



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

Press Statement

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Sole surviving mangrove forest on government land in Batu Maung turned dump site

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is shocked that the sole surviving mangrove forest on government land in the middle of Pekan Baru Batu Maung and adjacent to the Bayan Lepas Industrial Park is threatened by irresponsible dumping of waste.

Subsequently, the brackish river flowing through the mangrove forest here is inevitably polluted by leachates into a sensitive ecosystem sustained by the mangrove forest located at the back of the Fisheries Research Institute Malaysia.

In the 1960's before the development of the Penang Airport, Bayan Lepas Free Trade Industrial Zone and other development, this area was fringed by thick mangroves. Most recently in the past few decades, there remained about 20 hectares of mangrove forest. However due to recent intrusive activities, two areas totalling about 15 percent of the entire area have been rendered barren.

We understand that the land was owned by the Federal Government and placed under the supervision of the Fisheries Department. It is a surprise how lorries are able to dump the waste on federal land. It brings to question how the responsible agency does its monitoring and safeguards its own property from being encroached.

Among the waste dumped in the open space were concrete piles, car engine parts, electrical and electronic peripherals, thick nylon lines and plastic waste. Therefore, we do not subscribe to the belief that this could have been land reclamation activities. We rather believe that it is a blatant effort by people to conveniently dispose waste at that place.

Recently the waste material disposed at the dump site caught fire and scorched some of the mangrove trees fringing the open ground. The other concern is that this mangrove forest is less than 0.5 km away from the Penang International Airport and is virtually surrounded by a dense built-up of houses and the SME factories of Pekan Baru Batu Maung. Any pollution or fire will badly affect the community.

We demand that action be taken against the party responsible for clearing the mangrove land and we want the culprits who indiscriminately dumped rubbish there to be hauled up and punished. As for the presence of the large amount of construction material, there is a need to trace the origin of these wastes to identify the contractor and persons responsible in disposing of the waste.

The mangrove forest here should be accorded better protection as it is the sole surviving patch of mangrove forest in this area. Besides its many other functions, the mangrove forest in this particular area is important to maintain water quality, trap sediments and filter pollutants originating from activities in the surrounding area.

We need urgent and stringent action by the local, state and federal government to ensure that the remaining mangroves here are fully protected and conserved in perpetuity.

S M Mohamed Idris
President
Consumers Association of Penang