

PKA chief: No regrets opening can of worms
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Port Klang Authority (PKA) chairperson Lee Hwa Beng, whose term ends on Mar 31, has no regrets over his decision to initiate an investigation into the multi-billion Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) scandal that has riled up powerful politicians and companies.

"Now I have become a black sheep to certain people in my party (MCA). There are also cases where some friends don't want to go out with me anymore.

"There were also cases where people didn't want me to sit in their cars because they were scared of collateral damage," said Lee in an interview recently.

His role in the scandal has made him a persona non grata within the party and has shut his door to MCA politics, Lee (left) said.

However the former Subang Jaya assemblyperson called the task his religious duty.

"I take it as a religious calling to serve my god. Then you don't care what people say, you don't care how you suffer. You just carry on with what you think is the right way."

Lee's report card

Lee was appointed on Apr 1, 2008 as PKA chairperson by then-transport minister and MCA president Ong Tee Keat, who later extended Lee's term twice.

It is expected that with Ong's ouster as president by Chua Soi Lek last year, Lee as a staunch Ong supporter will be replaced by Chua's men when his term ends.

Under Lee's leadership and Ong's backing, PKA took several bold moves to probe the multi-billion ringgit scandal including commissioning an independent audit report and seeking professional advice from external bodies, followed by civil suits against several individuals and companies to claim the losses.

Those investigations also prompted the government to be more proactive in addressing the PKFZ debacle. Subsequently former transport minister Ling Liong Sik (below), former PKFZ general manger OC Phang and several others were charged in court and a high-powered task force was set up by the cabinet to carry out further investigations into the scandal.

To date PKA had filed four civil suits to recover the loss incurred in the project - two against PKFZ turnkey contractor Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd (KDSB), one against Phang and another one against architect Bernard Tan Seng Swee.

It also lodged police and Malaysia Anti-corruption Commission (MACC) reports respectively, and two complaints to the professional bodies the Board of Architect Malaysia and the Advocates & Solicitors Disciplinary Board, over the alleged misconduct by PKFZ architects and lawyers.

In return PKA was slapped with three civil suits by KDSB and a consulting firm for charges

including defamation and power abuse. Lee and Ong are also named as respondents in these cases.

"I have done everything I can," said Lee when asked if there are other culprits related to the scandal that have not been brought to book.

"We can only touch on people working in PKA or consultant appointed by us. For whatever that transpired outside PKA, we have no access to the documents (since they don't belong to PKA), so we cannot do anything," said Lee.

'Chua has never met me'

Asked on whether he has faced any political interference during the investigation, Lee said that was Ong's department.

"Any problem I faced from above or other politicians, he handled it. So basically I have quite a free hand. It is not my problem, I don't care about them, I just do my work. Obviously you know he had suffered from it."

His new boss MCA secretary-general Kong Cho Ha, who took over the transport ministry last June, has also given him a free hand with the exception of the PKA board decision to withhold payment to KDSB last year.

Kong overruled the decision but Lee argued that the minister was empowered by law to do so.

"The MCA president (Chua Soi Lek) also never tells me what to do. In fact he has never met me since he was elected."

Although Lee's service is not likely to be extended because of his political loyalty, he maintained that PKA should be led by a political appointee rather than a industry professional or a government servant.

"If you put a government servant, I don't think he has the guts to do what I have done. But that politician must be supported by his political master, and both of them must share the same ideals, that is for righteousness, truth and justice."