

- [Top Stories](#)
- [Hey!](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Expat](#)
- [Sunday](#)
- [Dr Money](#)
- [Specials](#)



## TOP STORIES

# Smelly factory water turns Kranji canal purple

By Teh Jen Lee

WHAT could have caused this mess? He thought his eyes were playing tricks on him since canal water is usually brown in colour.

When botanist Joseph Lai, 45, saw that the Kranji canal water had turned purple some time ago, he went for a closer look.

'You could see the colour from the (Kranji) MRT platform.



'I dismissed it as a one-off thing the first time, but then it happened again,' said Mr Lai, who used to work in the area.

Wondering if the colour was caused by chemical pollution, he photographed the purple canal water late last year.

The canal ends in the Western Johor Straits, along which the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve is located.

When The New Paper went to investigate two weeks ago, brownish water was being discharged.

### NOTHING UNUSUAL

There was foam on the surface, caused by the churning water, but nothing looked unusual.

Some contractors who were working along the canal said the water discharged often changes colour during the day.

'There is no fixed time, sometimes the water is chocolate colour, other times reddish,' said one man, who declined to be named.



'It can be smelly. But we're not worried, we use the water to wash our equipment sometimes.'

Mr Chai Kuan Teck, 39, a foreman who often fishes at different canals, said: 'Of all the canals, this is the smelliest.

'It's especially bad at low tide. The fish we catch also stinks so we can't eat it.'

When contacted, a spokesman for the National Environment Agency (NEA) explained that the purple discharge comes from a textile factory in the Kranji Industrial Estate.

She said: 'The factory uses a colour dye for its fabric dyeing process. The colour dye is organic in nature, is biodegradable and soluble in water.

'It is not toxic and is not harmful to aquatic organisms.

'The dye, however, does have an intense colour and even in very low concentrations, the colour of the dye can be visible in the treated water.'

The textile factory had installed a pre-treatment plant to reduce the amount of dye in its discharge.



This discharge then goes through a sewer for further treatment at a Kranji plant.

Although the final discharge into the

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sea follows internationally accepted standards, the water can still be purple because of small amounts of dye in it.

Because of this 'visual impact', NEA said it had asked the textile factory to take further measures to minimise its discharge of dye.

NEA assured the public that it regularly checks industrial discharges and monitors quality of inland and coastal waters.

### **WATER QUALITY GOOD**

The spokesman said: 'The monitoring results have shown that the water quality remains good and is able to sustain aquatic life.'

Mr Lai was glad that the purple discharge was harmless.

He said: 'If it had been toxic, it would definitely have affected the many bird species found at Sungei Buloh.'

### **Story Index**

#### **>> SINGAPORE**

- Marshals on the MRT
- 'Similar' addresses, names...
- Not quite the birthday he was hoping for
- Retirement not in her vocabulary
- Singapore a human trafficking hotspot?
- Smelly factory water turns Kranji canal purple
- Kampung weekend
- Kampung calm
- He will take Beck's role, but not his wife

#### **WORLD**

- Ex-MAS boss undergoes brain surgery
- Loser horse wins hearts of Japanese
- British universities helping to spy on foreign students
- Welcome to Earth
- One-legged swimmer beats the odds
- WHY PAS LOST BIG
- WHY THEY WON BIG

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