Under false pretenses

MACC investigates anonymous tip on sand mining activities in Damansara Perdana

Story and photos by STUART MICHAEL
metro@thestar.com.my

THE Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has confirmed receiving a report regarding illegal sand mining activities carried out at construction sites in Damansara Perdana, Petaling Jaya.

A senior MACC officer told StarMetro that it was illegal to transport sand to another area without the knowledge of the Land Office.

"This means that the contractor or developer is mining sand illegally without the knowledge of the Land Office," he said.

He said MACC also has information that several officers from the Petaling Land Office were taking bribes to allow illegal sand mining activities at these sites.

"We were also told of foreign workers who do not have permits working at the sites and their living quarters are in horrible condition," he added.

When asked on what action would be taken against the sand thieves, he said the matter was under investigation.

"We have just received the complaint but have not visited the site yet. We will be carrying out a thorough investigation before submitting a report to our superiors," he said.

Meanwhile, contractors were believed to have resumed mining activities along Jalan PJU 8/1 and 8/8A, Damansara Perdana.

A visit to these sites revealed that the contractors were masking their illegal activities by buying sand from legal sources and placing them near stolen sand next to the entrance.

The three sites are approximately 9.3ha, 2.1ha and 24.3ha in size and construction of buildings are taking shape there as well.

An informer, who spoke on condition of anonymity said about 100 tonnes of washed sand were extracted from hills daily for over a month. He told StarMetro that the illegal sand mining activities were at its peak last year for about six months but had stopped in March.

"However, they (the contractors) have resumed their illegal sand mining activities last month. Sand is extracted from the hills within the construction sites using excavators and then taken to the washing area.

"The washed sand is then brought back to the site for construction purposes without any docket from the Petaling Land Office," he said.

Smooth operation: Tipper trucks on standby to transport sand to the washing area located 2km away.

Ongoing: A building is being constructed in the midst of the sand mining operation at the 9.3ha site.

Polluting the environment: Sand is washed in a pond located near the LDP Highway.

StarMetro had witnessed the entire sand mining operation.

First, contractors cut and extract earth from the surrounding hills from two of the three areas where their project had been taking shape.

Sand was then transported by tipper trucks to the washing area located near the Damansara-Puchong Highway.

Silt and debris were dumped into a pond and a river, polluting the environment.

Rubbish could also be seen floating in the pond.

The informer had sent a report to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, supported with pictures of the illegal activities.

The report also stated that gates at the construction sites were not reinforced with silt traps while drains were not managed well, causing land erosion and water pollution.

Poor living conditions for its workers were highlighted as well.

The worker quarters were not in accordance with the guidelines set by the local authority and many of its foreign workers there did not have permits from the Immigration Department.