



Matt Benson
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Introduction

(VIP salutations as per attendance)

Members of the media,
Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good afternoon to all of you. Welcome to the U.A.B. and thank you for taking the time this weekend to be with us.

Penang Climate Action Week is something that's very close to our hearts because...

Cities Cause the Climate Crisis

Climate change is no longer something that will happen in the future. It is here. Earlier this month, 11,000 scientists issued a stark collective warning that the world is in the midst of a global climate emergency.

For centuries, cities have been centres of commerce, culture and innovation but today, evidence points to urbanisation and mass consumption as one of the largest causes of the climate crisis.

Large cities consume $\frac{2}{3}$ of the world's energy and create over 70% of global CO₂ emissions.

While 70% of cities are already dealing with the effects of climate change -- nearly all are at risk. Over 90% of all urban areas are coastal, putting most cities on Earth at risk of flooding from rising sea levels and powerful storms. And it is critical to note that the ASEAN region is one of the three most threatened areas in the world, alongside sub-saharan Africa and India.

Climate Adaptation Programme

However, there are opportunities to create a better quality of life while lowering the carbon footprint through better planning and investment into

- 1) nature-based solutions, and
- 2) behavioural change.



For Number 1, Think City is developing a nature-based climate adaptation programme for the urban areas of Penang island, together with the Penang City Council, endorsed by MESTECC and supported by multiple partners.

Why nature-based? It has proven to be the most effective, carbon-neutral way to combat climate change. When the city of Medellin in Colombia made the decision to create 30 green corridors along roads and waterways to reduce the heat island effect, the temperature was reduced by more than 2°C.

As for Number 2 - we want to ensure that we inform and empower urban citizens, as well as devise solutions together with climate professionals and city stakeholders.

This is why we are organising the inaugural Penang Climate Action Week - to raise awareness among Malaysians, so that you too, as individuals and collectives, can play your part.

As a collective community, here in Penang, we have the power to take action, to change the way we consume, deal with our own waste, to discover alternative solutions to the way we have been managing our daily life, and to teach the future generations now - so that they can cope with potential devastation, and be better guardians of the Earth.

Penang Climate Action Week is the first step in that direction and I hope that together we will discuss, debate, share knowledge and find solutions to the climate crisis.

Climathon

Yesterday we hosted Malaysia's first Climathon. A 24-hour hackathon to find solutions to Climate Change. I'm very encouraged by the creative solutions that we saw and to see bright Malaysian minds come together in this way - sacrificing their sleep and the comfort of their homes, to take action, and contribute to the future of Penang.

The winning team(s) will be recognised in an award ceremony a little later today, and they will have a chance to attend the global Climathon competition in Paris in 2020.

I want to say a big thank you to all the teams and wish them good luck.

Ladies & gentlemen, Penang Climate Action Week has only just begun and we have the rest of the programme to look forward to - including a talk by the highly respected Jane Goodall at USM, jointly supported and organised by Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots and the Habitat Foundation, a series of locally directed and produced short-film and documentary screenings, many of which, will be graced by the respective producers and directors for a Q&A session. We are also organising a community river clean-up session, and a number of

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family-friendly climate-change related workshops for kids. So bring your friends and family and come join us.

Finally, Penang Climate Action Week is part of Think City's year-long 10th Anniversary celebrations and we are grateful to be allied with the George Town Literary Festival. This alliance has given us access to their loyal followers so that we may reach out beyond the boundaries of urbanists and climate enthusiasts. Our hope is to extend this movement on Climate Action with an annual Climate Action Week every year.

With that, I give thanks to all our partners for helping us realise our vision for climate action week, and to all of you for being here. I hope you will find knowledge and solace in having this knowledge, so that you can be armed to face the challenges ahead. And also that you will enjoy the events we have in store for you.

Thank you.

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