

Reclamation spoils Gurney Drive

GEORGE TOWN: Reclamation work off Gurney Drive here is fast turning the state's iconic tourist spot into a desolate stretch.

Checks at the promenade yesterday found that there was massive sedimentation and the seawater had turned brackish.

To compound matters further, the fencing, put up for protection, has turned away visitors, leaving the place deserted.

Business executive Jesse Montano, 43, who calls himself a Penangite, said he was sad that Gurney Drive was no longer what it used to be.

He said although development paved the way for economic growth and job opportunities, it would be good if certain areas were

left untouched.

"In the past, there were many things to do along the promenade. The road would be closed to make way for a night market. There were also dragon-boat activities.

"The Royal Australian Air Force used to hold aerobatic shows once a year and children got to fly kites on the beach or catch horseshoe crabs during the full moon during low tide," he said, recalling the good old days.

Lorry driver Lim Ah Eng, 58, from Relau, said Gurney Drive had changed tremendously in the last three decades.

"Back then, the place used to bustle with people and traders.

"These days, the area is quiet and there are not as many people as

there were back then," he said at the promenade yesterday.

Lim said while he missed the old Gurney Drive, he would like to believe that the change was for the betterment.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Nature Society Penang branch adviser D. Kanda Kumar said Gurney Drive's change had been caused by the reclamation of Tanjung Tokong and, now, off the Gurney shores.

"The earlier reclamation work had changed the tides and sea currents, and brought in a lot of sediment.

"We expect the current work to cause as much damage despite the state government's rosy artist's impression of how the area is expected to look," he said.