

SPEECH BY YB YEOH SOON HIN
PENANG STATE EXCO OFFICE FOR TOURISM AND CREATIVE
ECONOMY (PETACE)
A CITY IN TRANSITION : REPORT LAUNCH
19 NOVEMBER 2021 (FRIDAY), 11.30AM, UAB BUILDING

A very Good Morning to

- Dr. Matt Benson
(Senior Director of Think City)
- Ms Josephine Tan Mei Ling
(General Manager of Penang Green Council)
- Mr Tony Yeoh
(CEO of Digital Penang)
- Members of the Media,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Ladies & Gentlemen

1. Good morning. I am pleased to be here this morning to launch two innovative and important publications put together by Think City and its partners. The first of these reports is the **George Town Population and Land Use Census 2009-2019: A City in Transition**. This body of work represents a culmination of a decade of data collection, analysis and monitoring of change of heritage site. It bookends a remarkable period in the history of George Town, from its listing as a World Heritage Site in 2008 to the time immediately prior to the COVID 19 pandemic. What the data shows is that the decade after heritage listing, there was a significant investment in new businesses and physical conservation.

2. While we have all personally seen and experienced the remarkable the rejuvenation of the World Heritage Site, the data provides evidence of this transformation. With this data, we have a robust framework to plan for the future of George Town aligned to the Penang2030 agenda. These data, alongside Think City's contributions have both influenced the revision of the George Town Special Area Plan.

3. Moving forward, the Penang State Government will concentrate our efforts to develop a more resilient heritage city and build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

PLANS for George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site

4. As part of our plans for the heritage site, a creative and digital district around the Beach Street and China Street Ghaut has been earmarked as a priority under Penang2030. The district will bring together an intersection of arts, culture, heritage and technology and inject new life into the inner city and the heritage enclave of George Town.

5. In addition to injecting new economic activities into the World Heritage Site, the Penang State Government will be focusing on reviving the tourism and creative sectors that have suffered staggering losses in this pandemic. Our 5R approach - Rethink, Reset, Recover, Rebrand and Restart - builds the foundation to accelerate the reboot of Penang's tourism and the creative sectors. Speaking from a tourism perspective, we intend to ensure that visitors visiting Penang can experience and value what Penang has to offer beyond the George Town World Heritage Site. As an example, we have a wealth of significant cultural and natural assets, Penang Hill that recently marked the momentous inscription as a biosphere reserve by UNESCO to add to the list.

6. Additionally, Penang has an established reputation for being a hub of technology and industry, with major global household names basing their regional even global operations in the state. Combined, these two elements - technology and cultural heritage - I believe the establishment of a creative and digital district is imminent, which will then provide a boost to the local communities, and our economy by creating opportunities that will further grow Penang's potential, fulfilling the Penang2030 vision of a progressive family-oriented, green and smart state.

7. Apart from further developing the potential of our people, from a tourism and creative economy perspective, harnessing our cultural and technology assets will also create in George Town, a place that will attract visitors and people who will want to live, work, play and invest. These are the windows of opportunities that we will be considering for the future growth of Penang.

8. Ladies and gentlemen, as we move forward towards the new normal, allow me to share that digital adaptation is of increased importance to all stakeholders, including the Penang State Government. However, allow me to note that the authenticity of our cultural heritage will not be compromised in the face of digital adaptation. In fact, the Penang Tourism Master Plan introduced by PETACE early this year has put forth two

important thrusts which are: (1) Ensuring Sustainable and Responsible Tourism and (2) A Smart Tourism Destination. As you can see, we outline sustainability as one of our overarching strategies in our way forward, which includes the preservation of heritage authenticity in this digital age.

FUTURE OF PENANG

9. Speaking of the future, the second publication that's launched today is the **Scenario Planning: Possible Futures for Penang's Economy in 2030**. This report was developed in response to the global socio-economic shocks and technology changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Think City partnered with Penang Institute and Penang Green Council to conduct a scenario planning exercise that is aligned with the Penang2030 vision.

10. As outlined earlier by Think City, the report identifies the key drivers of change, outlining possible futures, and provides recommendations on how Penang can best position itself post-pandemic. I would like to thank Think City, Penang Institute and Penang Green Council for developing this insightful body of work that allows us to imagine the different paths that Penang future could go, but importantly showcasing that the most likely of these scenarios is in keeping with the Penang2030 agenda,

that is to leverage the State's unique amenities and liveability factors, its immense cultural assets, geographic advantages and its history to be a family-focused, green and smart State that inspires the nation.

11. I would like congratulate Think City and its partners on the completion of these two reports and I encourage anyone who has interest in the future of Penang to download the reports from Think City's website.

12. On that note, I would like to officially launch the reports of:

1. **George Town World Heritage Site Population & Land Use Census 2009-2019 : A City in Transition**
2. **Scenario Planning : Possible Futures for Penang's Economy in 2030**

13. Thank you.