



Sand washing pollutes Klang River

Residents see red over contamination and noise pollution

THE two-toned colour of the Klang River, one greenish while the other is brownish and murky, flowing downstream along the 3rd Mile Jalan Kelang Lama, indicates signs of river pollution and has set off alarm bells within the community living around the area.

According to residents who wish to remain anonymous, the cause of the pollution is sand washing activities nearby that started about six weeks ago.

"It was a little over a month ago when lorries and excavators started coming into the area and we could hear them working with the heavy machines for long hours, including on weekends," said a resident.

"At first I thought it was another development project coming up. But two weeks later, we noticed tipper lorries coming in and out of the site. It was a week later that we noticed our cars and windows were caked with dust all the time," he added.

The resident said he had alerted a group of residents and business owners in the area to investigate further, as the site was hoarded up and they could not see anything from outside.

"We only discovered what they were really doing when we got a look from higher ground. We saw that they were washing sand.

"It all made sense – the noise, mud and dust – but when we noticed the river changing colour, that got us riled up," he said.

Residents claimed that the sand washing activities caused air and

noise pollution and they feared the muddy waters coming from the site could harm the ecosystem.

"Klang River is a muddy river with water the colour of *teh tarik*. And I read that it is already in bad shape and the quality of water currently is not safe to touch or bathe.

"So, it is indeed alarming to see such blatant sand washing activities taking place," said another resident who only wanted to be known as Patrick.

"The Government is spending billions to clean up the river, so I am a bit concerned over which local authority or government agency would allow sand washing activities to be carried out here," he said.

"It defeats the purpose to spend so much to clean up the river while such activities are taking place downstream," said a businessman who wished to remain anonymous.

The residents said they were still mulling whether to lodge a report with the police and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission.

StarMetro visited the site twice, once during the weekend and a second time yesterday.

During the first visit, we were accompanied by a senior officer from the Kuala Lumpur Department of Irrigation and Drainage, who confirmed that the river was polluted based on his preliminary inspection of the site and its surrounding area.

According to the officer, who wished to remain anonymous, the sand washing activity was sending sediment and silt into the river.

"The two-toned colour as the murky water flows downstream is indicative of pollution," he explained.

"We don't know the extent of the damage yet, we need to check this," he added.

The DID officer said a sustainable method of sand washing would involve proper drainage and filtering systems, but there was no evidence of it at the site.

The sand washing was being

carried out on a plot of private land behind two car showrooms.

The area had been hoarded up so we could not see anything from where we stood, but we could hear the loud sound of machines working inside.

We walked towards the back and spotted a crude piping system along the river bank that connected to the site.

There was also something that looked like a mini pump system that was discharging brown muddy water.

Also spotted were dozens of tipper lorries of varying sizes transporting sand in and out of the area.

A man who looked like a foreigner said he was working at the site and that the owner/operator of the sand washing business was also operating at another site down stream.

He said that sand was brought here to be washed from various places.

When asked how many lorries were bringing in sand on a daily basis, he said, "*beratus-ratus*" (hundreds).

We then decided to climb up to a higher point to get a better view and found one that looked directly across and into the site.

From where we stood, there were two excavators and tipper lorries actively working at the site, hauling away and depositing the sand.

A group of men were seen working the water pump that was used to wash the sand to separate the debris from it and we could see the steady streams of muddy water flowing into the river.

The change of river colour was obvious, as the grey mud flowed down stream and mixed with the river.

Sand mining and sand washing operations are regulated in the country and require permits from the Federal Territory Land and Mines Department (PTG) and the Kuala Lumpur Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) as well as Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL).