

For Immediate Release

MALAYSIA'S FIRST URBAN ADAPTATION PROGRAMME TO LEVERAGE NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE IN PENANG

Think City's work set to become an example for future climate adaptation programmes in the country and the region.

PUTRAJAYA, 31 January 2023 - Think City, an impact organisation to create more sustainable and equitable places, officiated its partnership with the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) in the implementation of Malaysia's first climate adaptation programme; the Penang Nature Based Climate Adaptation Programme (PNBCAP) officiated by the Minister of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change (NRECC), YB Tuan Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, and witnessed by Chief Minister of Penang, Tuan Chow Kon Yeow today.

The officiation ceremony included the signing of an Agreement of Cooperation between Think City and UN-Habitat, in front of a host of dignitaries, representatives from the NRECC, Penang State Government, members from various government agencies, climate experts, non-governmental organisations as well as members of the media.

It also included a forum that discoursed on the threat of climate change in Malaysia and how this pilot initiative will serve as a municipal framework for climate adaptation with the potential for it to be scaled in other cities in Malaysia and elsewhere in the region.

In the last few years, Penang has been severely impacted by climate change especially the island, due to its geography and infrastructure, which is a combination of historical and heritage site as well as modern, urban development. On a daily basis, the George Town World Heritage Site faces high temperatures due to the urban heat island effect, and is highly susceptible to floods due to a combination of reasons such as increased urbanisation, heavy rain, high tide and the monsoon season; with the worst flooding to ever happen in 2017.

In 2019, Think City initiated Penang Nature Based Climate Adaptation Programme (PNBCAP), the first urban climate adaptation programme to be developed for Malaysia. The 5-year programme was developed in collaboration with UN-Habitat, Ministry of Environment and Water (now known as NRECC), Penang State Government, Penang Island City Council (MBPP), and the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (JPS), secured a USD 10 million (RM 44.23 million) funding from the Adaptation Fund for implementation.

The climate adaptation programme won the prestigious Climathon Global Cities Award in 2020 and was recently featured in the Transforming Cities series, showcasing ambitious climate action taken by cities around the world. The 'Cooling Down Penang' episode, featuring the power of nature in addressing climate change was produced for Think City by BBC Storyworks. The programme is also in line with the Penang State Government's aspiration to be a family-focused green and smart state that inspires the nation by 2030.

Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, Minister of NRECC said, "The federal government cannot fight climate change on its own. No government can. It requires the buy-in from all sectors in the country, down to the ordinary public but also the private sector as well as at the subnational level. That is why the PNBCAP

is such a promising concept, perhaps even a gamechanger. It is a positive development that the Penang State Government and the Penang Island City Council has chosen to proactively pursue this programme, working in tandem with national and international partners such as Think City, UN-Habitat and others. The fact that it included engagements with stakeholders including civil society and vulnerable groups will also put it in good stead to achieve its goals in a way that will benefit all levels of society in Penang.”

Chow Kon Yeow, Chief Minister of Penang said, “PNBCAP, which has been co-created with the Penang State Government and local council, the former KASA which has been enhanced and now referred as Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change (NRECC), federal agencies, local and international institutions, is a multilateral initiative that looks to enhance urban resilience and reduce human and ecosystem vulnerability to climate change impacts and extreme weather events through the implementation of nature-based solutions. It also seeks to improve social resilience and build institutional capacity in collaborative efforts. This is the first municipal climate adaptation programme to be developed in Malaysia. It is in line with my administration’s Penang 2030 vision, an action plan that focuses on improving liveability, economy, civil participation and balanced development to achieve a family focused, green and smart state that will inspire the nation.”

Hamdan Abdul Majeed, Managing Director of Think City said, “The PNBCAP leverages nature-based solutions to drive its programme components’ goals. Think City, as a project partner in this venture, will leverage our expertise in nature-based solutions to combat the effects of climate change such as flash floods and urban heat island effect. We will also contribute significantly to address the social resilience component with our expertise in urban community interventions and stakeholder management to ensure that this is a participatory process. The programme components include urban greening, stormwater management, fostering social and community resilience, as well as strengthening institutional capacity. These components are centred around the goals of reducing human and ecosystem health vulnerability to climate change impacts and enhancing urban resilience. Think City will be working alongside MBPP and JPS, complementing physical interventions with strategic action plans to strengthen resilience among vulnerable communities and reinforce capacity at an institutional level.”

Neil Khor, Special Advisor to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat and Acting Director of the External Relations, Knowledge, Research, and Innovation Division, said, “At UN-Habitat, we work with international bodies, global city networks, and urban organisations to influence climate policy and action, promoting the role of cities and human settlements in mitigation and adaptation. UN-Habitat brings together all levels of climate action, from local to global, towards achieving common climate goals. This new initiative, which is multi-level governance from city to country, will help bring different stakeholders to agree on a plan, policies, strategies, and implementation to address climate change challenges in Penang. We look forward to working together and sharing our expertise and experiences in making this programme a success.”

Since the development process, Think City worked with the Penang State Government and other relevant stakeholders in conducting public engagement activities to raise awareness on climate change and climate adaptation, and have also conducted several studies including the Climate-

resilient Urban Tree Species Study for Malaysia under the guidance of Crowther Lab. One of the outcomes of this study was the development of the Atlas of Climate Resilient Tree Species (ACResT) which was launched in November 2022 and will guide the implementation of the urban greening component of PNBCAP.

For more information about PNBCAP, please visit www.thinkcity.com.my/PNBCAP.

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About Think City

Think City is an impact organisation established in 2009 to create more sustainable and equitable places for the benefit of all. Our knowledge, skills and strategies focus on urban solutions, the environment, social communities, and the cultural economy. Think City is a wholly owned subsidiary of Khazanah Nasional (the sovereign wealth fund of the Government of Malaysia). For more information, log on to www.thinkcity.com.my.

About PNBCAP

The Penang Nature Based Climate Adaptation Programme is Malaysia's first urban climate adaptation programme. The 5-year programme was developed in collaboration with UN-Habitat, Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change, Penang State Government, Penang Island City Council, and the Department of Irrigation and Drainage, secured a USD 10 million (RM 44.23 million) funding from the Adaptation Fund for implementation. The programme component includes urban greening, stormwater management, fostering social and community resilience, as well as strengthening institutional capacity.

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