



KERATAN AKHBAR

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TRIAL RUN

Bauxite mine operators optimistic

KUANTAN: Licensed bauxite mine operators can breathe a sigh of relief as mining is set to resume next year.

Although the moratorium ended on March 31, no bauxite mining and export activities were allowed in Pahang, leaving operators anxiously waiting to resume work after four years.

Pahang Mining Operators Association vice-president Datuk Yap Soon Huat welcomed the statement by Water, Land and Natural Resources Minister Dr A. Xavier Jayakumar on Monday to issue mining licences by the end of next month or early next year.

He described it as good news for the bauxite industry in Pahang.

"Finally, there is something to cheer after a long wait. The mining licences will be issued and followed by a six-month trial period... this will allow mining and export of the ore.

"We want to move on. Let the trial run be conducted to gauge the effectiveness of the new stan-

dard operating procedure. I believe once mining begins, the authorities can monitor and make changes if necessary," he said.

Felda Bukit Goh Village Community Management Council chief Jefri Salim said the settlers were relieved to learn that the government would allow mining next year.

"I have been receiving a lot of phone calls from settlers asking me if the news was genuine as they have been waiting for a long time for updates.

Finally, we have some positive news and the applications for mining licence are being processed.

"We welcome the trial run as it will ensure the SOP is adhered to. We do not want any repeat of past incidents. I believe everyone including the authorities can now handle the situation better."

A bauxite mining operator who

declined to be named said mining and transport operators here preferred to "wait and see" before deciding to resume mining.

"The new SOP is strict and requires miners to invest a lot before starting operations.

"This might be suitable for established companies. Since the ministry will conduct a trial run, will it impose another moratorium if things get out of hand?

"In terms of price, China was once our main buyer but they

are now importing from Guinea, Australia and Indonesia, so there might be some competition... operators need to consider a lot of things before returning to mining," he said.

Jayakumar on Monday told the Dewan Rakyat that bauxite mining licences would be issued soon and mining subjected to a six-month trial period.



Jefri Salim