

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD

'SEA POLLUTION IN PENANG ALARMING'

Dead fish, sludge and oil deposits found on beaches, say environmentalists

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SEA pollution at several beaches in the state has fishermen and environmentalists worried.

Penang Forum member Khoo Salma Nasution said on Monday that there were dead fish on the shores of Teluk Bahang, and sludge and oil deposits washing into Batu Ferringhi beach.

Yesterday, the Penang Heritage Trust vice-president shared video footage and photos of the sea at Teluk Kumbar, which sported a rusty red-coloured layer.

Khoo said the situation had riled up fishermen, prompting



Water sample containing sludge and oil deposits collected from Batu Ferringhi beach.

one of them to lodge a report.

In the report, the man said he went to sea to net prawns, and discovered a red-coloured layer on the surface of the water.

"I suspect this has got something to do with environmental

pollution. It worries me and other colleagues because our income would be affected when the catch is reduced. I made a police report so that the authorities will investigate the sea pollution in Penang," he said.

Barat Daya police chief Superintendent A.A. Anbalagan confirmed receiving the report.

Khoo told the *New Straits Times* that there were a number of pollution sources — river effluents, landfill leachates, untreated sewage, waste from aquafarms that cause eutrophication, oil or chemicals spilt or dumped by ships, reclamation works and dredging waste dumped at designated sites.

"Marine pollution in the state has reached the saturation point.

"Any responsible government would eliminate sources of pollution so that it can be isolated and cleaned up, instead of further polluting our seas through ambitious reclamation projects."

Sahabat Alam Malaysia president Meenakshi Raman said it was critical for the Fisheries De-



Department of Environment officers checking sludge and oil deposits at the Batu Ferringhi beach recently. PIC COURTESY OF KHOO SALMA NASUTION

partment and the Department of Environment (DoE) to investigate and clarify what was going on in the seas.

"We have been hearing complaints from fishermen about poor fish catch and discoveries of pollutants in the water. We urge the authorities to immediately explain what the problems are."

Penang Fishermen's Association chairman Nazri Ahmad said the pollution was worrying for fishermen as their daily catch had already been significantly reduced over the past five years.

"Our daily catch is already low. With the pollution, it will be worse."

Penang Environment Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh said

since last week, DoE and the Penang Island City Council had been investigating the first sighting of oil patches near the Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies in Teluk Bahang.

He said DoE was also investigating the pollution in Batu Ferringhi and Teluk Kumbar, as well as Miami Beach.

"We are investigating all reports of sea pollution. Since there is already a police report, we will give full cooperation to the relevant authorities," Phee said, adding that DoE personnel had taken samples from all affected areas for testing.

Phee said the state government would not show leniency towards the culprits.