



No clear view of murky operation

Illegal sand-washing activities well covered-up to avoid detection

Stories by **BAVANI M**
bavanim@thestar.com.my

ANOTHER illegal sand-washing site has been discovered along the Klang River facing 5th Mile of Jalan Kelang Lama, only 8km away from the site where the Government is spending billions of ringgit for the River of Life project (RoL) at Masjid Jamek.

This is the third illegal sand-washing site operating along the stretch in the past two years.

Some residents claim that this particular illegal sand-washing site has been operating for almost a decade because of its discreet location.

One cannot see anything from ground level.

The land in question where the activity is going on is private land and the operator had planted huge shady trees around the site making it impossible to see anything.

"We never noticed the lorries and excavators until we saw it from several hundred meters in the air.

"It was like a covert operation. The vehicles would use a well-planned route several hundred metres away from the site to avoid being detected.

"They would bypass the main road and use an inner road close to the riverbank at the back," said a resident living nearby.

It is not only the residents that



These activities are also contributing to all sorts of problems, ranging from air pollution to noise pollution as well as matters pertaining to the health of the river.

Datuk Hanapi Mohamad Noor

were being duped. Even Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) enforcement officers and the Federal Territories Land and Mines Department said that there was no evidence that lorries were transporting sand in and out of the area; which was the reason they were not able to apprehend the culprits.

The Global Environment Centre's (GEC) river care programme coordinator Dr K. Kalithasan notified the former Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID), River Basin and Management director Datuk Hanapi Mohamad Noor when he was informed about the activity.

The duo visited the site recently, but because of the hoarding, they were not able to get into the compound.

However, when they were shown aerial photographs of the area taken by a drone, they noticed there was discharge of murky substance coming from the site and flowing through a crude piping system directly into the river.

From their observation, both experts confirmed that the operator was contaminating the river.

"Due to rapid development, we understand that there is a demand for river sand as a source of con-