

# Family rejects RM1m offer from broker

**REASON:** They are afraid to lose their source of income once the land is left barren by bauxite mining

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A FAMILY of Felda settlers here has rejected a cool RM1 million offer from an operator to mine for bauxite on their oil palm smallholding here.

Salwani Tajuddin, 37, said her family was afraid that they would lose their source of income later on after the smallholding, owned by her father, was cleared of oil palm trees and the land was left barren by the mining activities.

She said she and her husband had surveyed nearby mining sites after getting the offer from a broker of a mining operator.

"Miners have dug deep into the ground and when the bauxite runs out, they will leave huge craters. How then will we replant oil palm trees on such a landscape?"

Salwani said the main grounds of the rejection were the need to plan for the future income of their children from harvesting the smallholding, which covered 4ha at the Youth Land Scheme in Bukit Goh.

"Had we accepted the offer, the money would not last long enough as we would have lost the main source of income from selling oil palm fruits."

Salwani said she, her siblings and their father first turned down the broker's initial proposal of RM500,000 early last year before he

raised the amount to RM1 million.

"After I turned down the RM1 million offer, the man was furious and said I was 'stupid' for rejecting that much money.

"But, for me, those who lease their land to the bauxite operators are the real losers as the money can only last for a while and their land will not return to its previous condition."

Besides, she said, the smallholding provided a steady source of income for the family.

Her family, she said, also rejected another offer from the same broker to pay a monthly rental of RM5,000 for the same smallholding to be turned into a site for bauxite stockpile and to park lorries.

The rejection, she said, was also based on her observation that some settlers had returned to their modest livelihood after mismanaging their windfall from the leasing of their plantation sites to bauxite miners.

Salwani said even though many of the villagers became "instant mil-



Salwani Tajuddin says the smallholding provides a steady source of income for the family. Bernama pic

lionaires" after leasing their land, their lives seemed to be listless.

"Indeed, some of them are leading lives of luxury after receiving high deposits from the bauxite operators, but the money can last only for a while and they have to wait a long time to get their returns from the bauxite mining.

"There are settlers who are now forced to become security guards as their money is already spent and their oil palm land is completely cleared for bauxite mining," she said.

Meanwhile, Bernama reports that Salwani's father, Tajuddin Harun, 68, who runs a food stall at Kampong Felda Bukit Goh, said the

bauxite operators did not fulfil their promise to provide a monthly compensation of RM1,000 for every trader and RM500 for every house.

Tajuddin said he only received a compensation of RM1,000 in November.

"Instead, business is affected as not many customers are patronising our stalls due to the dust from the lorries carrying the bauxite and I have to fork out RM6,000 to install a canvas (to cover my stall)."

On Wednesday, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar announced that bauxite mining activities here would be suspended for three months from Jan 15.

## Welcome respite for Felda Bukit Goh folk

**KUANTAN:** Felda Bukit Goh, where the bauxite-mining activities have been bustling for months here, is slowly returning to its normal situation — a sleepy settlement it once was.

The past year has seen a phenomenal change after settlers allowed their oil palm trees to be uprooted and excavators moved in to dig up the soil for bauxite.

However, the government's move to impose a three-month moratorium on bauxite mining in Pahang last week has prompted the operators to slow down their activities ahead of the start of the suspension on Jan 15.

The settlers can now breathe cleaner air and they welcome the respite from bauxite-mining activities.

Settler Mohd Nor Mohamad, whose house is barely 50m from a mining site, said the moratorium had brought much joy to the people.

The 67-year-old father of three said it had been a long time since the people enjoyed early morning walks, long hours at coffee shops and leaving the windows of their house open.

"It has been a nightmare, especially when the wind blows the red dust into the house and on our food.

"There has been hardly any lorry movement since last week. No fewer than 30 would ply the road daily and the entire area will be dusty.

"They used to operate until 10pm and sometimes up to midnight," he said, adding that his newly built house was now exposed to soil ero-



A Rela member patrolling a depot sealed by the state Land and Mines Department in Indera Mahkota, Kuantan, yesterday. Pic by Farizul Hafiz Awang

sion as a result of the mining activities."

His wife, Hamizah Shafie, 67, said since the mining activities had stopped, the residents could hang their laundry outside instead of drying it indoors.

"How do you expect us to dry clothes when red dust is everywhere? Thank goodness, the people are finally getting some rest and we can only pray that this will not be a temporary relief."

Meanwhile, Mohd Khairul Anuar, 50, said he was surprised to see a

huge presence of enforcement officers from the state Land and Mines Department at several locations in the settlement.

"The officers told us that they were acting on instructions but why only now are they monitoring the mining activities? All this while the villagers have been complaining to the authorities, only to fall on deaf ears.

"It was only after the Federal Government's interference that they are beginning to get into action. But most of the mining sites are no

longer in operation and the road into the settlement is empty of lorries."

Bukit Goh Bauxite Coordinating Committee chairman Datuk Dr Abd Wahid Abd Manap said the miners would cease operations by midnight on Jan 14, and they were currently clearing the ore from their mines.

Checks at Felda Bukit Goh yesterday revealed there were no lorries transporting bauxite on the main road or parked by the roadsides.

However, a few were seen operating at mining sites deep in the settlement.

## MACC detains 6 more state employees

**KUANTAN:** The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) yesterday intensified its crackdown on fraudulent practices in bauxite-mining operations by detaining six more state government employees.

This brings to 13 the number of people implicated in the probe into corruption in bauxite-mining operations since the first arrest on Wednesday.

MACC investigations chief Datuk Azam Baki said the commission yesterday ordered six state Land and Mines (PTG) Department employees, including a woman, to give their statements at the Pahang MACC headquarters here.

He said the staff, aged between 30 and 55, were held following the arrest of seven other people, including four PTG officers, on Wednesday and Friday.

"Among those held included those who were suspected of selling the Mineral Ores Transfer Document (form 13D) to illegal bauxite-mining operators.

"As of late today (yesterday), all the six are still being held. They will be released once we have completed our questioning and checked their offices and homes," he said.

The six were held when they arrived at the headquarters to give their statements at 8.30am.