rate.

A serious environmental impact of river sand mining that we have observed and received complaints

about over the years is downstream erosion, which causes damage to infrastructure, public property and loss of farmland and river reserves.

The aquatic habitat is also affected due to disruption to spawning beds, nursery habitat, shellfish habitat and riparian ecology.

The removal of sand from a river will alter the channel and river hydraulics, and degrade water quality as the river becomes more turbid.

Sand mining also causes re-sus-

pension of organic and toxic materials, further degrading the water quality.

There are many administrative and enforcement issues relating to sand mining. Among them is that technical conditions or requirements are constantly flouted by the miners.

There is also the problem of monitoring to check whether operators are adhering to the technical conditions or extraction of sand is according to the allowed capacity. Then there is the issue of illegal sand mining and sand theft, some backed by organised crime.

What the Malaysian government needs to do is to recognise that sand is a finite and limited resource. The world is running out of sand and many countries have started imposing bans on their export.

Malaysia should do the same and protect our precious natural resources. Stop exporting sand just to fill the coffers of a few.

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