

Penang PKR at the centre of a sand storm
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Within the quiet enclaves of Batu Kawan, a row has erupted that puts in bad light the Penang government in general and PKR in particular.

Batu Kawan, in the south of Seberang Perai, is the site planned for the third township in Penang, after Bayan Baru and Seberang Jaya.

NONE However, poison-pen emails alleging top-level corruption have been circulating for weeks about illegal sand mining activities in the area, purportedly allowed due to the clandestine relationship between the mine owner, the deputy chief minister I and a state executive councillor, who are top PKR state leaders.

Persons who are at the centre of the storm are DPM I Mansor Othman (left), state exco member for agriculture, rural development and flood mitigation and PKR state deputy chief Law Choo Kiang, and former state deputy women's wing chief Dr Joyce Lee.

The crisis has also led to Seberang Perai Municipal Councillor Goh Choon Aik to relinquish his post as Batu Kawan PKR exco member, as he claimed that the allegations have not been seriously looked into.

Goh tried to halt the sand mining operation but its owner revealed proof that he had obtained the approval of the state and threatened to take legal action against Goh.

As a result of the threat, Goh resigned from the party but has retained his councillor's post. Soon after, the poison-pen email was found circulating.

Goh and Law, who is also Bukit Tambun assembly person, have been at each other's throat in the Chinese press, with the former accused of sending a letter of complaint to Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and Mansor regarding the latter's alleged inaction towards the sand mining issue.

NONE Goh, however, has denied that he was the sender of the poison-pen email.

When contacted, Law (left) said he was currently at a meeting and asked for queries to be sent to his email address for a response, while Mansor has yet to respond to the matter.

It is learnt that the issue is being currently investigated by the state, but by a team led by Law himself.

Lee, when asked about the matter, denied she was the sender of the email but admitted that the circulation of such poison-pen messages was a culture within PKR.

"This is part of the internal struggles within the party, which is why I have resigned from all posts in January, though I am still a member as I believe in the party's multi-cultural vision," she said.

NONE "It is also unfortunate that the top leadership, including the national leaders, do not care much about what is happening but instead care more for their own positions," she added.

Lee (right), who was former Batu Kawan women's chief, said the email intended to give the impression that she was the mastermind behind the allegations.

"But the email is a false one as the real Penang PKR women's wing email is on Gmail and not Yahoo.

"I also no longer have any access to their email, though it is true I was the one monitoring it when I was in the women's wing.

"I have explained all this to Law when he called to ask if I was the one who sent this email," she clarified.

No investigation

Allegedly sent from the email account of the PKR women's wing, and signed 'a former PKR Women's wing exco member', the email accuses Law of covering up the illegal sand mining activities for more than a year without investigation.

The mine owner, only known as 'Moustache' (misai) in the email, has purportedly received a datukship recently from the governor.

He is rumoured to be aligned to Gerakan but shifted camps after the 2008 general election, in which BN lost to Pakatan Rakyat, who formed the new state government.

He is also known as 'the bag carrier' for Law, and has been alleged to have accompanied the latter to Genting Highlands and Macau for gambling sessions.

The email also alleged he had received the datukship after making several huge donations to Mansor 's office, for a dinner organised in Permatang Pauh in February, attended by PKR supremo Anwar Ibrahim himself.

"But the money did not enter the accounts of the division, instead it has gone into the accounts of the DCM I," added the email.

Similar allegations have also been hurled at Law for receiving donations for his Batu Kawan branch, which allegedly eventually ended up in his pocket.

The sender of the email has called upon the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate the cash flow into Law's and Mansor's bank accounts.

Not too long ago, former Penang DCM I Fairus Kamaruddin, who has since left the post and PKR to rejoin Umno, also faced similar allegations.

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