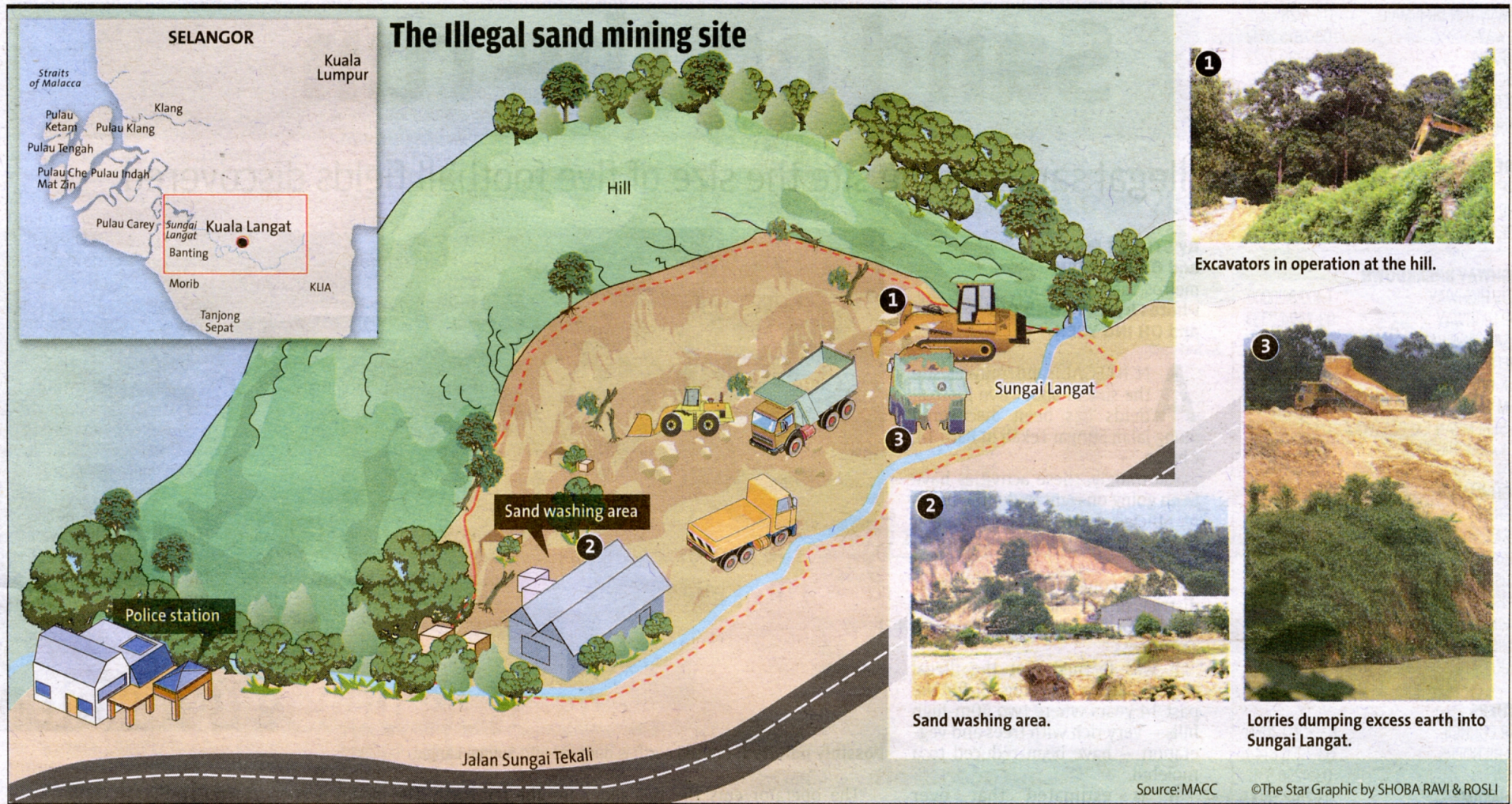


Exclusive

Biggest operation yet

An illegal sand mining site the size of five football fields in Jalan Sungai Tekali, Cheras is in operation for 14 years, right under the radar of the authorities. >2&3



No entry: A view across Jalan Sungai Tekali where sand is also mined.

