



# Sabah wants export ban on 'rakyat fish' to be lifted



**Subject of debate:** The ban aimed to ensure sufficient supply and avoid price surges during festive seasons.

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**KOTA KINABALU:** Sabah wants the Federal Government to lift a four-month export ban on certain types of fish, says state Agriculture and Food Industry Minister Datuk Junz Wong.

He said the export ban on fish dubbed "rakyat fish" by the Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia was enforced in January and February, and again between April 15 and June 15.

The ban was intended to ensure sufficient supply and avoid price surges during festive periods such as Chinese New Year and Hari Raya, as well as monsoon seasons.

Species that were banned included mackerel, pomfret, yellowtail

scad and prawns.

"The ban has taken a toll on the fisheries industry, affecting not only fishermen but also the economy of Sabah.

"The blanket ban is not suitable and should not be applied to Sabah for various reasons," he said.

Wong said Sabah's fish exports totalled 71,289 metric tonnes in 2018, while the imports were a mere 16,662 metric tonnes.

"In the same year, our exports fetched Sabahans RM876mil.

"Sabah is also the main hub for fish consumed by Malaysians. We landed 163,055 metric tonnes of fish with a value of RM945mil in 2018.

"While the ban may be suitable for Peninsular Malaysian states that have lower yields, Sabah is an exception as we have more than

what we need," he said.

He added that based on past experiences, fish landing increases in Sabah every April and May.

"This catch season causes fish price to plummet as a result of over supply.

"With limited local demand in Sabah, the export ban will be detrimental to fishermen, boat operators and the Sabah economy," Wong said.

He hoped newly appointed federal Agriculture and Food Industry Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Khandee, who is from Sabah, would understand and help the state's fishing industry by lifting the ban.

With Covid-19 affecting the country's economy, he said it was important to lift the ban to stimulate businesses.

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# Sabah first to draft own fishery law

By Jenne Lajiun

**KOTA KINABALU:** Sabah is drafting her own Sabah Fishery Enactment and is set to become the first state in the country to ban shark fishing.

Agriculture and Food Industry Minister Datuk Junz Wong said that the Sabah Fishery Enactment will be implemented next month.

He said that the enactment will address various issues, including those affecting sharks in Sabah.

Junz added that he had been told that fisheries, which include the protection of sharks, is under federal jurisdiction but stated that he wanted to overcome that issue.

"This is Sabah Baru now," he said in his WhatsApp comment to questions by the media in the



Junz Wong

Warisan Sabah group page.

"We are almost complete with

the draft," he said.

He went on to say that the previous Barisan Nasional government was not able to do it because they were not thinking out of the box.

"Enacting new law for Sabah is the way around it but they never thought nor dare to offend KL side, perhaps," he said.

He added that he will not pursue to amend the Federal law concerning fisheries issues affecting Sabah.

Instead, his focus will be to enact Sabah's own fisheries law which will protect Sabah's resources, he said.

"It is not just for shark fishing but many other factors such as minimum sizes of catching, not selling egg lobsters and many others," he said on the issues that would be addressed.

Headline	Lift export ban on rakyat fishes', Junz tells Kiandee		
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## Lift export ban on 'rakyat fishes', Junz tells Kiandee

**KOTA KINABALU:** Sabahans have for decades been neglected by Federal Agriculture and Food Industry Ministers who most have failed to understand the challenges, predicaments and obstacles faced by Sabahans in this part of the world, especially on the differences, dynamics of the agriculture, aquaculture and fishery industries.

State Agriculture and Food Industry Minister Datuk Junz Wong pointed this out in an open letter to his newly appointed federal counterpart Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee yesterday.

Kiandee made history by being the first Sabahan appointed as the Federal Minister of Agriculture and Food Industry under the Perikatan Nasional Government.

"With Datuk Seri as a fellow Sabahan appointed in this position, I believe this is the perfect opportunity for us to

rectify the many wrongs for the benefit of all Sabahans," said Junz who would like to draw Kiandee's attention to the predicament and plight faced by fishermen in Sabah.

In October 2019, he said Sabah fishermen were issued a four-month export ban for certain types of fishes by the Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (KEM) LKIM. LKIM's justification for the export ban on 'rakyat fishes' like mackerels, pomfrets, yellowtail snads and prawns is to ensure sufficient supplies and avoid price surge during the Chinese New Year and Aidilfitri festive seasons and monsoon seasons.

But the ban which was in effect in January and February 2020 and will take place again on the 15th of April to 15th of June has taken a toll on the fisheries industry, affecting not only fishermen but also the economy

of our beloved Sabah.

To take note, he said prawn has never been included in this ban list except for the previous ban last October. Thus, the challenging prawn fishermen have faced a tremendous challenges that a lot might not survive and might face closing down.

Hence, taking into consideration the appeals and scenario of the local industry, he said the MAF on behalf of the Sabah government is appealing for an exemption to Sabah.

According to Junz, the blanket ban is not suitable and should not be applied in Sabah for various reasons.

Firstly, Sabah has consistently achieved a surplus in self-sufficiency level (SSL). For example in 2018, Sabah's total fish exports was 71,289 metric tonnes while the imports was a mere 16,062 metric tonnes. In the

same year, our exports fetched Sabahans a total of RM576 million.

This means we are a net exporter and our exports have contributed tremendously to the economy.

Secondly, Sabah is also the main hub for fishes consumed by Malaysians. We landed 161,055 metric tonnes of fishes with a value of RM945 million in 2018. While the ban may be suitable for Peninsular states which have lower yields, Sabah is an exception as we have more than what we need.

Thirdly, Sabah experiences an increase of fishes landing on the shores of Sabah every April and May. This catch season causes fish price to plummet as a result of over supply. With limited local demand in Sabah, the export ban will only cause detriment to fishermen, boat operators and the Sabah economy.

Fourthly, it is also worth noting that generally fishes eaten during the festive season are the likes of snapper, groupers, lobsters, white fish and so forth. Therefore, the export ban might be irrelevant and misses its objective.

Junz said of late, the Covid-19 outbreak has stagnated the Malaysian economy and Sabah is no exception. So there is no reason to not lift the export ban which can help alleviate the hardship faced by the people.

In the long run, he said lifting the ban will also return Sabah's fishermen to a competitive position at the global scene. They have lost their competitive edge due to policies that cause inconsistent fish supplies to international buyers. This is even worse for the prawn industry which is an extremely competitive industry.

"I believe Datuk Seri, who has an education background

in fishery, aquaculture, who had been an officer of the Sabah Fishery Department (1984-1990), who has been the political secretary for Sabah agriculture minister (1990-2000) will possess the ability to understand the plight of Sabahans.

"I hope the export ban which was implemented by previous governments will be lifted so that the wrong can be rectified, unless during the ban.

"Dr Ronald can ban imports of seafood from foreign countries and make Peninsular dealers buy from Sabah suppliers. Or else this is not fair to Sabah fishermen.

"I look forward to hearing quick positive response from Datuk Seri Dr Ronald Kiandee as I believe if all Sabahans stay united with one Sabah heart, we can achieve many things," said Junz.