



THE MALAYSIAN INSIDER

“Johor villagers vent anger at mega reclamation project”

9/21/2014

A September 21, 2014 article from *The Malaysian Insider* covered the public hearing the Country Garden held as part of the Detailed Environmental Impact Access process. Villagers of Tanjung Kupang in Johor vented their anger at the developers of the biggest land reclamation project in the state, arguing during a public dialogue today that it will lead to the loss of their land and livelihood.

About 200 residents from about a dozen villages around Tanjung Kupang also accused the developer, Country Garden Pacificview Sdn Bhd (CGP), of bulldozing the project through their area without their knowledge even though it could have a huge impact on their lives. NGOs, independent experts and political parties who also turned up at the dialogue questioned the developers on details which they claimed were lacking in their Detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (DEIA).

The Forest City project will see four man-made islands being built in the waters in Tanjung Kupang between south-west Johor and north-west of Singapore. It was reported that the islands will have both residential and commercial lots and the project is expected to make a profit of nearly RM290 billion over the next 30 years for CGP. The Gross Development Value (GDV) will come up to RM600 billion.

CGP is a 66-34% joint-venture between China’s Country Garden Holdings Ltd and Esplanade Danga 88 Sdn Bhd, whose main shareholder is the Sultan of Johor.

The project had initially been approved by the Johor Department of Environment in January but work at the project’s site was halted in June after CGP was instructed to submit a DEIA.

The project is being done off the coast of communities of fishermen and sleepy villages who make a living from sea produce and agriculture in the Tanjung Kupang area.

The hearing in the packed Kampung Pok community hall had proceeded smoothly until a consultant

for the project started talking about a survey that was done among villagers. A man who identified himself as Cikgu Hanafi immediately got up and started questioning the veracity of the survey since according to him, the villagers in the hall had never heard of it.

Explanations from the developer's consultant that they had polled the opinions of 10% of the village's population were disputed by the audience and the hall exploded in a hail of boos and shouts of "who did you talk to?"

Forest City project director Datuk Zamani Kasim then claimed that there was a focus group meeting with village representatives in June where the community's leaders had supported the project. But this further angered the audience who shouted back: "Who did you speak to?" and "What meeting?"

The company claimed it had surveyed 100 heads of households in the village. The survey showed 69.2% had agreed to the project while 71.3% thought it had more positive than negative impact. CGP also claimed it had a focus group meeting with village heads and elders where they agreed to the project.

Fisherman Anuar Musa of Tanjung Kupang told the company that no amount of money could compensate him for the shrinking catches he was seeing ever since reclamation works started.

"Your project is for 30 years and so for that long my income will be affected. How am I going to feed my children?"

Fishermen and fish farm operators have claimed that mass fish deaths in the area had been caused by the land reclamation works. This has been denied by KPRJ. Anuar, along with some other residents, were unconvinced by the company's promises that locals will benefit from more jobs, contracts and business opportunities once property construction began.

"These promises had also been given to us by PTP (Port Tanjung Pelepas) when that was being built. Until now, they have not been fulfilled."

KPRJ executive vice-chairman Datuk Md Othman Yusof tried to calm the crowd and win them over with arguments that the people of Johor would benefit from massive project. But residents would have none of it and shouted that they still rejected the project.

"You tell us we will benefit, but who are those homes you are building for? Singaporeans and foreigners,

not Johoreans," said a resident of Kampung Pok, who did not give his name.

Another member of the audience attempted to get KPRJ to confirm or deny whether CGP had been exempted by the government from having to build affordable houses. The condition to build affordable houses in the state is applied to all other developers but CGP had somehow received an exemption, claimed the individual, who did not give his name.

"You will have to ask the government to respond to that," said project director Zamani. Vincent Chow of the Malaysian Nature Society claimed the DEIA lacked details on the impact of the project on the fish and other sea life of Tanjung Pelepas.

"The bed of sea grass is the biggest in Malaysia and is an important nesting ground for the fish population in the area. The DEIA does not explain in plain language for the villagers how the project will impact the sea grass area."

Perhaps the most critical question came from Mohd Khaidin Azman, a member of the Malaysian Institute of Planners. "How did a project like this start without a DEIA in the first place?"

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/johore-villagers-vent-anger-at-mega-reclamation-project>

THE STRAITS TIMES

"KL has reassured Singapore over reclamation concerns: MFA"

7/10/2014

Charissa Yong reports for the *The Straits Times* in a July 2014 article Malaysia's efforts to assured Singapore that no reclamation is currently taking place for its controversial projects near the Johor Strait. The Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Masagos Zulkifli said said in Parliament, "Singapore is very concerned about the potential transboundary impact on Singapore from reclamation projects in Malaysia that are in close proximity to Singapore."

Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

spoke and wrote to Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak on the matter in May. National Development Minister Khaw Boon Wan, who co- chairs the Malaysia-Singapore Joint Ministerial Committee for Iskandar Malaysia, also wrote to his Malaysian counterpart the same month.

The issue was also discussed in May at a meeting of the Malaysia-Singapore Joint Committee on the Environment in Malaysia.

Malaysia had responded on June 30 to Singapore's request for the projects to be temporarily suspended until the Republic receives and studies information on them.

The Malaysian Foreign Ministry then sent a diplomatic note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on July 1. Malaysia has also given Singapore preliminary general information on the projects and promised to share all other information once ready, Mr Masagos said. Singapore is seeking further clarifications on some of the information provided, and will study the projects' impact.

Under international law, Malaysia is obligated to "not permit reclamation activities of this scale and nature to take place so close to Singapore without first conducting an environmental impact assessment", he said.

If damage to the environment has been caused or is imminent, Malaysia has a duty to immediately notify Singapore, he added. Under a 2005 settlement agreement following a reclamation case, both countries must monitor their environments in the Johor Strait, share information and address any adverse impacts.

According to a Johor official, Forest City developers had voluntarily stopped work for about a week while awaiting approval from the Department of Environment. But a Straits Times check on June 25 found that work on a sandbank was still ongoing, as the developers had asked for more time to wind down operations.

Source:

<http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/kl-has-reassured-singapore-over-reclamation-concerns-mfa>

STAR ONLINE

New foundation set up to care for fishermen

10/30/2014

A Star Online article from October 2014 reports that Johor Fishermen Foundation is being established to help care for fishermen adversely impacted by Johor's coastal reclamation and development activities.

South Johor Fishermen's Association chairman, Azli Mohamad Aziz said the foundation would focus on looking after the plight of fishermen affected by the rapid development in Iskandar Malaysia, including the Forest City coastal land reclamation project in Gelang Patah.

The foundation will also assist coastal fishermen affected by the Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development (RAPID) project in Pengerang.

Of late, fisherman in Gelang Patah have voiced concern over the effects of the Forest City reclamation project in the Johor Straits on their livelihood.

The project will create four man-made islands and although the land reclamation works have now been stopped temporarily, the effects have already been felt by the fishermen who complained about poor fish catch.

The RAPID project in Pengerang was spearheaded by Petronas, which was committed to making Pengerang an oil and gas hub in the Asian region.

Azli said the Johor Fishermen Foundation planned to venture into oil palm cultivation together with the Johor Fishermen's Association (JOSFA), and into other industries.

He said the foundation would be using JOSFA's successful business model in its effort to improve the fishermen's economy which was affected by the rapid development taking place.

"We fishermen do not reject development in Johor, but at the same time we don't want to be sidelined or marginalized. Our welfare and future needs to be safeguarded," he said.

Source:

<http://www.thestar.com.my/news/community/2014/10/13/help-for-fishermen-new-foundation-set-up-to-care-for-fishermen/>