

Pakatan pledges to shelve Petronas' RM60b Pengerang project after GE13 win
Malaysian Insider
September 30, 2012
By Clara Chooi

PENGERANG, Sept 30 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) today promised to stop the Petronas RM60 billion petrochemical project should it wrest federal power in the coming polls, an electoral pledge likely aimed at capitalising on an emotive issue that could mark the start of Umno's weakening grasp over Johor.

Johor PKR chief Datuk Chua Jui Meng, speaking on behalf of PR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the Himpunan Hijau Pengerang Lestari rally here, made the announcement to a crowd of thousands who whooped at his words.

"If we do not win this case in court, this is Anwar's message to you — when PR wins the Malaysian government, and we are sure to win... when he becomes the prime minister, he will stop this RAPID project," he thundered to the crowd.

"That is our pledge to you today... and we will help you restore your lives here."

Speaking to The Malaysian Insider later, the former MCA leader said the petrochemical industry's plan for Pengerang was "not suitable" for the local villagers.

He pointed out that many constituents rely on fishing, farming and other petty trade to make a living, and would not have these means available should they be forced from their homes and away from the coast, some 15km to 20km away.

Chua noted that Pengerang was also home to a number of FELDA settlements, which are predominantly where Umno's vote bank lies.

"But these settlers do not realise that these industries will affect them in a long run too.

"The wastes from here will cause acid rain and this is what will destroy their oil palms," he pointed out.

During the rally earlier, PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub promised Pengerang folk that the opposition pact will use their grouses as the topic of their debate speech in Parliament tomorrow.

"Parliament starts its debate on Budget 2013 next week. We, MPs from PR – PAS, PKR and DAP – promise that the struggles of Pengerang folk will be the topic of our speech.

"Because your MP will not even discuss it. Look, we asked her to attend this rally but she did not turn up," he said, referring to Pengerang MP and former minister Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said.

"Thank you, we love you all and we will fight for you."

Earlier this morning, the sleepy hollow of Kampung Sungai Rengit came alive with animated chants and blares from portable air horns as green-clad protesters streamed in by the bus

loads to rally against Petronas' RM60 billion Refinery and Petrochemicals Development (RAPID) project that will see thousands of villagers lose their homes and livelihoods.

The highly-anticipated Himpunan Hijau Pengerang Lestari protest kicked off peacefully to a bright and early start despite earlier fears of possible police blockades to prevent protesters from attending the mass rally.

From 25 different locations across the country, including the east Malaysian state of Sabah, rally participants arrived from 9am onwards, all dressed in Himpunan Hijau's signature neon green T-shirts and bearing banners that detailed the rally's three protests — to protest the land grab, to protest the loss of livelihood, and to protest environmental destruction.

As at 10am, the small village square where the township's landmark steel lobster structure is located was flooded by nearly a thousand protesters.

Banners and placards condemning RAPID, which will see the relocation of over 3,000 people from seven villages girdling the shore of Pengerang, have also been erected across the small Chinese-majority Kampung Sungai Rengit, the only village that has escaped the government's relocation plans thus far.

According to rally organisers, the government has refused to acquire land from Kampung Sungai Rengit residents due to the high value of the commercial property here.

But a Pengerang PKR leader Taufik Jahir claimed the objective was to "force the villagers from their homes" as Kampung Sungai Rengit will turn into an island once all phases of the Pengerang Integrated Petroleum Complex (PIPC) is completed in the years ahead.

RAPID is set to occupy over 6,424-acres of PIPC's 22,500 acres, which is home to some 28,000 Pengerang parliamentary constituents in the southernmost tip of Johor. PIPC is a massive RM170 billion project that is expected to turn Malaysia into a mega petrochemical hub.

Hakcipta © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/pakatan-pledges-to-shelve-petronas-rm6b-pengerang-project-after-ge13-win/>