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## Town called malice

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BY RICHARD ALLAN AQUINO

*A new town land development programme has led to rare protests in Hong Kong.*

In mid-June, nearly a thousand protesters disrupted a finance committee meeting at the Legislative Council to oppose the Hong Kong government's plan to develop a big portion of land in the Northeast New Territories (NENT) region. The unspoiled tract will make way for the establishment of two new urbanised towns where some 60,000 public and private housing would be built.



The long-term rural development plan, which is still in the planning stage, for the dual-town project will affect an estimated 1,000 residential plots in the area and could displace up to 500 families, Hong Kong's Secretary for Development Paul Chan told international media.

Although the protests were almost unprecedented based on Hong Kong standards, the public outcry has been generally peaceful, but many residents—who mostly come from affected villages—are not hiding their disapproval.

"The protests need to be seen in the context of a population that is increasingly frustrated with the pace of political reform, with a lack of transparency in government decision-making processes and with concerns that Hong Kong people's interests are not being served," said Christopher Dillon, author of *Landed: The Expatriate's Guide to Buying and Renovating Property in Hong Kong*.