Monday, October 4, 2010

West Aitape oil palm project now a reality

[From The National, October 4, 2010, BY ISAAC NICHOLAS]

MORE than 1,000 people turned out to celebrate the official launching and planting of the first oil palm for the Aitape west agro-forest oil palm project in West Sepik last Thursday.

Most of the villages along this west coast devastated by the 1998 tsunami including Sissano, Malol, Warapu, Burupu, Warapu, Olbrum, Rawoi, Amu and Lamo all turned up for the occasion in putting on show more than 16 traditional singsing groups to mark the occasion.

Malaysian High Commissioner Datin Blanche Olbery, Aitape-Lumi MP Patrick Pruaitch, West Sepik Governor Simon Solo, Telefomin MP Peter Iwei, PNG High Commissioner to the Philippines Chris Wururi, Police Commissioner Gari Baki and Deputy Police Commissioner Tony Wagambie were present at the occasion.

The oil palm project is a joint-venture between the local people and Malaysian company, Vanimo-Jaya, that will see the transformation 47,000ha of forest land for oil palm planting.

Chairman of landowner company, Ignas Haro, said the landowners started negotiations with Vanimo-Jaya in 1993.

Haro paid tribute to a number of leaders who were killed when the tsunami struck and others who lost their lives through old age, not there to celebrate the occasion.

He urged landowners to stand together and support the project that would bring benefits including employment for the community.

“This is an opportunity that will change our lifestyle in a short period of time. I encourage attitude of respect to equally participate with our partners for this project over many years to come.”

Olbery said Malaysian investments in PNG were for the long term that had seen Malaysian companies becoming the leading employment providers.

Posted by Kandawa at 3:25 PM

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Is development for the benefit of a minority? Does it serve only the interests of the multi-national corporations that arrive on our shores every year? Where do the custodians of the land - the traditional landowners fit in to this model of development?

The Little Green Palai, though a seemingly unimportant member of nature seeks the challenge the conventional way of thought.

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