



1 Ramli (in white) gestures at a large rubbish pile on land classed as river reserve along the village's section of Sungai Kayu Ara.

2 A snapshot into an illegal *besi buruk* shed, one of several erected right above Sungai Kayu Ara.

3 The sand-mining activity and dumpsite next to Sungai Kayu Ara.

4 This sequence of video captures, from a recording forwarded to *StarMetro*, shows an excavator at an illegal landfill on the banks of Sungai Kayu Ara, just off Jalan PJU 1/4, digging up soil to bury trash.



A growing problem

Dumping in Sungai Kayu Ara is nothing new, but now there is an illegal landfill and sand mining in the mix

story by
VINCENT TAN

vincent.tan@thestar.com.my



FOR YEARS unchecked waste dumping has plagued Sungai Kayu Ara in Petaling Jaya.

Now, what appears to be an illegal sand-mining activity, has turned the river into a total mess.

Until over a month ago, Sungai Kayu Ara's riverbed was being

dredged to mitigate future flash floods, especially along the section next to Kampung Cempaka New Village.

The dredging project was to be carried out for one kilometre next to Jalan PJU 1/4, and work had been ongoing since the final quarter of 2015.

However, a stop-work order was issued in mid-February by the Selangor Drainage and Irrigation Department (JPS).

The letter, dated Feb 18, had informed the Selangor government-linked company Kumpulan

Semesta Sdn Bhd (KSSB) to halt the river dredging activity.

The document also stated that nearby residents complained of the dredging works damaging the L-shaped concrete structure lining the riverbank, which was constructed to prevent erosion.

Residents interviewed confirmed that the dredging works were still ongoing.

When *StarMetro* visited the area in early April, an excavator was seen digging further downstream towards the SS25 area.

Adelyn Wee, a resident in an

apartment on the SS26 side of the river facing Kampung Cempaka, said she had seen excavation into the riverbank continue even on Mondays.

"Previously, they used to dig right opposite my apartment," she said, adding that the last time she saw the excavator, they were digging further upstream towards Kampung Sungai Kayu Ara.

Wee said she was concerned as the digging had damaged the concrete riverbanks.

Similarly, Kampung Cempaka village head Theresa Lim had also received complaints from residents living on the banks, that excavators had damaged their property.

"At first, I was unaware that this was still going on until the residents' complained, and both the local assemblyman's assistant and I have been monitoring the issue closely since then," said Lim, adding that personnel from the Petaling Land and District Office had also inspected the activities.

As things turn out, the dredging activity off Kampung Cempaka is also a convenient cover for people to turn the riverbank into a landfill.

A video forwarded by Wee, dated from Jan 22, showed an excavator moving earth to one side, followed by a rubbish skip tipping its contents into the hole and driving away.

The excavator then moved the earth to cover the waste, and another skip drove by and dumped more items, including large wooden structures on top of the freshly laid soil.

"I have also seen them continue this dumping in February," Wee said, adding that she had forwarded the video footage taken from her apartment to the local assemblyman's office.

Dumping rubbish into the river was not new either, according to traditional Malay village Kampung Sungai Kayu Ara head Ramli Daud.

He said a few dengue cases had been reported in the village due to

its proximity to the dumpsite.

Ramli took the *StarMetro* reporter around to visit several parts within 30m of the riverbanks, which were river reserve land.

"Our village starts from the Sri Pentas building all down past the Sprint Highway until Kampung Cempaka, so that's about 2.4km of river reserve land, where people dump waste," said Ramli.

Along Jalan 5A, a residential road right next to the river, Ramli pointed out to a series of sheds overlooking the riverbank.

Some were open and at a glance inside, one could see various waste items made of plastic and metal strewn or piled up.

"Those are all illegal scrap dealers, and the reason for them setting up here is so that what they don't need, they can dispose of into the river," said Ramli.

Along the same lane towards the village's Monday night market spot, one could see a huge rubbish pile, partially burnt and spilling

onto the bank slope.

"We have done a 'mega' *gotong-royong*, with the district health office, land office, local authority and our village committee to educate residents and squatters not to dump waste onto the river banks.

"But it's going to be a long-term effort, I think," said Ramli.

The topic of excavations in Sungai Kayu Ara was also discussed in the Petaling Jaya City Council's full board meeting yesterday.

Councillor for Kampung Sungai Kayu Ara Tang Fui Koh raised the issue of sand-stealing in the river, which was attributed to soil movement in Kampung Cempaka.

Council Engineering Department director Ismail Shafie replied that the issue was reported to the state JPS, but there was no feedback yet.

Later during a press conference, mayor Mohd Azizi Mohd Zain said the issue would be reported to KSSB.