Sand on the run

Illegal sand mining site the size of five football fields discovered

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AN ILLEGAL sand mining site the size of about five football fields has been discovered along Jalan Sungai Tekali in Batu 14, Cheras.

Alarming, these activities have been going on right under the noses of officials from the Hulu Langat District Office who are stationed there.

When contacted, Hulu Langat district officer Haris Kassim was tight-lipped and said: "I have no comments."

It was learned that the illegal activity had been going on for the past 14 years where two 50m-high hills — very rich with trees and vegetation — have been reduced to a molehill.

It is estimated that over RM100mil worth of sand has been sold since the start of the illegal operation.

According to a resident from Batu 14, who identified himself as Azhar Arifin, the lorries make over 50 trips per day from the site.

"To avoid being noticed by the public, the operators have placed hoardings along Jalan Sungai Tekali stretching about 2km so motorists plying the road cannot see what is going on inside.



Possibly polluted: Unused earth is dumped into Sungai Langat.

"The operator cuts the hill and transports the earth by lorries from the site to the washing area.

"The washing area is located on a hill. Here, earth is washed away, leaving behind raw sand.

"The sand is then transported by tipper trucks out of the area at the break of dawn — at 6am when it is still dark.

"The remaining unused earth is then dumped into Sungai Langat.

"On the opposite site of the road, another hill is also being dug, expos-

ing the red earth. The *modus operandi* is the same," said Azhar.

StarMetro visited the site and found that there were foreign workers stationed at the entry points of the hoarded area.

The hoarding doors remain closed and will only open when the lorries make their rounds.

The illegal operators also use the help of *tonto* or informers who patrol Jalan Sungai Tekali using

A high-ranking civil servant is believed to be receiving RM30,000 monthly to allow the operation to be carried out without the interference of authorities.

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—MACC OFFICER

Site located just 1km away from police station

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motorcycles and four-wheel drive vehicles, to tip off the operators if they see any suspicious vehicles or enforcement officers coming to the site.

Despite this massive operation, it has been a secret among the villagers for over a decade.

Azhar said the Batu 14 police station is located about 1km away from the illegal sand mining site.

"The lorries transporting sand out of the area have to pass by the police station.

"Despite being a major sand mining operation in this small village, the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID), Selangor Water Governance Board (Luas) and Hulu Langat District Office have not lifted a finger to stop any of the lorries over the years or seize the land," said Azhar, who said villagers suffered sleepless nights as these noisy heavy vehicles plied the road often.

When contacted, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) officer, who did not wish to be named, said officers had been monitoring the site for several weeks.

He told *StarMetro* that a high-ranking civil servant was believed to be receiving RM30,000 monthly to allow the sand mining operation to be carried out without interference from the authorities.

"We were also informed that the DID, Luas, Hulu Langat District Office and the police were on the 'take' here.

"We are just waiting to pounce on the operators," he said.

According to MACC, each lorry load of sand is worth RM500. Taking into account that 50 trips are made per day, it would come up to about RM750,000 per month or RM9mil per year.

Thus the operators have reaped over RM126mil over the past 14



Illegal and hidden: The hoarding along the road blocks activities from the sight of motorists.



years for each lorry load.

When contacted, Selangor DID director Ab Qahar Osman said he was unaware of any pollution at Sungai Langat.

On March 14, an article titled "Robbed sand-less" appeared in *The Star* exposing a sand mining operation in Bukit Timah, Rawang that was said to be the biggest measuring some three football fields.

However, the Batu 14 operation is even bigger — almost double the area.

Only the state-owned Kumpulan Semesta Sdn Bhd is allowed to mine sand in Selangor.



At work: An excavator digging up earth which will be transported to a washing area.



Big operation: Plenty of sand mining equipment can be seen on site.