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For Environmental Justice

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Press Statement

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Reclamation Galore in Penang at What Stake

The numerous reclamation projects proposed in Penang will not only change the coastal hydrology and geomorphic of the island but also cause erosion and accretion in other areas. Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) is concerned that the reclamation projects will not only bring about environmental impacts but also socio-economic impacts to coastal communities including fishers.

Several land reclamation projects have been approved or proposed in the north-eastern, south-eastern and southern coasts off Penang. Among them are land reclamation works for Seri Tanjung Pinang Phase 2 which also includes reclamation on the Gurney Drive foreshore; Bayan Bay and Bayan Mutiara; and the proposed reclamation off Permatang Damar Laut near Bayan Lepas to finance packages in the Penang Transport Master Plan.

Since the 1990s, SAM and the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) had objected to the reclamation projects in Penang. The reclamation works carried out earlier came at a price in terms of its adverse impact on the environment mainly arising from erosion in other areas, loss of coastal resources, besides impacts to marine life, fisheries resources, displacement and disrupted activities of fisher community in the areas.

The reclamation off Bayan Mutiara and Bayan Bay has potential to cause sedimentation, erosion in the adjacent Pulau Jerejak due to change in wave pattern and sediment transport. Furthermore, given the projected reclamation projects in Penang, vast amounts of fill material is required. However, the adverse impacts of sourcing the sand and rocks required for these projects are often overlooked.

The Environmental Impact Assessment reports of the reclamation projects would indeed propose mitigation measures and the relevant authorities would eventually approve these projects. However the irreversible damages such as loss of fishing grounds and change in the landscape of Penang island can never be supplanted.

SAM urges the State government and relevant authorities to reconsider the reclamation works and re-examine the thrust of development in the State. Environmental destruction and that cost society in the long run is not the way forward.

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