

Pengerang folk rally against gas refinery
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The sleepy town of Pengerang, Johor today saw some 200 people holding a short protest against Petronas' plans to set up a gas refinery in Pengerang, Johor.

pengerang protest demo 180312Protesters are worried that the RM20 billion Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development (Rapid) would pollute the environment.

They are also worried that the Rapid plant would affect sea fishing activities, which is the main source of income for the locals.

Pengerang residents in seven villages are also worried that the first phase Rapid project, involving 9,500 acres, might see some of them being evicted.

pengerang protest demo 180312The second phase is even bigger, at 22,500 acres.

Strangely, the event saw protesters holding placards and chanting slogans for only 20 minutes at a beach near Kampung Sungai Karpal.

Kota Tinggi district police chief Che Mahazan Che Aik told reporters later that organisers had informed them that they will only be gathering for 30 minutes.

Che Mahazan was monitoring the rally with 15 other police personnel.

Relocation fears

At a press conference later, the spokesperson for the protesters Kasran Abdullah said locals are not opposed to development, but they don't want to be relocated.

pengerang protest demo 180312 kasran abduallahKasran, a former school headmaster, said locals are also very concerned about the economic cost of pollution caused by the refinery.

"A four to five acre oil palm plantation can bring about RM1,000 to RM2,000 monthly. If we move out, how are we suppose to feed ourselves?" he said.

He added that 35 percent of the local population are fishermen who are expecting to face water pollution as a result of the refinery.

pengerang protest demo 180312He said that currently, fishermen are already experiencing poor catches and the refinery would worsen the situation.

Pengerang is famed for its river prawns.

Moreover, he said the situation has caused problems within the community and cracks among families.

'Planners only want profit'

He said there are those who are keen to sell their land to make a quick buck, but there are others who are against it.

NONE"For decades, we have worked hard to beautify our houses. Now, it is as though our village is being bombed.

"We want things to remain as it is... The planners do not see things humanely. They are only interested in profit," said Kasran during a press conference held at the Kampung Sungai Karpal MCA branch headquarters.

Meanwhile, Che Mahazan told reporters later that the protest was held smoothly and according to terms that were agreed upon.

"The police have no objections as long as it is peaceful," he said.

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