

**Oxford grad MPs clash over sand and water**  
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Two prominent young Parliamentarians from opposing camps today traded blows over the Selangor government's handling of illegal sand mining and water management.

NONE In a statement, Petaling Jaya MP Tony Pua (left) claimed that Umno was only mounting attacks on the Pakatan Rakyat government over these issues because the new administration had cut off Umno cronies from dubiously-obtained lucrative contracts.

A few hours later, Rembau MP Khairy Jamaluddin came out with his own statement expressing "shock" at Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim's apparent "denial syndrome" where the existence of illegal sand mining is concerned.

Both graduates of Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Oxford University, the duo often pit themselves against each other as political enemies, though they are known to have struck a cordial personal relationship.

Pua said the motive of Umno Selangor leaders Dr Mohd Khir Toyo and Noh Omar, together with Deputy Premier Muhyiddin Yassin on the sand mining and water controversy was "crystal clear".

"The determination of the state government to reduce patronage and corruption, maximise government revenue and improve the quality of public services without increasing the financial burden of the rakyat is hurting the pockets of Umno cronies in Selangor who are used to the BN's ways."

Elaborating, Pua said that the state government vehicle Kumpulan Semesta Sdn Bhd (KSSB) was established by the Pakatan government to institute open tenders for sand mining permits, in contrast to direct negotiations employed during BN's era.

This has, therefore, earned the ire of "Ali-baba licencees" who were once able to secure permits via patronage and subsequently subcontracting the actual mining work for quick and easy profits, he said

He added the new system came with more stringent processes and enforcement resulting in lower leakages, boosting government revenue.

"These figures speak for themselves, which are a result of a competent, accountable and transparent state administration. The rising income has been used to finance the state government's welfare schemes for the people," he said.

People's champion tussle

On the water controversy, Pua said the Pakatan government refuses to be cowed by "arm-twisting tactics" adopted by the Umno-linked Puncak Niaga Holdings Bhd, the owner of water concessionaire Syabas and responsible for Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya's water supply.

"The latter entities have sought to substantially and unreasonably increase water tariff by up to 37 percent for Selangor consumers," said Pua.

By refusing the Pakatan government's proposal to consolidate the water industry, Puncak Niaga and the federal government were rejecting a plan which would have resulted in lower tariffs and improvement in the quality of service.

"Instead, they chose to attack the state administration, accusing it of mismanagement of water resources just because the state offers free water monthly to the poor and needy," he said.

Pua lamented that Umno's series of attacks was despite the existence of widespread illegal sand mining in Johor, Muhyiddin's home state, which has been prominently highlighted by the media, including the Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia.

linggiu reservoir johor dam 280207He adds that Johor was also handicapped by the highest water tariffs in the country after the state's water industry was privatised and yet having questionable service as evident in the water rationing exercise in major townships such as Kluang and Batu Pahat recently.

Conversely, Khairy claims that it is the Selangor MB prioritising politics over the rakyat's welfare by allegedly turning up his nose at federal cooperation despite the state's "critical water crisis".

Earlier today, however, Klang MP Charles Santiago refuted the crisis call, saying that the state's water supply would last until 2019 and not 2014 as suggested by the Economic Planning Unit.

Santiago said that the discrepancy arose because the EPU had used a different methodology to that of the state government, which used the Works Ministry's method.

NONEBut for Khairy (right), the handling of the water issue highlights the MB's flawed leadership, made obvious by the alleged sand mining fiasco.

The Umno Youth chief, who in an instigator's move openly 'endorses' Khalid's said rival Selangor PKR chief Azmin Ali as MB, derided the former for "confusing" the location of mining activities in Selangor.

The MB had at first said that the photos of alleged illegal sand mines published by the media this month were at Kampung Olak Lempit, and not Kampung Bukit Changgang as reported, but later clarified that there was authorised mining activities at the latter location.

Guan Eng mean-spirited

Khairy also took aim at Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng for "acting in a way that is unbecoming of a statesman.

"What kind of leader is he that he can even lambast a state development officer?... His statements show that is mean-spirited (mudah membenci) man who acts recklessly (mudah melatah)," he said.

Lim and state development officer Nik Ali Mat Yunus are engaged in a war of words, involving name-calling on both sides, over sand-mining activities in Penang.

"All these developments show that Pakatan Rakyat governments are incompetent...governing several states have proved problematic for them, so it is reasonable to question if they are prepared to take over national leadership, " he said.

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