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## ELECTRIC NEWS

### TREK ON 'TRASH'

Well, almost. Palau Semakau, S'pore's only landfill island, will open it's non-landfill shore to nature lovers today

By Teh Jen Lee

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WIDE-OPEN space.  
It's a rare commodity in Singapore.

But not on the north-western shore of Pulau Semakau.



That's where you'll find a wide expanse of natural shoreline on the 350ha island. The mangrove mudflats alone cover an area roughly the size of 20 football fields.

And they teem with marine life, as you can see from the pictures here.

This is because only the south-east shore of the island receives waste, such as treated sludge, non-burnable trash, silt and bottom ash from incineration plants. Other parts of the island remain relatively pristine.

It is quite an achievement, given that the six-year-old landfill site receives 2,000 tonnes of waste every day.



The Minister for the Environment and Water Resource, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, will officially open Semakau for nature-based recreational activities this morning. If you want to visit the place, you can call one of these interest groups: The Sport Fishing Association at [info@sfas.net](mailto:info@sfas.net); The Nature Society on 6457-1196; or The Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research on 6874-5082.

Visits to the island - a 15-minute ride from Pasir Panjang Ferry Terminal - will require specially-chartered boats, as there is no regular ferry service.



To ensure public safety at the operational landfill while preserving the island's natural habitats, all visitors will be led by trained guides.

About 40 people will today join Dr Yaacob on such a tour to get a taste of what Semakau has to offer.

They come from families who used to live on the island before it became a landfill.

Semakau and its neighbour, Pulau Sakeng, both south of mainland Singapore, were linked by reclamation to provide a final destination for waste.

After taking a tour of the island, the visitors will picnic on the reclamation bunds that have been replanted with mangrove trees.



They won't have to worry about any bad smells, because all the waste has been incinerated

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at high temperatures.



To help people appreciate the island's biodiversity, a team of dedicated biologists and nature lovers conducted an early-morning survey last month.

Although the team only covered a small fraction of the island's habitats, they already uncovered biological gems, like a seagrass species that is found nowhere else in Singapore.

The landfill is expected to last until 2040, but hopefully the enjoyment of Semakau's nature will go on for generations.

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