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PRESS STATEMENT

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FOR WATER'S SAKE: SAY "NO" TO "RE-OPENING" OF LOGGING IN ULU MUDA, KEDAH

- **Re-opening logging concessions in Kedah is likely to cause more deforestation activities in Ulu Muda, the most important water catchment area in the Northern region, in the future.**
- **Only 16% of 160,000 hectares of the rainforests in Ulu Muda have been classified as "water catchment forests".**
- **Logging in Ulu Muda will endanger water supply for Perlis, Kedah and Penang. A total of 4.2 million people in these 3 states need sufficient water daily to win the fight against Covid-19.**

PENANG, Friday, 29.5.2020: The Federal Government, the Perlis and Penang State Governments, the National Water Services Commission (SPAN) and non-government organisations, as well as 4.2 million people, padi farmers and all the businesses in Perlis, Kedah and Penang must say "NO" to the re-opening of logging concessions in Kedah.

Recent news reports have stated that the new Kedah State Government is reportedly considering the re-opening of logging concessions or allowing logging companies to harvest "production forests" to avoid paying compensation.

Under present circumstances, this is an irresponsible and short-sighted proposal because it is likely to lead towards logging in Ulu Muda, the most important water catchment area for Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

All 3 states are heavily dependent on rainwater that is "caught" in Ulu Muda's 160,000 hectares of rainforests. About 70% of Perlis' raw water and 96% of Kedah's raw water originate from Ulu Muda. Meanwhile, in Penang, Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) abstracts more than 80% of the raw water that Penang needs daily from Sungai Muda; and

the water catchment area for Sungai Muda is Ulu Muda.

Classification of Ulu Muda rainforests

On 4.11.2019, the Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources (KATS), stated in Parliament that only 10.2% (16,299 hectares or ha) of Ulu Muda has been classified as “water catchment forests” while another 6.9% (11,118 ha) has been classified as “state forestry parks” under the National Forestry Act 1984 (NFA 1984).

The classification of the remaining 132,583 ha (82.9%) of Ulu Muda is not known or not specified. It should be noted that Section 10(1)(a) of the NFA 1984 allows for the classification of a “permanent reserve forest” as a “timber production forest under sustained yield”.

As such, up to 82.9% of Ulu Muda may be harvested as “production forests”.

The inevitable consequence of “harvesting” Ulu Muda will be disastrous water crises in Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

Without sufficient raw water from Ulu Muda, businesses in all 3 states will have to shut down and padi farmers will not be able to grow their crops in the “Ricebowl of Malaysia”. Most importantly, the daily lives and livelihoods of 4.2 million people who need water supply daily will be adversely affected.

Climate change & dam capacities

There are 3 dams in Kedah, in the Muda Water System, that store raw water from Ulu Muda. As at 26.5.2020, the capacities of the dams are as follows:

Kedah Dams	Effective Capacity (%) on 26.5.2020	Average Effective Capacity (%) on corresponding date for 2018 & 2019	% Decrease
Muda Dam	14.8	62.5	- 47.7
Beris Dam	52.3	76.4	- 24.1
Pedu Dam	37.7	78.5	- 40.8

The abnormally low dam capacities reflect the effect of climate change in Kedah. It is likely that abnormally low volumes of rainfall were recorded in Ulu Muda in the period June 2019 to mid-April 2020. Kindly note that the capacities of the Kedah dams have increased recently due to cloud seeding operations, commissioned by Penang, over Sungai Muda and these dams.

With rainfall shortages and unpredictability due to climate change, it would be illogical for the Kedah State Government to approve and endorse deforestation that will compromise Ulu Muda's role as the most important water catchment area in North Malaysia.

Water supply and the fight against Covid-19

For now, the states of Perlis, Kedah and Penang are considered to be "green states" in the fight against Covid-19. For 8 weeks, most people have had to stay at home and practise good personal hygiene to keep the pandemic at bay.

One of the key critical services that have helped all 3 states to achieve the "green state" status is water supply. Malaysia has been successful in implementing the Movement Control Order (MCO) because Malaysians have had enough water to drink, bathe, clean, wash and cook at home.

Under the Conditional Movement Control Order (CMCO), people and businesses are working hard to recover from the effects of Covid-19 on the economy. Everyone and all businesses are dependent on water supply.

However, the fight against Covid-19 is not over yet, and no one knows how long it is going to take to win this fight. What we do know is that we must have enough water supply for all, as the fight goes on.

The last thing we need right now is to risk the sustainability of continuous water supply in Perlis, Kedah and Penang. The Kedah State Government's proposal, to re-open of logging concessions or allow logging companies to harvest "production forests" in Ulu Muda, must be stopped.

The risks are too high and the consequences may be too severe.

Thank You.



PBA

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Memenuhi segala keperluan bekalan air anda

Meeting all your water supply needs

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