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Singapore News »



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Posted: 16 July 2005 19:18 hrs

**Semakau landfill to last 15 more years as recycling reduces waste**

By Hasnita A Majid, Channel NewsAsia

Singapore's landfill at Semakau can now last up to 45 years, 15 more than initially expected.

This is because recycling has gone up hence generating less waste to be incinerated and dumped at the landfill.

Environment and Water Resources Minister Dr Yaacob Ibrahim gave this update when he officially opened the Semakau landfill for recreational activities on Saturday.

When the Semakau landfill first started operations in 1999, it was expected to last for 30 years, up to 2030.

But recycling has caught on recently.

Last year, the volume of waste generated was 11 per cent less compared to 5 years ago, enabling Semakau's lifespan to be extended until 2045.

Dr Yaacob said: "I want to emphasise that recycling is the way to go for us because we cannot continue this manner. Although we can extend this to 2045, we got to think of what the next generation will have to do. So recycling, conserving and minimising waste is the way to go or we have to continue to explore ways to dispose of waste and ultimately Singaporeans will have to do their part."

Dr Yaacob said Semakau is a prime example of how operating a landfill need not be a threat to the environment.

The island has been developed so that it is not smelly and even has a thriving marine and plant wildlife.

Two islands - Pulau Seking and Pulau Semakau - have been joined to form the landfill site.

It is enclosed by a 7-km rock bund filled with sand, and then lined with a layer of impermeable membrane and marine clay so that there would be no leakage into the open sea.

Dr Yaacob said: "This is a way for Singapore to show the world that as a nation this is a very responsible way to manage our waste and manage our environment and it may not be a lose-lose situation but win-win situation. So we can enjoy this and continue to dispose of our rubbish - it doesn't threaten our environment in any way."

From fishing to picnicking to kite-flying, the place certainly looks like an idyllic place to spend time with the family.



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And the authorities have promised to make the island more accessible to Singaporeans.

Lim Kim Keang, Chairman, Nature Society (Singapore), said: "The southern islands are very much different from the northern islands, Ubin or Tekong. Since this area has been out of bounds for a long time, people may see it as a novelty and then can have various activities here, for example sport fishing, which is more eco-friendly and appreciating nature."

For people who used to live on Pulau Seking and Pulau Semakau, it was a trip down memory lane for them and their families who were relocated to mainland Singapore more than 10 years ago.

Amat Kerip, Former Pulau Semakau resident, said: "Last time, we worked as fishermen, but now we all work on the mainland. Now we also have more access to education."

The former islanders hope to set up an association, and have more activities in the area they once called home.

For now though, those who wish to visit the Semakau landfill will have to register with the Singapore Nature Society, Sports Fishing Association of Singapore and the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity. - CNA /ch

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