



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Release

25 February 2016

Gurney Wharf: An Artificial Waterfront Park-in-the-City

The Penang state government had unveiled plans for a new seafront public park named as Gurney Wharf on the foreshore of Gurney Drive that is soon to be reclaimed. The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) and Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) welcome the rehabilitation of the Gurney Drive foreshore and creation of parks for more greenery, BUT not in this manner.

The waterfront park will be created on land to be reclaimed by Tanjung Pinang Development Sdn Bhd (TPD), and will feature a seaside retail food and beverage area, water gardens, a man-made beach and a coastal grove. TPD is reclaiming an additional 131 acres along Gurney Drive for the Penang government as per its concession agreement for reclaiming land for Seri Tanjung Pinang 2.

Sourcing of fill material which includes sand and rocks for the reclamation is a major issue of concern. To create a park here, you are actually causing devastating impacts to the natural environment elsewhere following quarrying and sand-mining or dredging activities to source these fill material.

Whither the commitment to environmental justice for all? In one part we are "greening the world" but at the same time depletion of natural resources and environmental destruction are caused elsewhere. The public is also not aware of the implications of such development unless it happens in their own backyard.

In addition, the impacts of reclamation and messing up with Mother Nature and the natural shape of the island are still not fully understood. SAM has received complaints from the public that the seas along the Tanjung Bungah coast are full of mud in the sea-bed, making it difficult to swim. We are uncertain as to the cause for these but more reclamation of this kind will further damage our sea and beaches.

Another issue of concern is creation of the artificial sandy beach. This waterfront development is basically "pieces of artificial nature". We need to understand why in the first place the foreshore of Gurney Drive became muddy. It was a sandy beach a few decades ago and thus the source of this problem has to be addressed first. Otherwise maintaining this artificial beach is going to be expensive. And also there is the issue of sourcing sand for the beach for many, many more years if the foreshore continues to be sedimented.

The media has reported that the cost of the project will be borne by the State but the state has yet to announce the cost. We are concerned about the direct and indirect economic and environmental impacts of the project. Surely there can be other ways to improve the Gurney Drive foreshore without a project of this magnitude and implications.

We want natural beauty of Penang and not more of man-made Penang.

S. M. Mohamed Idris
President
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