

# Strict rules to regulate bauxite mining

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Pg. 2

## PROTECTION:

Measures will allow Kuantan to recover, says minister

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**B**AUXITE-RELATED activities in Kuantan will be regulated under strict and specific regulations that will give the district, widely damaged by poorly-regulated mining, a chance of recovery.

Fresh from imposing a moratorium on bauxite mining in Pahang on Wednesday, the Federal Government yesterday revealed what they expected the industry players to observe in protecting the environment, through the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry.

Its minister, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, told the *New Straits Times*' Special Probes Team that those involved in the four chains of the bauxite sector — mining, transporting, stockpiling and operations at the port — would have to comply with the rules that would be issued soon if they wanted to resume their operations.

He assured Kuantan folk, who had been forced to grapple with polluted air and water, damaged roads, as well as speeding and poorly covered bauxite-laden lorries, at least in the past year, that what they heard yesterday was not mere lip service.

The NST, which has been highlighting the hazards and risks posed by the poorly-managed sector as well as public concerns, agreed that the rules, if adhered to, would give Pahang a sustainable bauxite industry (see details in the interview next page).

"We have no problems. If there is no compliance, we will keep extending the moratorium until they tick all the boxes," said Wan Junaidi.

"Our decision (on the moratorium) was made after a thorough assessment of the situation on the ground... and yes, the situation is worrying. Denial syndrome must stop and mitigation must come in."

Wan Junaidi had, on Oct 8 last



Pahang Land and Mines Department personnel checking lorries carrying bauxite at a mine in Bukit Goh, Kuantan, yesterday. Pic by Zulkepli Osman

year, shared exclusively with the team the results of the tests it commissioned on water and air samples taken from areas suspected to have been polluted by bauxite run-off. The results were consistent with those the team had commissioned earlier.

He also revealed yesterday that 1,200ha of land in Kuantan had been dug up for bauxite, all done by both legal and illegal miners without the crucial steps that could have helped with rehabilitation once mining ceased.

On resuscitating the decimated Kuantan landscape, Wan Junaidi said experts, including those from the Forestry Department and non-governmental organisations, would help rehabilitate the areas affected, including through replanting.

On the assurance that the authorities, including those from the state government, would push for compliance, he said the system of checks and balances would be sound and

comprehensive enough to ensure that those mining illegally for bauxite would have no way to export their haul or sell them.

This, Wan Junaidi said, was because in addition to the strict procedures, the National Blue-Ocean Strategy would be called into play. This means that the police and the military, among other agencies, would oversee and monitor the district's bauxite-mining activities, including making sure that only legally-mined bauxite are allowed to enter the port and that only those from the stockpile area would be processed for export. Only registered lorries with special permits will be allowed to transport the mineral.

It is understood that the sole central bauxite stockpile area will be on a 200ha land near the Kuantan port.

Wan Junaidi said the stockpile area would be built using proper engineering designs and follow industry standards. It would be equipped with pollution mitigating measures,

such as drainage, as well as slopping and retention ponds that would treat run-off.

"We are looking at a recommended discharge of 50mg/l or 100mg/l of suspended solids for discharge from the ponds.

"Barriers, hoarding and fencing walls will also be constructed around the stockpile area."

The monthly export of bauxite from Kuantan Port, he said, would be limited to two million tonnes.

This, Wan Junaidi said, was to suit the capacity of the port, which would no longer be allowed to hold on to any stockpile.

New approved permits (APs) would be given only to eligible companies and no longer individuals.

He said no less than 300 APs for bauxite mining in Kuantan had been issued since bauxite was first found in the district.

"The Federal Government will not issue any APs if the rules are not observed."