Fancy a nature trek on Pulau Landfill?

You can visit 'waste' island from June to see its surprising bounty

By Alexis Hooi

THE place is a dump. But beauty thrives there, as nature lovers are set to discover on Pulau Semakau, Singapore's sole working landfill.

From June, they can meander through the island's mangrove mudflats that span the size of more than 20 football fields, or explore the teeming western and northern shorelines of the island.

Fishing enthusiasts can also get hooked: there's sport fishing to be had at man-made salt-water lagoons created for rubbish but which have not been filled up.

The activities will be led by selected recreational and nature groups. Those keen must register with these groups to get there.

This is because there are no regular ferry rides and they need to be guided to nicer parts of the island.

It is using less than half its available space now and is expected to fill up only by 2040.

Waste, such as treated sludge, non-burnable trash, and silt and bottom ash from incineration plants, is dumped there.

But the island has been developed with enough care that it is scenic and not smelly.

At least that was the picture Environment and Water Resources Minister Yaacob Ibrahim painted yesterday when he told Parliament of the plan, which is part of moves to open up more areas for people to enjoy the environment.

The ministry's statutory board, the National Environment Agency (NEA), did a feasibility study last October after observing the island's 'pristine' conditions.

Said Dr Yaacob: 'Many people picture a landfill as a dirty and smelly place.

'This is not the case with Semakau... Preliminary biodiversity surveys conducted on the island revealed a significant variety of flora and fauna.'

Already, several groups approached have told the NEA they want a piece of the action.

They are: nature group Wild Singapore, which wants to conduct bio-diversity surveys; the Nature Society, which is keen on birdwatching; and the Sport Fishing Association of Singapore.

After all, the main activity on the six-year-old landfill is the dumping of around 2,000 tonnes of rubbish a day.

There is also no separate COEs for green cars.

Helping hard-hit hawkers

Casino - porridge cooked, why wait?

5 things to know about Budget debate

He once ran up $100,000 in gambling debts

Blindfolded man's wrists were slashed

School pals pen letters of grief

Man sues 42 law firm partners for negligence

Helping children combat cancer

Fancy a nature trek on Pulau Landfill?

$40m for R&D brains? 'A drop in

Environment & Water Resources

This year: $1.36b

Last year: $1.68b

% change: -18.7
Others who have already been there on organised group visits include students and grassroots members.

The idea of a landfill as a nature retreat has fresh appeal, say the groups.

Said Mr Chin Chi Khiong, of the Sport Fishing Association of Singapore, who has visited the place: 'I can’t think of anywhere else in the world where they’ve done something like this.'

Added chairman of the Nature Society’s conservation committee Ho Hua Chew: ‘It’s a very good initiative. The whole area contains a lot of interesting bird species, such as the great-billed heron and Pacific reef egret.

‘The forest there is quite impenetrable and we expect to see more rare species, regularly, in the future.’

Interested in visiting Pulau Landfill? More details will be out soon.

The write stuff from S’pore women

Malaysian top cop receives top award

$2.5m pledge

What it should have been