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Monday September 6, 2004

Islanders question need for marina

PETALING JAYA: For Noran Idrus, giving up his only piece of land in Pulau Tioman for a proposed RM40mil marina project is like being thrown out of his own state.

“I’ve lived here all my life. What’s the point of being born and bred in Tioman if we are forced to move out? It feels like being thrown out of your own state,” said Noran, 36.

Noran was told early last month that his less than one acre of land, which is next to Tekek Inn, would be acquired to make way for the project, which includes a cargo jetty, yacht docking areas and administration buildings.

“Where will I go? I have nowhere to go to. I just moved into my house, which my father-in-law slowly built over the span of five years. Now, they want to take that away from me,” said Noran, who earns RM950 a month as a poolside guard at a nearby resort.



Noran: 'Where will I go? I have nowhere to go to'

He said he had been saving 40% of his salary since 1990 for the house and had invested over RM80,000 of his hard-earned savings for the house.

Chalet operator, Zainah Abdul Rahim, 31, questioned the rationale for building a marina and a cargo jetty in an area full of corals.

“Our livelihood is at stake. The marine park attracts tourists. The marina project is going to destroy the environment. If the corals are destroyed, we would have no more tourists,” she added.

Local dive operators and tourists have voiced their concern and objection to the marina project in Pulau Tioman.

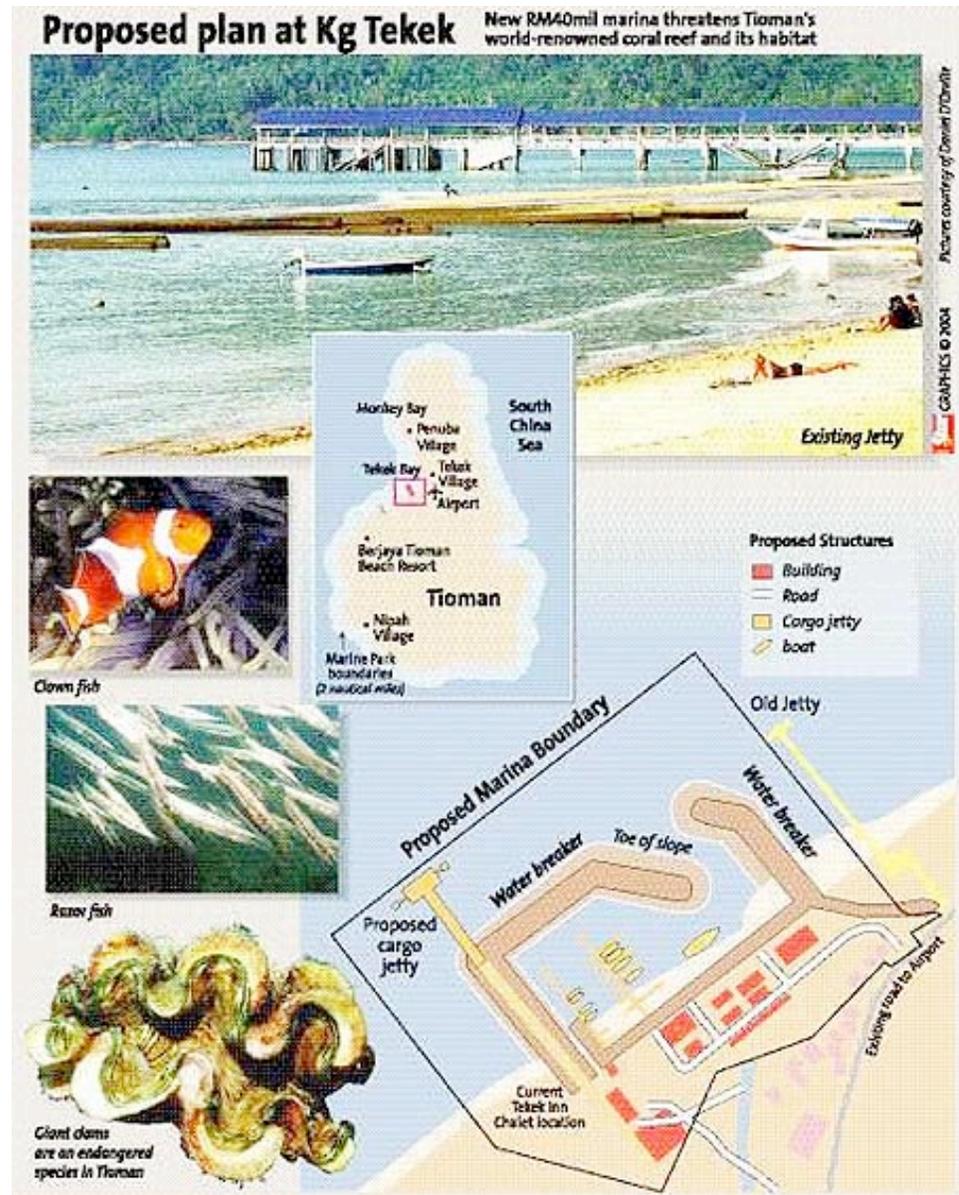


Dive instructor Jeffree Shahrizal, 30, said the locals had written a letter of appeal to the Prime Minister asking for his intervention.

“We fear the barges will come and smash the reef into pieces as all the supposed approvals have been obtained and the green light has been given to commence work.

“This project will have a ripple effect on us as our livelihood depends primarily on what the reefs have to offer to the thousands of tourists, who come here to experience one of the world’s last magnificent reefs,” he said.

Jeffree said villagers had been left in the dark about the project and no one had been consulted or approached to comment on the Environment Impact Assessment report.



Tioman Dive Centre operator Julian Hyde said the island did not need a marina.

“We have problems with our water supply and waste disposal. Why can’t the authorities fix this first instead of this kind of unwanted development,” he asked.

Danish tourist Mette Hansen, who did 32 dives with her boyfriend Ole Rydal during

their 12-day stay in Tioman, said they had “never seen such undisturbed underwater beauty like in Tioman.”

“There’ll be nothing to see if development takes place. So, why come here then?” she asked.

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