

Indonesia: Hundreds of Rempang residents reject relocation to make way for Eco City project

Monday 29 July 2024, by [BALOWSKI James](#), [CNN Indonesia](#) (Date first published: 21 July 2024).

Tanjungpinang – Hundreds of Rempang Island residents in Galang district, Batam city, Riau Islands, held a demonstration on Sunday July 21 rejecting relocation to the Pasir Merah Sembulang beach area and to oppose the Rempang Eco City national strategic project (PSN).

The action, in which they gave speeches and unfurled banners and posters, was joined by hundreds of residents from various villages in Galang district including Kampung Sembulang Hulu, Sembulang Tanjung, Sembulang Pasir Merah, Sembulang Camping, Sungai Buluh, Pasir Panjang and Sungai Raya.

“Reject relocation, reject evil investment. We the residents of Rempang, still refuse relocation. Non-negotiable! We will not leave our home villages, in these villages we were born, in our villages we will die”, said Sembulang Camping resident Bakir while giving a speech rejecting relocation.

There were several demands taken up by the residents during the action, namely the dissolution of the Batam Free Trade Zone Authority (BP Batam) and that the national strategic project designation for the Rempang Eco City be revoked.

According to the residents, without this project the communities who work as fishers and farmers on the Rempang Island will still be prosperous. According to residents, although they have held frequent actions opposing relocation, the government has never responded.

“I feel there has been quite a lot [of protest actions], but there has never been any response from the government. We want our village to remain”, he said.

A resident of Sembulang Pasir Merah, Nia, said the same thing, that they will continue to reject relocation to make way for the Rempang Eco City project.

“We have never been afraid no matter what form of your tyranny takes, my name is Nia. I dare to fight you. People from PT Batam or outside of BP Batam we will fight them, we are willing to die here. Relocation is non-negotiable! Investment, we will refuse it, as long as that investment is unclear”, she said when interviewed.

In addition to this, they also asked BP Batan to stop doing things that make residents anxious because every day they come to collect residents’ data and try to persuade them to relocate to a different location to make way for the Eco City project.

Nia said that residents will continue to stand their ground because they do not want to be moved anywhere because they have lived in their villages for generation after generation and it is where

their ancestors lived and died.

“The reason, because here is the place of our ancestors and the place where our families were born, generation after generation. Here also are the fruits of the earth, God willing, we are happy and prosperous here, we no longer need to move anywhere”, he said.

After giving speeches and the action rejecting relocation, they also received gifts of vegetables and fruits from the farmers on Rempang Island. (arp/kid)

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Translated by James Balowski

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