

Selangor Umno storming over sand mining?

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Umno Selangor's eagerness in using the sand mining issue to bury the Pakatan Rakyat government appears to have backfired, with pundits raising eyebrows over the pattern of attack.

With salvos fired from what appears to be two different camps in Selangor Umno, the issue seems to expose a rift between its leaders, deputy Umno state chief Noh Omar and state opposition leader Mohd Khir Toyo.

NONE Instead of digging holes in the Selangor administration, it looks like the two are exploiting the sand issue to outshine each other in the apparent race for the menteri besar's post.

In the past two weeks, reporters were pulled left and right as they accompanied both Khir and Noh in separate exposes on the same issue.

On July 11, Khir took reporters to inspect the mining site in Dengkil. And three days later, Noh upped the ante by releasing a media statement after a helicopter ride to inspect other sites in Hulu Selangor.

Both were equally unrelenting last weekend, calling separate media conferences on the issue, giving an even clearer inkling that Khir and Noh are not working in tandem.

The ironic turn of events is not lost on the Selangor government.

Yesterday, its Sri Muda state assembly person lambasted both leaders in a media statement for trying to milk political mileage from the 'trumped up' issue.

noh omar statement in paper parliament pc 301105 ignorant According to Shuhaimi, Noh (right) had visited the areas which were already heavily mined during Khir's tenure as Selangor MB prior to the 2008 general election.

"Why did Noh inspect this area? His purpose is to embarrass Khir as (the former MB) went to inspect Dengkil, which is the constituency of Noh's ardent supporter Marsum Paing.

"Batang Berjuntai (which Noh inspected) is the constituency of Khir's supporter, Amiruddin Setro," he said, turning the spotlight on the alleged rift.

Khir: Noh is supporting me

The increasingly public rivalry for the MB's post may have been triggered by a suggestion by Umno vice president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

In a bid to strengthen Umno in Selangor, Ahmad Zahid had suggested that each state Umno chief be made MB if BN takes them in the next general election.

khir toyo pc on khir toyo mansion 060709 However, the position is currently held by Prime Minister and Umno president Najib Abdul Razak, putting Noh, his deputy in Selangor, ahead of Khir for the post.

Khir, (left) who is also Sungai Besar Umno chief, seems to be at the losing end, as Noh's position as the minister of agriculture gives him the one-up over Khir.

The former MB, however, was quick to refute all claims of a rift, seeing the tit-for-tat move as a show of support.

"I grew up with (Noh) in the same village. We can't possibly be arguing. I am a state leader, while Noh is a

federal leader. When he (does the same thing that I do), it is a sign of support," Khir said, when contacted.

Rift or no rift, the coveted MB post will only be available if Selangor Umno wrests the state back from Pakatan Rakyat - but this is less likely to happen if the two leaders do not close ranks.

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