

Unauthorised clearing at Kranji woodland

On Jan 13, JTC Corporation suspended clearing works at a site which is part of Kranji woodland. This was after the statutory board discovered excess clearing of the forested area, which had been slated for development of the Agri-Food Innovation Park (Afip). **Ang Qing** takes a look at what happened:

CLEARANCE OF SITE

2011 July 1

Land belonging to the former Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) railway line is returned to Singapore. This includes a 25ha site around Kranji Road and Kranji Close. The land area – which is part of Kranji woodland – was formerly disused scrubland.

2015

The site is set aside for industrial use. The Rail Corridor is re-routed southwards along Woodlands Road after consultations with community stakeholders.

2019

In planning for Afip, JTC and the National Parks Board (NParks) propose the retention of the Rail Corridor as a green corridor that cuts through the development. This plan is exhibited in the Urban Redevelopment Authority's Draft Master Plan 2019. Meanwhile, fast-growing non-native Albizia trees and scrubland vegetation have grown at the site. No environmental impact assessment is required for the land parcel because it is not close to sensitive nature areas.

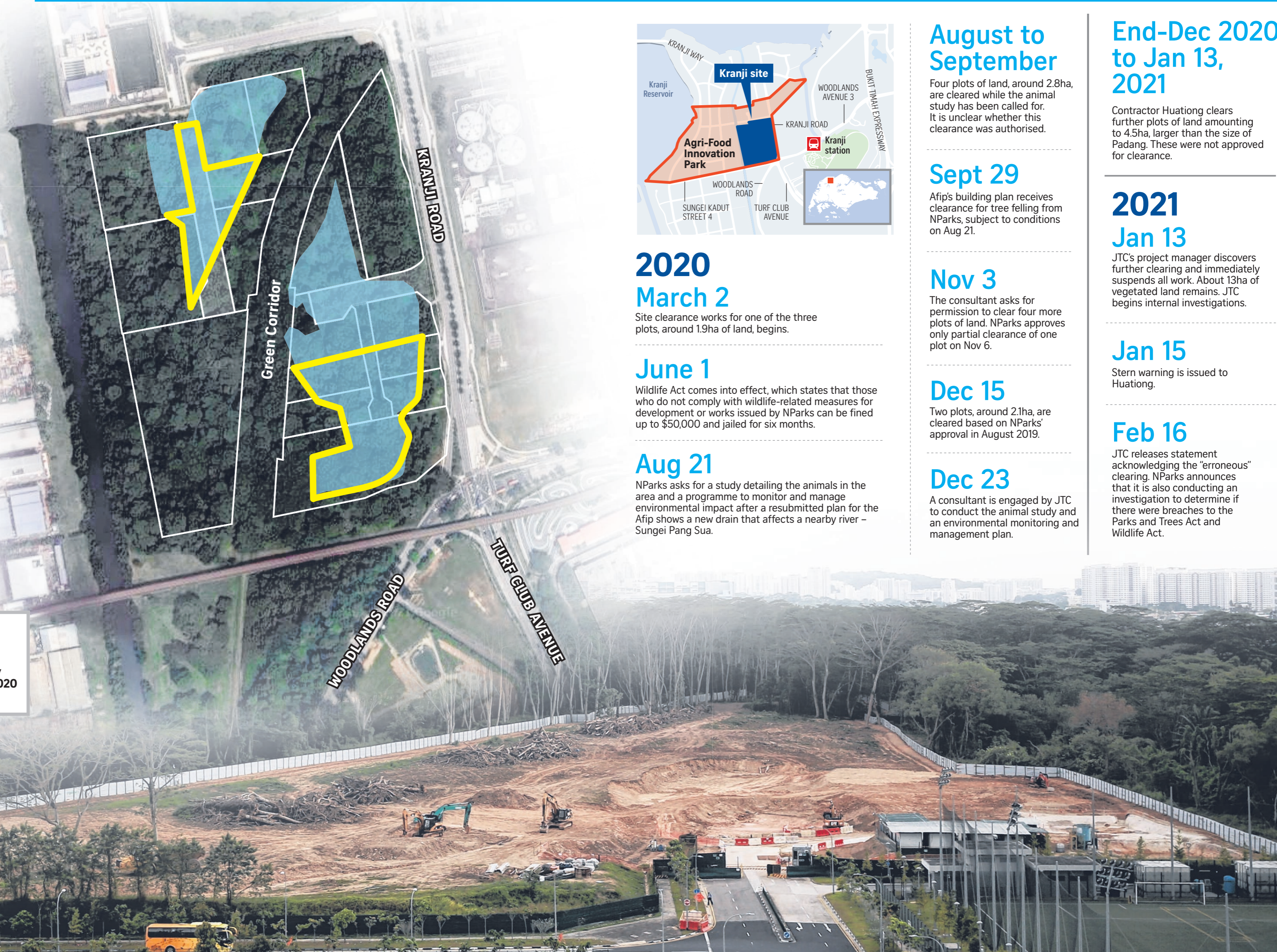
May to July

JTC engages a consultant to execute planning and design works for Afip. The consultant submits a building plan for tree felling and conducts a study that details plants in the area.

Aug 29

NParks approves the consultant's request to clear three out of 18 plots of land after verifying trees that can be felled.

- Area of land that has been cleared
- Areas that were erroneously cleared between end-Dec 2020 and Jan 13, 2021



2020 March 2

Site clearance works for one of the three plots, around 1.9ha of land, begins.

June 1

Wildlife Act comes into effect, which states that those who do not comply with wildlife-related measures for development or works issued by NParks can be fined up to \$50,000 and jailed for six months.

Aug 21

NParks asks for a study detailing the animals in the area and a programme to monitor and manage environmental impact after a resubmitted plan for the Afip shows a new drain that affects a nearby river – Sungei Pang Sua.

August to September

Four plots of land, around 2.8ha, are cleared while the animal study has been called for. It is unclear whether this clearance was authorised.

Sept 29

Afip's building plan receives clearance for tree felling from NParks, subject to conditions on Aug 21.

Nov 3

The consultant asks for permission to clear four more plots of land. NParks approves only partial clearance of one plot on Nov 6.

Dec 15

Two plots, around 2.1ha, are cleared based on NParks' approval in August 2019.

Dec 23

A consultant is engaged by JTC to conduct the animal study and an environmental monitoring and management plan.

End-Dec 2020 to Jan 13, 2021

Contractor Huatong clears further plots of land amounting to 4.5ha, larger than the size of Padang. These were not approved for clearance.

2021 Jan 13

JTC's project manager discovers further clearing and immediately suspends all work. About 13ha of vegetated land remains. JTC begins internal investigations.

Jan 15

Stern warning is issued to Huatong.

Feb 16

JTC releases statement acknowledging the "erroneous" clearing. NParks announces that it is also conducting an investigation to determine if there were breaches to the Parks and Trees Act and Wildlife Act.