

State firm denies sand deal given to PKR men's company

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SHAH ALAM, March 5 — A state government subsidiary involved in the mining and selling of sand in Selangor today denied awarding a contract to a company linked to two Pakatan Rakyat state assemblymen, as accused by controversial blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin.

Earlier this month, Raja Petra claimed that Sri Muda assemblyman Mat Suhaimi Shafiei and Batu Caves assemblyman Amirudin Shari had colluded with a well-heeled contractor to submit a sand-mining application to state-owned Kumpulan Semesta Sdn Bhd (KSSB).

He had said that both Mat Suhaimi and Amirudin were among the five directors of Double Dignity Sdn Bhd that submitted the application and their agreed fee was RM5,000 per month.

However, KSSB chief executive officer Wan Abdul Halim Wan Ismail today denied the allegations, saying no contract was awarded to Double Dignity as alleged.

"There is a tendering process where interested companies have to register (with KSSB) before submitting their application for open tender," Wan Abdul Halim told the Selangor Capability, Accountability and Transparency Committee (Selcat) during a public hearing here today.

"Double Dignity have never registered, have never submitted their application (to mine sand), and therefore they were never awarded a contract," he said.

Mat Suhaimi, who was first witness to be called during the hearing, also denied registering with KSSB and said that this was "an elaborate plot made by irresponsible parties to tarnish efforts made by the state government and its leaders ahead of the upcoming general election".

"Before KSSB, there was no control over sand mining in the state. But now there are standard procedures and guidelines to follow," he said.

"Those who wrongly accuse KSSB (of awarding contracts without a tendering process) only want to paint a negative image of the state government," he added.

He said Double Dignity had no reason to submit an application to KSSB as the company was involved in plantation, not sand mining.

Asked if he thought KSSB was monopolising sand mining in Selangor, Suhaimi disagreed and said KSSB was responsible in making sure standard operating procedures and policies were met by companies awarded contracts.

"Each time there is a tender, all interested companies are welcomed to submit their application and are given enough time to get involved," he said.

"KSSB eases control and documentation of sand mining in the state, which leads to optimised results."

The sand-mining controversy erupted soon after PR took the reins in Selangor following allegations that sand theft and corruption had cost the state hundreds of millions of ringgit.

In addition to accusing Mat Suhaimi and Amiruddin of taking bribes, Raja Petra also alleged that businessman Datuk Patrick Wong was murdered in 2009 to prevent the sand mining scandal from being exposed.

Last month, Selangor Umno deputy chief Datuk Seri Noh Omar said he had proof there was graft involved in the awarding of sand mining permits and challenged the state government to investigate his claims.

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