Drama at sand-mining site

Equipment seized and operator given warning to stop extracting sand

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Photos by AZHAR HEAPFO

AFTER 15 years in operation, the law finally caught up with an illegal operator of a sand-mining site — purportedly the biggest and measuring the size of more than five football fields — in Batu 14 Cheras.

Raiding teams from the Hulu Langat Land Office, Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID), Selangor Water Governance Board (Luas), Department of Environment and Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Syaba) stormed the area at 6am yesterday after a report on the illegal activity was front-paged in the StarMetro yesterday.

However, no arrests were made even after the police left and returned to the scene later.

Officials from the agencies broke down the zinc hoarding at the entrance, but they encountered some form of resistance from the operator when the staff of the Hulu Langat Land Office tried to seize the machinery and equipment.

There was a four-hour standoff as a four-wheel drive vehicle drove to the site and parked on the bridge — blocking the entrance to the area.

Luas legal officer Shahrin Nordin said the department had seized batteries, starters, alternators, water panels and pump and issued the operator with a warning letter not to draw water from the river.

"The operator does not have any approval to draw water from the river. They need to apply for a permit if they want to do so," he said.

As the excavator was being driven out, the operator known only as Jimmy, refused to move his vehicle which was parked on the bridge.

He said he needed to consult his lawyer before allowing the authorities to take away his machinery and the equipment that were seized by Luas.

Jimmy said he was not happy with the land office for breaking the lock on the zinc hoarding and trespassing into the private property without a warrant.

"The must show me a warrant if they want to come into my area as it is private land," he said.

He even claimed that he had given to charity and even free sand to the schools, community halls and community projects in the area.

"I even had the license to carry sand-mining but when state-owned Kumpulan Semesta Sdn Bhd was given the job to handle sand mining in 2008, my licence was revoked," he said.

Eventually, the operators were bold and refused to budge and tried to prevent the authorities from taking away their machinery and equipment.

In fact, it was the operators who lodged a police report and requested for police presence there.

Hulu Langat Land Office assistant district officer Mohd Azhar Mohd Daif who had called for a trailer to ferry the seized machinery in the morning did not arrive. At 1pm, about 30 people gathered outside the zinc hoarding blocking the part of the entrance to prevent any vehicles from coming inside.

Azhar, however, said the land office had every right to break into any public or private property if it was found that illegal activities were being carried out.

He said there was a huge 30ft mountain of sand at the site and this was enough evidence to seize the equipment and machinery.