



Sahabat Alam Malaysia **Friends of the Earth Malaysia**

For Environmental Justice

1, Jalan Joki, 11400 Penang, Malaysia
Tel No: +604 827 6930
Fax No: +604 827 6932
Email: foemalaysia@gmail.com
<https://www.foe-malaysia.org>

Media Statement

26 March 2016

SHRIMP CULTURE PROJECT THREATENS ENVIRONMENT AND COASTAL FISHERS IN BALIK PULAU

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) and the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) urge the Penang state government to take immediate measures to stop the shrimp culture projects in Balik Pulau that have threatened the environment and livelihood of more than 1,000 coastal fishers here.

The problem that began more than 10 years ago has become more serious because the shrimp farmers have expanded their project area and destroyed vast areas of mangrove forests and discharged poisonous waste into the waterways, disregarding the impacts to the surrounding environment. *Avicennia* spp. mangrove trees here have been felled to make way for shrimp ponds.

Our survey found that the income of coastal fishers' from five jetties has been severely affected due to the destruction of mangroves and the shrimp culture projects here. Marine life such as fish, prawns, crabs, cockles and mussels here have dwindled due to the mangrove destruction and discharge of effluents from the shrimp ponds.

The jetties that are affected by this problem are Kuala Sungai Pinang, Pantai Acheh, Kuala Jalan Baru, Kuala Sungai Burung and Pulau Betong. Fishers here could get a monthly income of RM2,000 before the problem but due to the pollution and mangrove destruction their income has dwindled to between RM400.00 and RM800.00 a month.

We regret that despite this long-standing problem and many complaints have been lodged to the government but no effective action has been taken. The Environmental Health Division of the Penang City Council has investigated and confirmed that effluents from the shrimp ponds discharged in the trenches has led to clogging and water retention. But no enforcement action can be taken as it is outside the jurisdiction of the division.

The main cause of this problem is the change in land use from mangrove forests to agricultural land, specifically for aquaculture purposes. Ownership of the mangroves at lot 802 covering an area of 93 hectares (229.8071 acres) has been given to the Penang Regional Development Authority (PERDA) in 2001, which in turn has leased the mangroves to aquaculture farmers.

Given that up to now this problem cannot be tackled by the government effectively and Balik Pulau being one of the largest fishing villages in Penang as well as supplier of fish to consumers in the state, SAM and CAP urge the Penang government to halt further development in the mangrove forests here and stop the operations of the shrimp farms immediately.

SAM and CAP also appeal to the state government to repossess the mangrove forests given to PERDA and gazette the mangroves as Permanent Reserved Forest. The mangroves that were destroyed have to be rehabilitated and replanted with suitable species of mangrove trees.

S. M. Mohamed Idris
President
Sahabat Alam Malaysia &
Consumers Association of Penang