



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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CAP: Just leave the Botanic Gardens of Penang alone

The Consumers Association of Penang is appalled with the “Special Area Plan for Penang Botanic Gardens” which will basically bring in lots of visitors, have more man-made structures and ultimately may charge Penangites a fee to visit the gardens (clause IV, p5-4 which states “... arrange and control the admission of the public to the State Parks and to impose fees for their entry and enjoyment of the facilities and services provided”).

The Plan had been gazetted without or with little public consultation in July 2019. The public was only briefed about it in November after approval.

The ambiance of the gardens will change forever with the Special Area Plan to develop the Gardens into a major tourist destination. A multi-storey car park to house cars will be developed when the authorities cannot even provide Penangites with real affordable houses. Traffic congestion will be deplorable as the Gardens is a dead-end and too many visitors will spill the congestion to the already busy Jalan Utama - Jalan Gottlieb junction.

The expansion of the Botanic Gardens will also mean that the present Botanic Gardens (which is more natural) will be moved to the last part of the Gardens. The front part of the Gardens will be a long “Malaysiana Boulevard” using the present road into the Gardens. The Boulevard will have pop-up kiosks and events – a totally inappropriate commercialised and noisy ‘pasar minggu’ atmosphere at the entrance to introduce the tranquil Gardens to the public.

A cable car station may be developed at the Botanic Gardens to connect to Penang Hill. The Special Area Plan says that “the presence of the cable car ground station can increase the visitor numbers to the garden as it will provide opportunities for visitors to include the botanic garden as another tourist site before going up the Penang Hill” (p3.38). Not much detail is provided in the Plan.

The cable car if implemented will cause will cause irreparable damage to the Gardens and Penang Hill through the building of more hotels, bungalows for the rich elites, cafes, amusement joints and roads.

The focus of the Special Area Plan seems to be development for tourism, not as a natural heritage park for the recreational needs of Penangites.

This is especially true in the case of charging an entrance fee for a public facility. It is akin to the recent gigantic increase in rates for Penangites when you spend a lot of unnecessary monies in the name of development for the state and then place the burden on ratepayers. The State should be more prudent and provide public facilities without charge as it has been already paid for by ratepayers.

The increased visitors to the garden and motor vehicles will produce large quantities of carbon dioxide which would aggravate the climate emergency. It would be contrary to our commitment to reduce carbon emissions under international treaties.

The authorities should focus on improving public transport to the gardens, research and education facilities and introducing more indigenous plants, particularly those threatened with extinction.

It should not trade the beauty and tranquillity of the Gardens and the welfare of the people for tourist dollars.

CAP reiterates its call: “For the sake of Penangites, leave the Botanic Gardens alone”.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
Consumers Association of Penang