Barisan reps lash out at Selangor Govt

They say state seems powerless to act against sand thieves

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STATE opposition assemblymen, MPs and public complaints bureau representatives have lashed out at the Selangor government for being toothless when dealing with sand thieves.

Selangor MCA Public Complaints Bureau chief Datuk Theng Boon said the Hulu Langat Land Office had dramatised the matter and these authorities had the power to arrest the thieves.

He questioned the Hulu Langat Land Office for not being able to arrest people stealing sand in its own backyard.

"The Land Office can work with the police to make an arrest here.

"The state had promised to take in RM150mil in profits for the selling of the sand but they must deliver," he said.

"The state should try and help bring down the price of sand to ensure that construction cost of buildings and houses also come down," he added.

He pointed out that the current price of sand per metric tonne was RM28 and it should be brought down to about RM10 per metric tonne.

"Before 2008, the price of sand per metric tonne was only RM8," he said.

On Tuesday, thieves from the Hulu Langat Land Office, the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID), the Selangor Water Governance Board (Luas), the Department of Environment and Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Syabas) stormed the area in a morning raid.

"However, no arrests were made despite the police presence.

"Officials from the agencies broke down the zink hoarding at the entrance, but they encountered resistance from the operators when the Land Office staff tried to seize the machinery and other equipment.

"Before 2008, the operators had a permit to run the operation and it was rescinded after state-owned Kumpulan Sembesta Sdn Bhd (KSSB) was given the right to manage and mine sand throughout Selangor.

"Kuang assemblyman Abdul Shukor Idrus questioned why the state government said it was transparent but still unable to catch the sand thieves.

"He said that since 2008, millions of ringgit worth of sand was siphoned out from Batu 14, Cheras, and the authorities did not seem to know anything about it.

"Sand is an asset to the state and a natural resource. I also want to know what Agriculture Modernisation, Natural Resources and Entrepreneurial Development Committee chairman Yaacob Sapari is doing to curb sand theft in the state.

"Where is the money from the sale of the sand?" he asked.

Kuala Kubu Baru assemblyman Wong Koon Mun said the state was very smart in dodging its responsibilities and the sand theft in Batu 14 Cheras was a classic case.

"The state's enforcement is weak and it is unable to take stern action against the sand operators.

"The state has always given excuses that it was the previous government's fault as the operators had been extracting sand for the last 15 years.

"The state rewards the public for any information about sand mining activities.

"However, it is unable to offer any protection to whistleblowers. A reward of RM10,000 is not worth a person's life."