



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:  
[www.consumer.org.my](http://www.consumer.org.my)

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia  
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109  
email: [consumerofpenang@gmail.com](mailto:consumerofpenang@gmail.com)

## Press Statement

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### **Government must act now in wake of 4 November Penang flood tragedy**

The Consumers' Association of Penang and Sahabat Alam Malaysia are very distressed by the tragedy that has taken place yesterday and early morning today in Penang.

The floods, landslides and the disruption of people's lives are even much worse than what happened on 15th Sept.

Yes - there was non stop rain and very high winds, but the major factors causing this mega flood and landslides have been the removal of the hill forests, silting of the rivers and overdevelopment in Penang which has replaced the green areas with concrete. This has resulted in the heavy rainfall not being able to be drained because of the loss of trees and fields which act as a sponge absorbing the water and because the rivers and drainage system are clogged up by silt and cannot clear the rain water.

The State government has to fully recognise that we are in a state of environmental and social crisis. It can no longer be in a state of denial. It must at last recognise that we have genuine manifold problems and that these problems have to be tackled head on, instead of the State being on the defensive and denying that there is any crisis or problems.

CAP and SAM demand the following actions:

1. The State government has to allocate much more funds to rehabilitate and repair the damaged hill slopes as well as to resuscitate the rivers so that they can flow in a proper way;
2. It must allocate many more staff to check hill slopes and land adjacent to hills and to take preventive measures;
3. It must pressure and require private developers to take extra preventive measures and if they are found not to do so, or that future rainfall causes similar problems, they have to be seriously prosecuted in court and made to pay the penalties;
4. The State has to examine the inadequacies and loopholes in the laws and guidelines for environmental quality, hillside development, adequate drainage and to take action to redress these inadequacies and loopholes.

The following actions should also be taken:-

1. Stop all work in hill slopes or in hill land irrespective of whether these lands and slopes are below or above 250 feet until a review is done on all projects and activities in these areas.

2. Stop all works that are being done on land areas adjacent to hill slopes or hill land which carry risks of erosion and landslides
3. All approved projects on hill land and on lands that have hill slopes, whether or not they are above 250 feet should be put on hold and they should be reviewed and extra measures should be imposed to ensure they are safe and there must be strengthened enforcement to monitor these projects.
4. Stop the approval of all new projects on hill lands and hill slopes and on land adjacent to hill slopes whether or not such lands are above 250 feet or not.
5. There should be no development on river reserves.
6. The State government has to have an overhaul of the way in which it undertakes state planning as well as planning and project assessment and approval process by the municipal authorities. They must put the interest of the people and the environment far above the interest of the developers.
7. The Federal government must also play a major role. It must allocate emergency funds for Penang to tackle the problems of risky hill slopes, landslides and floods.
8. The Federal government should immediately strengthen its own activities in the areas where it has jurisdiction such as the imposition of the environmental impact assessment on projects and to undertake the responsibilities on the approval process seriously as well as to monitor the environmental impact of projects as they are being developed.

**S. M. Mohamed Idris**  
**President**  
**Consumers Association of Penang &**  
**Sahabat Alam Malaysia**