

Wong vs Wong: Mud slinging continues over dredging issue
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SIBU - As the floods subsided in SibU, the mud slinging between DAP and SUPP escalated over the dredging issue which was supposed to solve the flooding problems here.

Yesterday, Minister for Public Health and Environment Wong Soon Koh had thrown the dredging problem at DAP chairman Wong Ho Leng.

Ho Leng accepted the challenge but wondered if Soon Koh has the authority to give him the job.

Soon Koh announced recently that under the 10th Malaysia Plan, he has asked for RM30 million to dredge two of the five bottleneck areas along Rejang River to ease the flood situation.

The two areas affected badly by siltation are in Kerto and Sg. Sadit which cause frequent flooding in SibU.

SibU was hit by flood a week ago including the surrounding central region districts. Schools and offices were closed causing massive losses to businessmen.

Soon Koh, who is also the SibU SUPP branch chairman, said the State Drainage and Irrigation Department has met up with him on how to carry out the project in stages and solved the flooding woes.

MP for SibU Ho Leng came out the next day asking the state government not to abuse the people's "blood and sweat" money.

He said in Selangor and Penang, contractors through open tender dredge for soil and sold it to housing developers and paid the state government while it appeared that in Sarawak, the practice was just the opposite.

Asking Soon Koh to spend the money wisely for education and infrastructure in SibU, Ho Leng said he would not be surprised if the dredging job was given to crony companies.

Soon Koh, in a press conference Saturday, said he would give the Kerto dredging job to Ho Leng to handle. He said it is a "present" from him to Ho Leng since the latter appeared to be an expert at it. He said the profit made should go to the Chinese schools.

Accepting the challenge thrown at him, Ho Leng said Soon Koh should not only give the Kerto project but all the other five bottleneck areas to him.

"I just wondered if he has the authority to give me the licence and if he has, he should deliver the licence to me within two weeks," he said.

Calling Soon Koh a narrow-minded politician, Ho Leng queried why the former was suddenly so concern about Chinese school education. He said that he would seek the co-operation of the Chinese School Board to join forces with him and any profits made would go to the schools.

"Actually, the RM30 million should go to the schools instead of giving it to contractors to

dredge the river," said Ho Leng.

After news broke out that Soon Koh has given him a "present", Ho Leng said more than 10 contractors called him up wanting the job and 30 land owners wanted the sand dredged for their lands.

If Pakatan Rakyat were to take over the state government, Ho Leng said he would assure them that the flood problem would be solved within two years.

"That would involved dredging done, logging activities controlled, replanting and environment problems tackled," he said.

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