



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

Press Statement

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Are We Going to Lose Another Icon?

Don't Stop the Penang Hill Funicular Railway

On 10 November 2021, Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow announced that Penang is considering shutting down the problematic Penang Hill funicular train service if it continues to break down, stressing on the importance of passenger safety.

CAP is shocked at this announcement and hopes that the shutdown will not be a permanent one.

The iconic Penang Hill Railway was opened in 1923 with work beginning in 1920. The last modernisation of the train was in 2011 which reduced the time of the whole journey to just 10 minutes.

Penang lost its iconic ferry in December last year. Are we going to lose another icon that has been operating for nearly 100 years?

Or is this an announcement to give weight to the proposed cable car project? This announcement of the possible shutting down of the Penang Hill Railway seems to be building up the logic of the need for a cable car, either as a replacement or an alternative to carrying people up the hill.

CAP is not against shutting down the Penang Hill Railway for repairs or servicing as the safety of the train is most important, but to give the excuse that the train continues to break down and is problematic, and therefore that it may be shut down is like giving up any hope on this iconic service which is both important for tourists and residents on the hill. The Penang Hill Railway had also created many wonderful memories for both Penangites and tourists.

There will be a public uproar if the Penang State Government decides to shut down the Penang Hill Railway for good. There was a public uproar when the Penang Ferry was closed last year. Even YB Lim Guan Eng organised protests when the closure was announced. The blame was easy then as it was the Federal Government's decision to close it. But the Penang Hill Railway is under the State Government and this will incur the wrath of Penangites if the State decides to close the Penang Hill Railway.

The source of the breakdown should be located and rectified. In this hi-tech age, it is incredible that breakdowns of the hill railway cannot be reduced substantially or prevented.

Repair and service the Penang Hill at all costs for passengers' safety but to completely-shut it down and abandon it is irresponsible as the train was changed and modernised only in 2011. There should be no double standards when it comes to protecting Penang's icons and heritage.

Mohideen Abdul Kader

President

Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP)