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Joint AVA and ENV Press Release on Phenol Spill

1. Following the phenol spill that resulted from the Indonesian-registered tanking tipping over in Malaysian waters near Pulau Ubin, on Wednesday, 13 June, Agri-food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) and the Ministry of the Environment, have been monitoring the waters regularly. AVA has suspended the harvest and sale of fish from the 37 floating fish farms off the Pulau Ubin and Serangoon coastal areas. AVA is also continuing to collect sea water and fish samples for laboratory testing.
2. AVA's laboratory detected 410 parts per billion of phenol in the fish meat samples collected from the farm closest to the spill. The permissible safety level of phenol in fish is 0.5 parts per billion. Phenol does not accumulate in the fish meat and is quickly excreted from the body. Once the source of contamination is removed, the fish is able to get rid of the phenol in 1 to 2 days. AVA's laboratory also detected 100 parts per billion of phenol in the water samples collected from the farm closest to the spill.
3. The safe limit to protect human health from possible harmful effects of drinking or contact with water contaminated by phenol is 300 parts per billion, higher than the tolerance limit for fish. ENV's monitoring results showed that phenol was not detected in the water of the Straits of Johor off Pulau Ubin and the main island of Singapore.
4. The concentration levels of phenol reduce over time in water, not only through dispersion but also through biodegradation.
5. AVA and ENV will continue to monitor the situation closely. AVA will only lift the prohibition on the harvesting and sale of fish from the 37 floating fish farms when the fish has been found to be safe for consumption. ENV will also lift the ban on fishing, and other water-related activities in the area when it is satisfied that the waters are safe for such recreational activities.

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