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**Pahang Land and
Mines STAFF
QUIZZED** in bauxite
graft probe

remanded

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) officers on Wednesday arrested four Pahang Land and Mines Office staff, including a senior officer, for allegedly soliciting and accepting bribes relating to bauxite mining activities.

MACC Investigation Division director Datuk Mohd Azam Baki said that the alleged bribe was accepted from unlicensed miners to prevent any enforcement action.

"The graft involved in this case is valued at over RM100,000.

"Those arrested are aged between 30 and 38 years, and are being remanded for a week (from Thursday) under Section 17 (a) of the MACC Act

2009," he said in a statement yesterday.

Mohd Azam said the commission is looking into complaints where the mineral ores transfer documents, or Form 13D from the Land and Mines Office, which cost between RM150 and RM200, were sold to the illegal miners for only RM1.

"MACC is not ruling out any follow-up arrests," he said.

The MACC on Wednesday said there were elements of graft in the complaints it received about the uncontrolled bauxite mining.

The Health Ministry recommended that bauxite mining in Pahang be halted altogether, cautioning the people against drinking water from polluted rivers.

"Do not drink the water even if it is

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Subra: Situation being monitored

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boiled. It contains heavy metal that is detrimental to health and could remain in the body undetected for a long time," said its minister, Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam.

They should also not eat fish caught in the polluted rivers, he told reporters after delivering his New Year message here.

He said the ministry was monitoring the situation to ensure the water supply in the Kuantan area was not affected.

On reports that people exposed to bauxite dust could eventually suffer from Alzheimer's, he said: "All forms of metal carry a long-term effect. It will take some time for it to manifest."

The federal government on Wednesday announced a three-month moratorium from Jan 15 on bauxite mining in Pahang.

Health Deputy Director-General Datuk Dr Lokman Hakim Sulaiman said the ministry was awaiting a chemical analysis report to determine the effect of bauxite on man and marine life.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Department of Land Management, Faculty of Agriculture lecturer Prof Shamshuddin Jusop said the red dust in the air or deposited on the ground due to the mining activities can be hazardous to health.

"It was also lately observed that oil palm at the Felda plantations in Bukit Goh were not healthy any more," said Shamshuddin.

"Some areas in this Felda scheme were being mined for bauxite that resulted in serious land degradation which might affect the growth of the palms.

"If allowed to go on, this can cause further damage to the oil palm industry."

He said there will not be enough topsoil to cover the entire dug-out areas and during the wet season, the half-filled holes would be flooded with reddish muddy water.

He said this would eventually result in the overflow of sediments that may damage other areas of the plantation.

"The damage done to the oil palm industry has not been factored into the equation of the mining activities, including the economic loss to the people owning the plantation," said Shamshuddin.

On the contamination of rivers, he said the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry had reported in October last year that the level of aluminium, silver, cadmium, iron, lead, chromium and manganese in Sungai Pengorak, Pahang, exceeded the limits of Class III of the National River Water Quality Standards.

As a result, he said the water from the river cannot be used for washing let alone for drinking.