

'The more Khir Toyo speaks, the more it stinks'

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Former Selangor menteri besar Mohd Khir Toyo's endless tirade on sand mining issues in the state has hit him in the face, as PKR's Seri Muda assemblyperson Suhaimi Shafiei reminds the state Umno chief that the problem was a legacy of Khir's own administration that was ignored while he was in power.

Suhaimi was responding to Khir's plea that the government stop mining sand on state land lest it becomes "a hollow state with many huge holes".

"Khir Toyo, you should shut up. The more you speak, the more bau busuk (foul odour) emanates from your mouth," he said.

NONE "In the eight years that he was MB, what did he do about illegal sand mining?" asked Suhaimi.

He was speaking at a press conference in Putrajaya today, which Kumpulan Semesta Sdn Bhd (KSSB), the state-owned company that controls sand mining in Selangor, organised after bringing the press on a site visit to the Olak Lempit sand mine (above) that had been the target of Khir's allegations.

Umno in-fighting

Hitting back at Umno's concerted efforts to undermine the Pakatan-led Selangor government, Suhaimi repeated recent speculations of a leadership tussle between Khir (below) and state Umno deputy chief Noh Omar, with the sand mining issue being the bone of contention.

NONE Suhaimi said Umno leaders should stop making the Selangor government their scapegoat, as it will lead to their own downfall when the people learn the truth.

"Don't push us to the wall on this issue. The more you reveal about the issue, in the end it is Umno that is going to tersungkor (fall)," he said.

Suhaimi added that while they continue to accuse the state government of not doing a good job at curbing illegal sand mining, the federal government run by them is at the same time poised to frustrate their efforts.

He alleges this will happen through legislative amendments that will take away the power of local and state enforcement officers from the District Land Office and the Office of Land and Minerals to arrest illegal sand miners.

"This is an act of sabotage by the federal government. The power to prosecute is already out of our hands, as you know it is the attorney-general's prerogative, and now this," he said, without further elaboration.

Crying wolf

Meanwhile, at the same press conference, Enviro Enhance Sdn Bhd Director Geetha P Kumaran refuted Umno's claims that the sand mining operations at Olak Lempit has compromised the nearby Paya Indah Wetlands.

NONE "There is no proof that the sand mining operations is detrimental to the wetlands (left)," said the environmental consultant, who advises KSSB on their projects.

She also added that the 'sand washing' pond used to refine sand and filter out unwanted materials did not face the wetlands, and silt that the process produced does not drain into the Paya Indah area as claimed.

Pressed further, she showed proof in the form of water readings, which according to her showed that silt levels in the run-off water from mining operations were well below danger levels.

According to Geetha, the silt measurement levels at an index of 50 on the measurement scale was considered dangerous, but said that samples taken from surrounding ponds of the site only registered an index of 2.

NONThe 18-year environmental sciences veteran, whose speciality is environmental impact assessment and environmental management planning, is the independent consultant who monitors and assists in management of KSSB's mining projects.

Umno leaders had picked on KSSB and Selangor MB Khalid Ibrahim recently over state management of sand mining - ever since PKR Kapar parliamentarian S Manikavasagam raised the issue of illegal activity to the MB - even accusing them of destroying the environment.

Khalid has however maintained that the allegations were baseless, and that illegal sand mining had existed way back while the state was under Umno rule.

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