



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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Press Statement

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## Sand mining benefits few but detrimental to most

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is shocked that a private company Ageson Bhd has entered into joint venture (JV) agreements with Bintang Dayang Sdn Bhd (BDSB) for river sand and Menteri Besar Kedah Incorporated (MBI Kedah) for silica sand to mine and export 50,000 tonnes of river sand monthly to China and Hong Kong by end 2020. Such sand mining is sheer exploitation of Malaysian resources to benefit only a few interested parties and a few businessmen in Hong Kong and China and in no way benefits Malaysians.

There have been ample science-based studies done worldwide on the negative impacts of sand mining on the ecological structure such as habitat loss and degradation, and the environmental degradation such as water temperature and river hydraulics. The changes can be rapid and irreversible.

Rivers and their surroundings are homes to a wide variety of riparian species: fishes, crustaceans, otters, monitor lizards, and birds. Sand mining destroys their habitat and spawning grounds, affecting wetlands, besides causing pollution and flooding. It is also associated with landslides and faster beach erosion through the reduction of sediments carried by rivers to coastal areas.

Activities of sand mining are also linked to the lowering of water table and the subsidence of the ground. The effects are well documented in the case of the construction of Prangin Mall's basement in 1997. Scores of buildings around Pintal Tali, Jalan Sungai Ujong, Jalan Dr Lim Chwee Leong, Jalan Magazine, Lebu McNair and Lebu Nordin started to crack in 1997 when the water table was lowered to build Prangin Mall's basement. Repairs to the affected buildings were only carried out when the water table had stabilised and this clearly demonstrates the importance of the maintenance of the ground water table.

There have also been cases of people drowning in mining pools because the activities deepen the river thereby increasing the flow rate and volume of water. Sand extraction increases the turbidity of the water and also releases toxic contaminants such as manganese and chromium into the aquatic system.

We, therefore, call upon the government to seriously cancel existing permits, including that of Ageson Bhd, and cease approving any permits for sand mining. The reason is that Ageson Bhd alone is expected to export between five million to eight million tonnes of river sand per year with a contract for up to 15 years. If it proceeds as expected, Ageson Bhd would be exporting 120 million tonnes within that time period, barring the fact that it is also going into several other contracts to export sand.

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