

Penang sets up climate change plan

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GEORGE TOWN: Despite managing its water resources effectively, Penang is facing serious challenges where water security is concerned.

The state is said to be vulnerable to climate change with the average temperature in urban areas predicted to rise by 1.5% by 2030.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said as such, Penang has taken the lead by developing Malaysia's first climate adaptation plan with initiatives on cooling urban areas.

"This is one of the major concerns in the 'Penang 2030 Guide' booklet.

"Concerns about water resources have been put under the 'Investment in built environment to improve resilience' theme.

"The other three are 'Increase liveability to enhance quality of life', 'Upgrade the economy to raise household incomes' and 'Empower people to strengthen civic participation'," he explained during the official launch of the booklet yesterday.

Also included is the "Sponge City Model" – a plan to absorb water naturally through more permeable surfaces and reduce floods.

Playing a major role in the Sponge City Model will be the Penang Green Connector's project linking different components of urban green spaces to create a network that will benefit biodiversity.

Chow said among the key initiatives are partnering with international organisations to develop and implement adaptation plans and piloting urban cooling initiatives.

"Our main targets are to have all developments with a green building index (GBI) Gold certificate from 2020 onwards, 30% of infrastructure construction materials recycled, 100% hotels in Penang to be green and a 20% reduction in domestic water consumption per capita per day," he said.

The Guide also outlined a key initiative in adopting a network city model for the special development of Penang, upgrading industrial parks and other employment hubs with public amenities and facilities to minimise travel time.

Also included is the revitalisation of waterfronts in Butterworth and George Town as well as of suburban areas to be more self-inclusive as places to live, work and play.