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MEDIA RELEASE

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“VALUING WATER” MEANS FORWARD-PLANNING FOR PENANG’S FUTURE

- **Penang continued to enjoy 100% urban and 99.8% rural supply coverage in 2020. However, urgent measures must be taken to ensure water supply security for socioeconomic recovery in the post-pandemic era.**

PENANG, Saturday, 27.3.2021: The Penang State Government and Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) will continue to lay the groundwork for water supply security in the future.

As such, in commemorating “World Water Day 2021” and its theme of “Valuing Water” in Penang, we must think of the future, the true value of water and use water wisely.

In 2019, Penang contributed RM94.7 billion to the national GDP and generated estimated tax earnings of RM10.5 billion for the Federal Government. These achievements would not have been possible without continuous good water supply services, 24/7.

We should remember that Penang is a “raw water stressed state” because it has a small geographical footprint. Although Penangites continued to enjoy continuous good water supply in 2020, all our in-state raw water resources have already been optimised for conventional water treatment processes and we will need more water in the future.

Accordingly, the Penang State Government and PBAPP is pursuing the following 3 urgent raw water initiatives to mitigate the challenges of climate change, increasing water demand and water supply security:

1. **UMBA (Ulu Muda Basin Authority)**

UMBA is a proposed independent statutory body which should be set up by the Federal Government to manage and protect the Ulu Muda Basin (especially its 163,000 hectares of rainforests) that serves as the most important water catchment area in the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER).

UMBA's role will be to manage the Ulu Muda Basin (including Sungai Muda), from NCER raw water security standpoint, so as to address and circumvent all the threats that may compromise its role as a critical NCER water basin.

After all, Ulu Muda's well-being is directly related to the socioeconomic well-being 4.2 million people living in Perlis, Kedah and Penang. The key role of UMBA is to draft and implement a scientific and sustainable "Ulu Muda Basin Plan" that is fair, equitable and acceptable to the Federal Government and 3 NCER states.

2. **SPRWTS (Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Scheme)**

The SPRWTS was proposed to allow Penang to tap Sungai Perak as a second major raw water resource for the future.

Over the past 48 years (since the commissioning of the Sungai Muda Water Scheme in 1973), Penang has been "over-dependent" on one raw water resource: Sungai Muda. More than 80% of the raw water that PBAPP abstracts daily comes from Sungai Muda.

Being able to tap a second major raw water resource, like Sungai Perak, will significantly reduce our raw water risks in this age of climate change and provide better raw water security for the future.

As at March 2021, Penang seeks to negotiate with Perak so that the Federal Government may undertake the SPRWTS, as soon as possible, for the benefit of both states.

3. PWSI 2050 (Penang Water Supply Initiative 2050)

In terms of contingency plans, the Penang State Government will be reviewing the “Penang Water Supply Initiative 2050” (PWSI 2050) projects proposed by Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) soon.

Originally, the PWSI 2050 projects were conceptualised to ensure water supply security for Penang over the next 30 years, with the continuing availability of a certain volume of raw water from Sungai Muda and the potential of the Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Project (SPRWTS).

We will now look into implementing more strategic projects under the PWSI 2050 to mitigate the risks of potential “mishaps” involving Sungai Muda that may affect water supply services in Penang in the future.

The Penang State Government and PBAPP are forward-planning because we acknowledge the importance of water as an essential element for daily life. We appreciate the value of water for socioeconomic growth in the future, in the post-pandemic era.

As such, we seek the understanding and cooperation of all Penangites to kindly value our good water supply services in 2021, and to use water wisely until we manage to achieve water supply security for our children and grandchildren.

Thank You.