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PRESS RELEASE:

Penang's World Water Day 2018 commemoration event,
officiated by Penang Chief Minister YAB Tuan Chow Kon Yeow.

LOGGING IN ULU MUDA IS NOT A FORESTRY ISSUE, IT IS A SOCIOECONOMIC THREAT.

PENANG, SATURDAY, 23/6/2018: Logging in Ulu Muda must be regarded a socioeconomic threat to the northern states of Perlis, Kedah and Penang instead of a forestry issue.

Penang Chief Minister YAB Tuan Chow Kon Yeow said Ulu Muda was more than a forest reserve. Ulu Muda encompasses 163,103 hectares of rainforests in Kedah that "catch" 96% of Kedah's raw water, 70% of Perlis' raw water and more than 80% of the raw water that Penang abstracts from Sungai Muda daily.

"It is the most important water catchment area in the northern region," he said at Penang's commemoration of World Water Day 2018 at the Taman Bandaraya here today.

He said when logging affected Ulu Muda as a water catchment area the 3 northern states would face the risk of a regional water crisis.

"If there is a regional water crisis, 4.09 million people will suffer from lack of water; thousands of businesses will suffer losses; and the GDP contributions of 3 Malaysian states will be compromised," he said.

"As such, logging in Ulu Muda is a socioeconomic threat. It threatens the well-being of our people, our businesses and the regional economy."

He said Penang and Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) were committed towards the campaign to "Save Ulu Muda" for the benefit of Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

He added that Penang looked forward to working with Kedah to request for Federal compensation *in lieu* of "forest premiums" for logging; as well as to seek Federal assistance to gazette, manage and protect Ulu Muda as a regional water catchment area.

“There is a Pakatan Harapan State Government in Kedah and a Pakatan Harapan Federal Government in Putrajaya. It is a good time to re-visit logging in Ulu Muda as an issue that affects Perlis, Kedah and Penang,” YAB Tuan Chow said.

“The Penang State Government will strive to resolve this issue at state-to-state level. We will also seek support from Members of Parliament (MPs), to resolve this issue at the Federal-level.

“I hope that all our Penang MPs will support the mission to save Ulu Muda. If we can get the support from the MPs in Kedah and Perlis, so much the better,” he added.

Meanwhile, PBA Holdings Bhd and PBAPP Chief Executive Officer Dato’ Ir. Jaseni Maidinsa said PBAPP was “very concerned about logging in Ulu Muda.”

“In planning to avoid a water crisis, we have helped Penang to build up a water treatment reserve of 34.8%, the highest in Malaysia. This means that our water treatment capacity is 34.8% above the water demand in Penang in 2017.

“However, we cannot supply sufficient treated water if we are not able to abstract sufficient raw water from Sungai Muda; and the raw water we abstract from Sungai Muda originates from Ulu Muda,” he said.

When the rainforests in Ulu Muda are wiped out by logging, he said, there would be an unprecedented water crisis in Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

“If we do nothing and allow this catastrophe to occur, the impact will not only be widespread, it will be long-term. A water crisis caused by deforestation cannot be easily remedied. Rainforests do not grow overnight. There are not enough water tankers in Malaysia to supply water daily to 4.09 million people,” he said.

Dato’ Ir. Jaseni urged the “citizens of the New Malaysia” to speak to their MPs to raise the Ulu Muda issue in Parliament.

“If we can change the Malaysian Federal Government in 2018, I believe we can stop logging in Ulu Muda,” he said.

Dato' Ir. Jaseni also called on the mass media to continue to highlight the issue in the public eye. "As for the NGOs (non-government organisations) and our other comrades-in-arms, please continue to fight the good fight," he said.

"Let us work together to protect Ulu Muda. Please remember: we are not doing this only for the plants and the animals. We must save Ulu Muda to protect ourselves, our children and grandchildren," he added.

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