

Fishermen oppose land reclamation project

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BALIK PULAU: Fishermen in Penang are against a reclamation project on the island's southern coast, saying it will affect their livelihood.

Some 1,000 fishermen from 14 fishermen units (*unit nelayan*) from Sungai Pinang in Jelutong to Kuala Sungai Pinang in Balik Pulau gathered at the Sungai Batu beach here yesterday to protest against the proposed project.

They held placards and banners, asking the state government to call off the project.

One of the banners read "We oppose strongly to reclamation projects in southwest district".

They set a fishing net on fire to symbolise that their livelihood would be affected should the project be carried out.

"We knew nothing about the reclamation."

"A few months ago, our fishermen saw some workers and when we spoke to them, it was only then that we were told about the reclamation plan," Gertak Sanggul Fishermen Unit chairman Datuk Chooi Sooi Kong said.

"We heard that the proposed island would be 1.5km away from the Gertak Sanggul shore. That is



Protest: Fishermen in Penang protesting against land reclamation on the southern coast.

where we always carry out our work."

Asked whether the fishermen knew about a session held by the state government and SRS Consortium Sdn Bhd to explain the project at the Esplanade's Town Hall on Dec 6, Chooi claimed they were not told about it.

Arshad Omar, the head of 3,000 fishermen from 14 fishermen units, said they had been fishermen for many generations.

"The southwest district is a breeding ground for shallow water fishes

and prawns. The project will affect the ecosystem here. The reclamation in the northeast district had already affected the catches there. We are afraid that the fishing villages in the southern coast will disappear," he said.

Nazri Ahmad, 50, who has been fishing for the past 25 years, said they were not against development but the state government should not sacrifice their livelihood for new projects.

"Our only wish is that we will be able to maintain our way of life," he

said, adding that they did not want to politicise the matter.

SRS Consortium, the Project Delivery Partner for the RM27bil Penang Transport Master Plan (PTMP), has proposed the 1,375ha reclamation project.

The two man-made islands, located near Permatang Damar Laut, spanning 930ha and 445ha, will be known as the South Reclamation Scheme.

Watch the video
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