



Clearing work: An excavator being used for quarrying activities at the bald hillslope in Teluk Bahang. Inset: View of the coastline from the hill. Below: A worker (left) at the quarry throwing a rock at the drone.

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It was a hostile reception at quarry site

GEORGE TOWN: All began well for *The Star* team and two drone pilots when we went up a hillslope in Teluk Bahang at 8am to check out a huge bald patch.

But within an hour, we had to flee the scene when a man, believed to be the site supervisor, came up to us and shouted: “*Ini tempat kerja.*” (This is a place of work.)

“*Awak tak ikut undang-undang.*” (You’re not following the law.)

“*Kalau tak keluar, saya akan tutup pintu* (I will close the gate if you don’t leave),” he said in a threatening tone.

We left immediately. He followed us, closed the gate and gave it a kick.

At about the same time, a Penang Island City Council four-wheel drive vehicle came up to the gates.

We briefed the four council staff members on how we were chased away.

The team opened the gate and went inside. They asked their driver to bring in their vehicle.

Since we were waiting outside, Se Vena Networks Sdn Bhd drone pilot Tan Kian Hin, who had accompanied us, sent a drone up to take pic-

tures of the council staff meeting the site supervisor and inspecting the hillslope.

When the drone hovered over the men, the supervisor spotted it and bent down to pick up some stones.

And Kian Hin, 32, immediately piloted the drone skywards and brought it back to us.

Through an opening in the gate, we saw the supervisor speaking on his mobile phone.

Concerned that more trouble may be in store, we fled the scene.

Earlier at the outset of our adventure, photographer Zainudin Ahad and I met Kian Hin and Warren Tan, another drone pilot with Se Vena Networks, outside the former Penang Mutiara Hotel near Teluk Bahang town.

Warren, 28, suggested that he and Kian Hin pilot the drone from the hillslope itself although the drone could be flown from the site where we had gathered, which was less than 0.5km away.

So we drove to the site via a narrow road running along a Chinese school and several kampung houses.



We reached a blue zinc fencing erected by the side of a house. The gate was open. There was no signboard saying it was private property or warning off trespassers.

We found a cemented ground from which to launch the drone. As we got ready we saw some motorcyclists entering the area and heading toward the hillslope.

A pick-up truck also entered the area at about 8.30am. The driver slowed down and kept looking at us.

I hopped into Zainudin’s four-

wheel drive to ride up the steep slope. We saw a man drive his excavator to a big tank at the foot of the slope and pump fuel from it.

The driver of the pick-up asked us “*Siapa hantar kamu?*” (Who sent you?) and Zainuddin replied we had come on our own to take some pictures.

The man kept quiet and we proceeded up the hill where we saw another excavator next to a huge boulder perched on the ground. Two workers were there.

It looked like they were drilling

holes to crack the boulder.

I could see about 10 slabs which had already been cut, each possibly weighing more than a tonne. We got down and took some pictures.

While driving around the site, Zainudin took pictures of the barren land from close range as well as shot a video.

We saw a total of three excavators, a huge lump of aggregates and a quarry machine.

After a while, we went back to the earlier site from where we launched the drone.