



PERBADANAN BUKIT BENDERA PULAU PINANG

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PRESS RELEASE

Penang Hill Corporation Has Successfully Submitted The Application To Be Listed As A UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Under Man And The Biosphere (MAB) Programme

The approved paperwork to have Penang Hill and its surrounding areas to be accorded recognition as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve has been successfully submitted to UNESCO after four years of meticulous research work and tedious submission processes.

The nomination dossier was submitted by the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources on 29th September 2020 after it was approved by the Cabinet. The assessment of the application at UNESCO is said to take about one year to be completed.

The proposed UNESCO Biosphere Reserve will encompass 20% of Penang Island, covering Penang Hill as a central park, Teluk Bahang National Park and Marine Park, Penang Botanic Gardens, 6 permanent forest reserves which are Bukit Kerajaan Forest Reserve, Teluk Bahang Forest Reserve, Laksamana Forest Reserve, Penara Bukit Forest Reserve, Highlands Forest Reserve, and Pantai Acheh Forest Reserve including 2 dams; Teluk Bahang Dam and Ayer Hitam Dam. It is equivalent to 12,481 ha of land.

According to UNESCO, the biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems or a combination thereof which are internationally recognised within the framework of UNESCO's Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB). The MAB programme is an intergovernmental scientific programme that aims to promote innovative approaches to reconcile conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.

The Penang Hill Biosphere Reserve will serve as a central green lung to Penang Island where sustainable economic activities facilitate conservation efforts of the island's natural landscapes. Penang Hill Corporation (PHC) believes that these efforts can be driven through community stewardship as the MAB framework will demonstrate a balanced relationship between the community and the environment.

This recognition will further benefit the conservation and preservation efforts of our ecosystems and forest reserves that are rich in biodiversity where various species of flora and fauna have been found including species that are endemic to the hill range in Penang.

"The gazettelement will also intensify education for sustainable development and conservation through further scientific research work. This could lead the way of Penang becoming a global centre of excellence for research-initiatives about sustainability, biodiversity and conservation driven by local academics, creating spin-off effects and further contribute to the promotion of eco-tourism. Through the education components of this project, we will be able to draw greater awareness towards sustainable development in the country and improve livelihood of local communities," says Chief Minister of Penang Y.A.B. Tuan Chow Kon Yeow who is also the Chairman of Penang Hill Corporation.

"As you can see, the impact it will bring is tremendous and will pave an exciting future for us. While the project is led by PHC, it will not have been possible without the immense support



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from the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources and collaborative work with the academias from Universiti Sains Malaysia, The Habitat Foundation and state agencies. This effort also signifies the Penang State Government's commitment to preserve and conserve Penang Hill," he adds.

Penang State Exco for Tourism and Creative Economy, YB. Yeoh Soon Hin is also optimistic about the application and potential it would bring to Penang. "If our bid to have Penang Hill and its surrounding areas recognised as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, this would be the state's second accolade from the organisation and the third of its kind in Malaysia. George Town was the first to be recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site 12 years ago in 2008. With this additional status, we can expect greater transformation efforts put in to preserve and conserve our cultural heritage and natural landscapes that are unique to Penang. This will in turn promote Penang as an eco-tourism site and add the variety of attractions we can offer tourists," he explains.

At present, UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves lists 701 sites in 124 countries, including 21 transboundary sites. There are only two UNESCO reserves in Malaysia, Tasik Chini in Pahang and the Crocker Range, south of Mount Kinabalu in Sabah. They were accorded the UNESCO reserve status in 2009 and 2014 respectively.

For enquiries, please contact Penang Hill Corporation at 04-828 8880 ext 345 or email cheryl.cheah@penanghill.gov.my

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About Penang Hill Corporation

Penang Hill Corporation was established in 2009 through an enactment passed by the Penang State Legislative Assembly. Its main focus is to manage the funicular system, maintain and develop Penang Hill as a major ecotourism destination, and its vision is to make Penang Hill the hill resort of choice in Malaysia and the region.

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