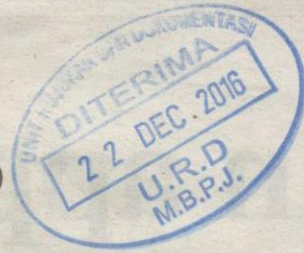


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# Bauxite-mining areas cleared of pollution

**CHECKS:** Kuantan roads no longer look like taking a 'journey to Mars'

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**T**HE environment here has improved considerably compared with last year as roads, signboards and trees are now free from layers of red dust from bauxite.

A trip along the Kuantan bypass road and Jalan Kuantan-Kemaman is no longer "a journey to Mars", a description used by Netizens for the roads which turned red from bauxite dust last year.

During a check by the *New Straits Times* yesterday, the situation along the roads and other areas badly affected by the rampant bauxite-mining activities had returned to normal.

At Kuantan Port, the situation was significantly better as Kuantan Port Consortium Sdn Bhd (KPC) had cleaned up the site.

The roads were no longer covered with bauxite dust as lorries leaving the port were hosed down to reduce dust spillage.

It was also observed at the port that a water truck was spraying water to clean the roads.

Earlier this month, KPC had reportedly said it had complied with government guidelines, and was ready to handle the new bauxite shipments should the government decide to let the existing moratorium lapse on Dec 31.

A food trader operating near the port said the situation had improved.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, she said she was thankful for the long-term moratorium,



**Lorries carrying bauxite** plying the road in Kuantan Port yesterday. (Inset) A Kuantan Port worker using water to clear the road of bauxite dust in Kuantan yesterday. Pix by Farizul Hafiz Awang

which had contributed to the situation.

"There are fewer lorries carrying bauxite plying the roads now."

Asked if she would agree with a move to allow for the bauxite-mining activities to resume, she said it should be done with good planning.

"The moratorium is unlikely to stop mining activities that have been going on for many years and

all the mess caused by them.

"It is best if the authorities can impose stringent procedures to ensure that bauxite-mining activities do not pollute the environment," said the trader, in her early 30s.

On Tuesday, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar inspected bauxite-mining sites, including Felda Bukit Kuantan and the port.

After the inspections, he had expressed satisfaction with the level of cleanliness in the district.

The moratorium was first imposed from Jan 15 to April 14 to address concerns over pollution, lack of regulation and excessive bauxite extraction by operators.

It was extended to Dec 31.

The ministry, however, has yet to decide if the moratorium will end on Dec 31.