

Indians and rural displacement: exclusion from region building in Malaysia

Abstract

Building regions often creates socio-economic imbalances that exclude low-income earners from the benefits of development. In Malaysia, an example of this is the territorial and cultural displacement of Indian plantation workers by rapid economic growth and urbanisation. Since 1980, nearly 300,000 Indians have been forced to move from the long-term relative security of their plantation estate communities, and have relocated into urban squatter settlements, when plantation land has been subdivided for housing and industrial estates. This article examines the loss of income, social role and cultural identity which accompanied the loss of physical place. Using a case study from Kamiri Estate in Perak, it also outlines the Indian community's attempts to politically engage and negotiate a level of regional belonging.