

All to have say in Penang's reclamation project

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GEORGE TOWN: Everyone will have a chance to air their views on Penang's latest project that involves yet another reclamation.

The Penang Port Commission (PPC) will engage the local community and civil society to give them an insight into the project to expand Swettenham Pier, from the Esplanade to the now disused Tanjung City Marina near Weld Quay.

PPC chairman Jeffrey Chew said he was prepared to meet his detractors to explain the project's importance to the port as well as the state's economy.

He also assured environmentalists that only a 200m-300m stretch of the seafront would be reclaimed for the project, which is part of the Penang South Reclamation (PRS) initiative.

"The entire process will be transparent. There is no hanky-panky here as some have alleged."

His remarks came on the heels of a report that Penang Forum is launching a series of protests to "save" Penang from what it claims

was too much reclamation.

Altogether, there will be more than 1,800ha of reclaimed land under the PRS scheme.

The coalition of civil society groups said such reclamation would be harmful to marine life and lead to erosion and flash floods.

The RM1 billion project to expand Swettenham Pier, will turn the area into a major tourism and public transport hub that will also serve water taxis and enable the upgrading of the cross channel ferry terminals.

When completed, the area will have an array of attractions, such as museums, art galleries, a flotilla of restaurants as well as a shopping area offering some duty-free items.

Chew said with Penang becoming a major stop for cruise liners, such as the Royal Caribbean and Star Cruises, more tourists would be attracted to the state.

The expansion, he said, would be in compliance with the requirements of local authorities and the state government.

He also said PPC is waiting for fresh proposals on how to redevelop Tanjung Marina as there is no need for it to be retained as a marina.