



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Release

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SAM AND CAP SUPPORT CALL TO HOLD OFF RECLAMATION WORKS PENDING NEW EIA REQUIRMENTS

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) and the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) welcome and support the call yesterday by Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Minister Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar to put off all land reclamation work in Penang until new and improved requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Detailed Environment Impact Assessments (DEIAs) are put in place.

According to news reports, the NRE is coming with the new requirements which will be sent to the Cabinet, the National Land Council and National Physical Development Council for approval, after which they will apply to the entire country.

The new requirements to the existing EIA regulations and DEIA guidelines are long overdue and proposals for changes have been under consideration for sometime now, and both SAM and CAP, along with others have pushed for improvements over the years.

Further, all State governments and authorities must also ensure that there is a comprehensive and detailed consideration of all environmental and social impacts of proposed development projects, including reclamation projects.

EIAs and DEIAs must be taken seriously, involving a serious consideration of alternatives to proposed projects, including a no-project option, so that projects are not allowed to proceed if the environmental and social impacts are serious and also take into account the feedback from the public.

Existing EIAs and DEIAs are required to include this aspect of alternatives and a no-project option but they are not taken seriously by the government authorities or project proponents, who often treat EIAs and DEIAs as mere token, ignoring the environmental and social impacts as well as public interest.

EIAs and DEIAs must be regarded seriously as planning tools to prevent environmental and social damage.

Among the measures for further improvements should include the hiring of independent consultants who are on the roster of the Department of Environment and are paid for through an independent fund to which project proponents provide financial resources. This will prevent the dangers of having consultants who produce biased EIAs or DEIAs which favour their paymasters.

Hence, there should be no further delays in ensuring urgent improvements are made to overcome existing shortcomings in the current system and processes of EIAs and DEIAs.

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