

Sand pit of dust and din

Residents forced to put up with questionable sand-washing operations

A PIECE of government land beside Seri Anggerik People's Housing Project (PPR) in Batu 4, Jalan Kelang Lama has ended up in the hands of mining operators conducting sand-washing activities.

Not only are the operations causing distress to residents who have to put up with the dust and noise, the Klang River is also being polluted as the untreated wastewater is being discharged back into the river.

The land, which belongs to Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL), has been used by the operators for almost a decade.

For the past 10 years, residents of Seri Anggerik PPR, who were relocated from various squatter areas, had to put up with the dust and drone of the machines and excavators washing sand next to their homes.

Dust and din

According to the residents who spoke to *StarMetro* on condition of anonymity, the operators are taking water from the Klang River to wash the sand.

"The company has connections and this has enabled them to carry out their activity for many years.

"We have been watching them for years, they take the water from the river but the discharge is not being treated properly.

"It is almost dark grey in colour and goes back into the river," said a resident.

Another added: "The dust and noise pollution is a never-ending nuisance. Imagine having to live with your doors and windows shut all these years."

Another resident, M. Letchumy, said it was not conducive for a housing area to be located right next to a sand-washing operation.

"Is this not a health hazard?" she asked.

"The land could have been turned into a playground or a park or even a football field. My sons can play football there. Instead, we have to lock ourselves indoors all day," lamented Letchumy.

Earmarked for surau

Another resident who runs a stall in the area said the land was believed to have been meant for a *surau*.

"We were told that a *surau* was going to be built, but it never materialised.

Residents said sand was being brought in from different parts of the city to be washed here.

"Lorries laden with sand are continuously coming in and out of the area. The noise is at times deafening.

"This is a government housing scheme, not a construction site," said a resident, Siti Aishah.

They said they had complained about the matter to City Hall, Federal Territory Land and Mines Department (PTG), the Kuala Lumpur Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) and even the Federal Territories Ministry.

"We have heard nothing so far," said another resident, Abdul Malek.

As a last resort, they have contacted the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

"I hope the MACC will seriously look into the matter or we will take the matter up with our MP, Nurul Izzah Anwar.

"We hope that she will bring the matter up in Parliament."



Used for almost a decade: An aerial view of the institutional land at Seri Anggerik People's Housing Project in Jalan Kelang Lama.

We have been watching them for years. They take the water from the river but the discharge is not being treated properly.

— SERI ANGGERIK PPR RESIDENT

No permit

Meanwhile, *StarMetro's* investigations showed that sand-washing was indeed being carried out at the site.

A source from DID said contaminated water was being discharged back into the river.

A sand-washing pit has been set up, with muddy water flowing from there into the river.

"Water from the Klang River is used to wash the earth and debris where sand is collected and materials such as metal, concrete and waste are disposed nearby," added the source.

The DID source confirmed that the operator did not have the required permits to carry out sand-washing at the site, but added that his hands were tied as a "Datuk" was involved in the matter.

Numerous calls to the Kuala Lumpur Land Office to check on the legality of the operation proved futile, as the officers said it was DBKL land, and not under their jurisdiction.

However, it is learnt that officers from the Land Office had visited the site two weeks ago and found the place to be locked.

When alerted, Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Seri Ahmad Phesal Talib promised to look into the matter.



Routine: A lorry about to load washed sand. (Inset) Water being discharged back into the Klang River.



Too close for comfort: The close proximity of the sand-washing site (left) has been worrying the residents for years. (Right) An oxidation pond next to Seri Anggerik PPR which has not been working is also said to contribute to the stench and breeding ground for mosquitoes.