KEMENTERIAN TENAGA DAN SUMBER ASLI

KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	THE STAR			
TARIKH	:	17/9/2021 (JUMAAT)	MUKA SURAT	:	13
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Penang Hill now on Unesco list

The area is Malaysia's third biosphere reserve to be recognised

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GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Hill Biosphere Reserve (PHBR) has been listed as the latest Unesco Biosphere Reserve, making it the third Unesco Biosphere Reserve nationwide after Tasik Chini in Pahang and Crocker Range in Sabah.

PHBR, which spans across 12,481ha, encompasses three terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. Aside from the core area, this includes 7,285ha of terrestrial tracts and 5,196ha of marine space.

This covers Penang Hill, Penang National Park, Penang Botanic Gardens, Teluk Bahang Dam, Ayer Itam Dam.

It includes six permanent forest reserves: Bukit Kerajaan Forest Reserve, Teluk Bahang Forest Reserve, Laksamana Forest Reserve, Penara Hill Forest Reserve, Highlands Forest Reserve and Pantai Acheh Forest Reserve on top of several water catchment areas on Penang island.

PHBR was listed under Unesco's Programme on Man and the Biosphere (MAB).

This was announced after the 33rd Session of MAB's International Coordinating Council held in Abuja, Nigeria, from Sept 13 to 17.

Penang Hill Corporation (PHC) general manager Datuk Cheok Lay Leng said the listing of PHBR will spur better research studies on biodiversity and sustainable development.

"We hope to engage in knowledge-sharing with members of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves to integrate best practices," he added.

According to Unesco, Biosphere Reserves are "learning places for sustainable development".

MAB was launched by Unesco in 1971 to promote environmentally sustainable approaches to economic development that are both socially and culturally relevant.

Currently, there are 714 biosphere reserves across 129 countries worldwide, including 21 transboundary sites.

Cheok said that at PHBR, its core area of 5,757ha is already a protected site where biodiversity conservation works, research and educational activities are carried out.

The PHBR zoning is divided into the core area, buffer zone and transition areas.

Its core area comprises four main regions: Penang National Park, six permanent forest reserves, the water catchment areas and two dams. The buffer zone covers 50m around protected areas, terrestrial core boundary and a radius of 0.5 nautical mile around the marine zone.

The transition areas are connected to the core area by the buffer zone and encompasses human activities like settlements, commercial and recreational spaces.

"The PHBR acts as a core green lung for Penang island where sustainable economic activities can be carried out hand in hand with environmental conservation.

"Apart from being home to thousands of endemic species, PHBR is extraordinary in that it is located within minutes from George Town Unesco World Heritage Site," Cheok added.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, who is PHC chairman, said PHBR fosters harmonious relationships between man and nature.

"It paves the way for Penang Hill and its surrounding areas to become a world-class learning site to explore and illustrate methods of conservation and sustainable development.

"We hope to generate innovative and green approaches to bring us closer to the Penang2030 vision and hope to make Penang a shining example in conservation works and sustainable economic development," he said yesterday.

State tourism and creative economy committee chairman Yeoh Soon Hin said PHBR will open a whole range of opportunities for the tourism industry.

"Visitors can enjoy and learn about the natural and historic elements scattered all over the island from Penang Hill to Teluk Bahang.

"This can instil a deeper sense of appreciation towards our natural gems," he said.





Natural treasures: An aerial view of Penang Hill in the file photo above, while (left) visitors throng the scenic routes of the hill.