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For Environmental Justice

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Media Statement

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Marine Resources and Livelihood of Coastal Fishers Threatened
SAM CONCERNED THAT MANGROVES IN PENANG CONTINUE TO BE CLEARED

The livelihood of around 500 coastal fishers in Kuala Sungai Pinang and Kuala Jalan Baru, Balik Pulau, Penang has been severely affected following the implementation of shrimp farming projects in this area.

The project has not only destroyed hundreds of acres of mangrove forests which are breeding grounds of marine life but has also polluted the fishing zone of coastal fishers.

Pond effluents which contain chemicals are discharged into the waterways by the shrimp farmers and this has led to the decline and near extinction of various marine species that the fishers depend on for their livelihood. Among them are ikan sembilang (*Plotosus* spp.), belanak (mullet), pedukang, lobster, crabs, cockles, mussels and clams.

The fishers' income had declined from RM200.00 per day to RM30.00 to RM50.00 per day over the past 10 years since the problem began.

SAM's survey two days ago found that about 60 acres of mangrove forests here are being destroyed for a shrimp farming project. The local fishermen had raised their objections but their protest has not been taken seriously by the state government.

We are chagrined that the Penang government is not sensitive to the impact of mangroves destruction on the environment and the livelihood of fisher communities. Although the adverse effects of the aquaculture project in the mangrove areas have persisted for some time but until now no effective action has been taken.

Last January, SAM submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Penang YAB Lim Guan Eng urging the State to stop the destruction of mangrove forests and cancel all proposed projects in the mangroves because of the potential threat to the environment, fisheries and local livelihoods. Among the case studies highlighted in the memorandum are shrimp culture projects in Balik Pulau.

SAM believes that if this situation continues, the fishers and their families who have been suffering due to decline in fishery resources will be plunged into poverty and their future will be bleak.

Thus SAM urges the Penang government to investigate thoroughly and disclose all the proposed aquaculture development projects in the Southwest District of Penang. Meetings and discussions with fishers must be conducted so that the issues and their plight can be addressed immediately.

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