

200 fishermen lose half their income due to pollution

KUANTAN: Contamination of coastal areas by bauxite ores has affected the livelihood of more than 200 fishermen, who have lost about half their income.

Pahang Fishermen's Association chairman Zulkiflee Md Yusof said they had received complaints from fishermen on the declining catch daily at the sea near Balok.

"It's not only the fishermen. Even people living in the fishing village have voiced their concern about the

bauxite mining in the area.

"Previously, a fisherman could make up to RM200, or catch about 40kg of fish per day.

"That is about 12,000kg per day from all the fishermen in Beserah and Balok. But, now, they can barely get half this number."

The murky sea water, he added, had discouraged fish from coming close to shore, making it difficult for fishermen with small boats as they could not go far out to sea.

He said the recent report on the possibility of the water and marine life being contaminated near Balok had caused the public to stop buying fish in nearby markets.

"The public are reluctant to buy fish or shellfish, especially at Pasar Sejahtera, Beserah or at Balok. They believe the fish contain heavy metals. We hope the authorities will take action to resolve this issue, which has affected fishermen's earnings."

Heavy rain for more than 24 hours

had recently turned the waters at Balok and Batu Hitam beaches, both favourite picnic spots, into a sea of red. It was reported that the rain had washed bauxite ores from the stockpile near Kuantan Port into nearby rivers, which flowed into the sea.

Kuantan Port Consortium, however, refuted the claims, saying that the two rivers — Sungai Balok and Sungai Tunggak — had no connection with Sungai Pengorak, which was linked to the port.