

Villagers can finally breathe easy after illegal Pekan tyre plant shut down



By T.n. Alagesh - July 19, 2024 @ 7:26pm



An illegal scrap tyre pyrolysis factory at Kampung Sijau in Pekan/Luqman Hakim Zubir was ordered to be shut down yesterday by the Department of Environment and Pekan Municipal Council.

PEKAN: Over the past five years, three villages along Sungai Pahang have been engulfed in a relentless onslaught of black toxic fumes from a scrap tyre pyrolysis factory located at Kampung Sijau near here.

Nestled amid oil palm and rubber trees, the illegal factory is believed to have been extracting oil and wire steel cords resulting in air pollution due to the unregulated process using brick kilns.



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Justice was finally served yesterday, when the Department of Environment (DoE) and Pekan Municipal Council inspected the premises before they ordered the plant to be shut down.

Tanjung Cempaka Village Development and Security Committee chairman Abd Hadi Awang Abdullah said he hopes the factory will be closed for good following the third inspection in five years yesterday.

"The DoE had previously visited the factory in 2020 and several months ago but the operator was only issued compounds. I believe the operator returned after some time and resumed their operations.

"When the plant is operating, it will emit black smoke and the wind will carry the dust into the homes at three nearby settlements namely Kampung Sepagar, Kampung Salong and Kampung Bukit Udang.

"The dust and smell of the smoke reaches as far as five kilometres especially during strong wind. Some of the nearby house roofs are covered with black dust and this has raised environmental concerns...I hope the shut down order has brought an end to the pollution issue," he said after bringing reporters near the cordoned-off factory here today.

Meanwhile, Abd Hadi said he hopes the DoE will conduct regular checks at the premises to ensure the plant does not resume operations after several months.

"The premises are secluded as the area is surrounded by rubber and oil palm trees. No one realised the presence of the factory until people spotted the thick black smoke...people were fed up with the factory as their health was at risk.

"I am grateful to th department, the district office and police for inspecting the facility and instructing the workers to cease operations.

"The people here can finally breathe fresh air," he said, claiming the facility operator had violated a number of laws including operating on agricultural land.

Meanwhile, a state DoE spokesman confirmed that officers had visited the plant yesterday but declined to comment, saying the matter was still under investigation.

The New Straits Times has reached out to Pahang Local Government, Housing, Environment and Green Technology Committee chairman Datuk Mohammad Fakhruddin Mohd Ariff and Pekan district officer Datuk Zaliza Zulkipli but but have yet to receive any response.