



KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

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Quarries only have limited limestone stock left, say operators

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GEORGE TOWN: Limestone quarries are running low on raw material stock with some halting production due to the lockdown.

Perak Quarry Association secretary Saw Lid Haw said some of the quarries had only enough stock to see them through for a week or two.

"After that, we do not know what will happen as most of the limestone supply comes from Perak," he said.

"Many do not understand that limestone powder is needed for many daily essentials."

Saw added that industries that would be affected included water treatment, glove manufacturing,

plastic manufacturing and the animal feed industry.

"From your toothbrush to toothpaste, mirrors and pharmaceutical products, tyres, face masks, personal protective equipment – they all have limestone powder in them. "People do not realise how many products use limestone powder as a component," he added.

Saw said there were over 50 limestone quarries in Perak. A representative of a quarry producing limestone powder, who wanted to remain anonymous, said there was enough raw material to last another two weeks.

"Our production is still running with the raw material stock we have right now. "We are unsure how things will be if they do not allow us to operate

soon as our raw materials are running low.

"This will be bad for our customers, who include glove makers, as they are still in production and need our supplies.

"The demand for the powder went down this month and that is why we still managed to have some stock," the representative added.

It was reported that the Chemical Industries Council of Malaysia (CICM) had highlighted that a few industries were in a fix as they were not allowed to operate despite being allowed to do so in the last two movement control orders.

These included operators of limestone quarries, who would be declaring force majeure to water treatment and sugar production industries as they had run out of

reserves due to the lockdown.

(A force majeure seeks to protect a party that cannot fulfil a contract for situations beyond its control).

CICM executive director Datuk Muhtar Hashim had said that they were not currently listed as an essential industry.

This was despite the fact that water treatment plants and sugar production factories needed to keep operating, he added.

"They have been operating by running down limestone stock since June 1 but this stock is getting critically low and will result in the shutdown of limestone factories in the coming days and weeks," he was reported to have said.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PRAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa

said water treatment plants should not have an issue with the supply of limestone powder.

"We are an essential industry and those related to essential industries should not have a problem.

"The quarries will have approval from the Environment and Water Ministry to supply limestone powder to water operators.

"Those who supply chemicals to water supply operators should not have problems obtaining approval from the ministry, the National Water Service Commission and the International Trade and Industry Ministry," he said.

Lime – both in the form of quicklime (calcium oxide) and hydrated lime (calcium hydroxide) – is used in drinking water treatment.