

m/s 65

PSR PROJECT A BANE FOR FISHERMEN

Creation of 3 man-made islands will 'kill off' affected inshore fishermen in Penang

AUDREY DERMAWAN
GEORGE TOWN
cnews@nstp.com.my

THE proposed Penang South Reclamation (PSR) project, which will see the creation of three man-made islands measuring some 1,700ha, will "kill off" all inshore fishermen along the coast of Penang.

Bakri Bakar, 53, a fisherman from Teluk Kumbar with more than 35 years of experience, said thousands of fishermen like him would be severely impacted by the reclamation project.

Stressing that they were against the project, Bakri asked why should it be carried out at the expense of the fishermen, who were already leading a hard life.

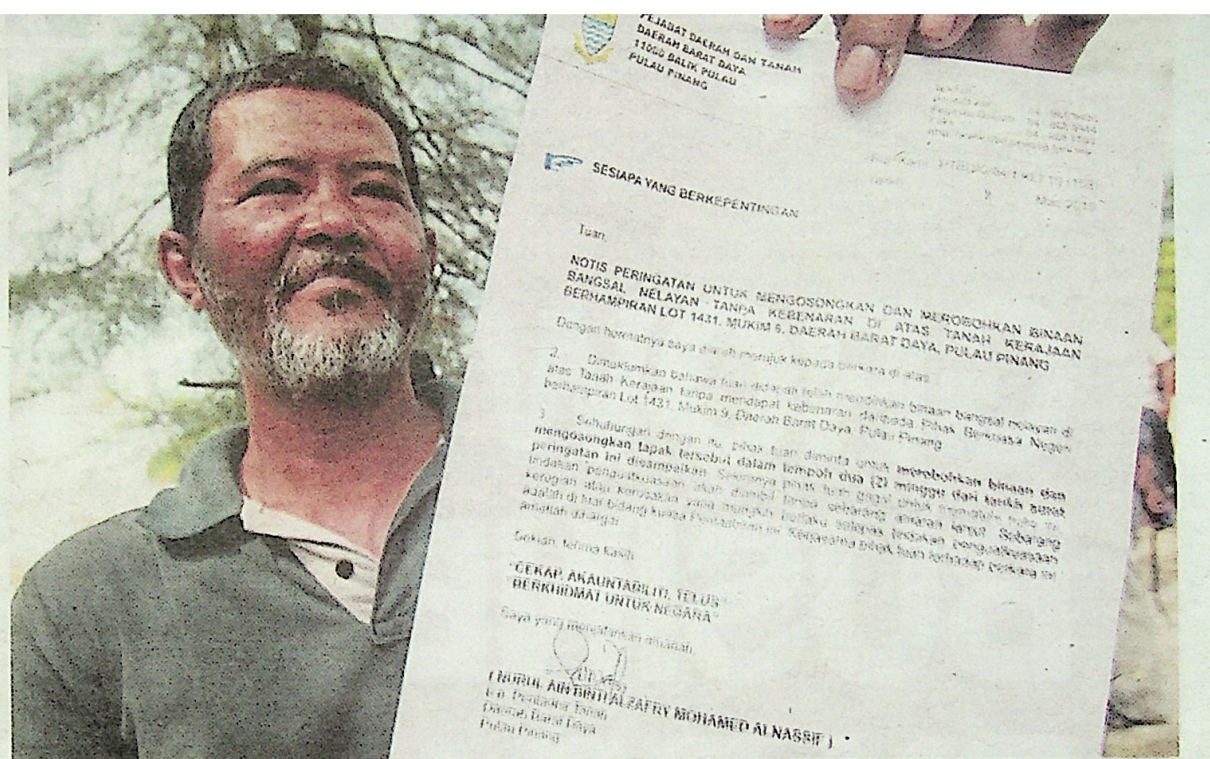
"For generations, fishermen have depended on the sea for income, and now, they are going to take away our livelihood.

"No amount of compensation is enough. The only conclusion is to scrap the reclamation project once and for all.

"There are no two ways about it," he said at the Teluk Kumbar fishing village here, yesterday.

The fisherfolk there, together with the Malaysian Inshore Fishermen Association for Education and Welfare, held a peaceful demonstration against the proposed PSR by the coast off Teluk Kumbar.

Bakri also showed a two-week notice they received earlier yesterday from the southwest District and Land Office to demolish and empty all structures built on



Fisherman Bakri Bakar showing a two-week notice from the southwest District and Land Office at the Teluk Kumbar fishing village in Balik Pulau yesterday. PIC BY DANIAL SAAD

the government land.

Admitting that the 200 structures were built without approval, Bakri said they were built by the fishermen as a place to rest and, more importantly, to store their belongings.

"Now, we have been given two weeks to demolish all these structures or risk enforcement action. Look what we have been reduced to ... what is to become of us?"

Another fisherman, Mohd Sabri Yusof, 64, said they were never consulted on the project and had never agreed to the compensation offered.

"No one came to meet us. They

only called in their 'cronies', the few fishermen, and some of them were not even fishermen, to talk and discuss," he claimed, urging the authorities to discuss the matter with the affected fishermen, not just the handful of representatives.

The fishermen also cast doubt on claims by the authorities that the majority of them supported the project.

A spokesman for the group, Faizal Zabri, 36, a fisherman from Teluk Bahang, claimed the Penang government or even the PSR's project delivery partner had never consulted them on the

issues faced.

They also claimed that the ideas put forth by several fishermen's association to transform the fisherfolk also did not take into account the views of all fishermen as a whole.

"I can tell you some 90 per cent of fishermen oppose the reclamation," he added.

The PSR project is meant to fund the RM46 billion Penang Transport Master Plan (PTMP) and create additional landbank for the state.

Both PSR and PTMP are still in planning stage and pending the relevant approvals.