

BN: Unplanned development robs Balik Pulau of greenery
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Balik Pulau MP Dr Hilmi Yahaya agrees with DAP's Tan Seng Giaw on area being 'less green', saying he fears durian orchards, paddy fields could be gone in a few years.

GEORGE TOWN: Massive unplanned development is destroying the greenery in Balik Pulau that had been preserved as the green lung of Penang island during the Barisan Nasional (BN) administration, says Balik Pulau MP Dr Hilmi Yahaya.

He said the ongoing development approved by the DAP-led state government had totally changed the character of the villages in Balik Pulau, especially in Kuala Jalan Baru, Sungai Rusa and Pondok Upeh.

Development had become more aggressive of late, with more hillslopes and hilly areas being cleared for projects, he said to reporters during a visit to the Penang Hospital today in conjunction with Aidilfitri.

He said he was worried that if the clearing continued, all the durian orchards and paddy fields in his constituency would be gone in the next few years.

Hilmi, who is the deputy health minister, was asked to comment on a Facebook post by Kepong MP Dr Tan Seng Giaw on Sunday that Penang was changing and Balik Pulau was less green.

The BN state government did not allow massive development in Balik Pulau, he said, adding that the present state government had overruled everything that had been put in place by the BN state government.

“During our time, there were no expensive condominiums or bungalows in the middle of the jungle in Balik Pulau. We did allow development but carefully adhered to our structure plan and only certain areas were allowed to be developed to ensure that the greenery in Balik Pulau was well preserved,” he said.

He said the BN state government had planned to gazette the structure plan for Balik Pulau but the present state government had totally ignored the plan.

Hilmi said he agreed completely with Tan regarding his comment on Balik Pulau.

“I think Tan should advise his party leader (Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng) to consider slowing down the development in Balik Pulau,” he said.

Hilmi also said that the latest development project in Teluk Kumbar, Sungai Batu and Bayan Lepas, which involved sea reclamation, would jeopardise the livelihood of some 3,000 fishermen.

He said the area had been identified as the ideal breeding ground for fish, prawns and crabs but the upcoming reclamation would destroy the marine habitat as well as the livelihood of the fishermen there.

“We have engaged Universiti Sains Malaysia to conduct a study on why we should not allow development and reclamation in that area and the report has been submitted to the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment for further action,” he said.

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