

25.4.2019

PRESS STATEMENT

by Dato' Ir. Jaseni Maidinsa,
Chief Executive Officer,
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Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP).

GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF ULU MUDA FOR GOOD

- **Legislation, enforcement and compensation are needed to keep Ulu Muda safe.**
- **Exposé on logging near the Ahning Dam reflects uncertainty on how logging is “licensed” in Kedah’s water catchment areas.**

PENANG, Thursday, (25.4.2019): The Federal Government and the Kedah Government must act swiftly and precisely to guarantee the safety of the Ulu Muda water catchment area, so as to protect water supply services in Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) is very concerned about recent logging exposé at Bukit Keramat, as published by The Star in collaboration with PEKA (Pertubuhan Pelindung Khazanah Alam).

In September 2018, the Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources (KATS) and the Kedah State Government announced that logging had been banned in Ulu Muda. PBAPP welcomed the announcement. However, an announcement, by itself, does not provide lasting protection.

Proper legislation, strict enforcement and fair compensation (to Kedah) are needed to keep Ulu Muda safe, in perpetuity.

A law, or laws, must be passed to protect Ulu Muda as the largest, and most important, water catchment area in the Northern Region. The law must then be enforced by a government department that is empowered to protect Ulu Muda, without fear or favour.

Finally, for the protection to be sustainable, some form of Federal compensation must be paid to Kedah to keep Ulu Muda free from loggers.



This is the logical and rational way to guarantee the safety of Ulu Muda for good; and for the good of more than 4.2 million people* living in Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

The socioeconomic value of providing this protection can be measured in terms of the combined GDP contribution of the 3 northern states, which is estimated to be RM139 billion* (at current prices) in 2017.

* Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia.

Uncertainty about logging in Kedah's water catchment areas

On 21.4.2019, The Star exposed widespread logging activities at Bukit Keramat, revealing a bare hill near the Ahning Dam in Kedah.

Other than shocking images of the logged area, the exposé unveiled several disturbing statements that should prompt an in-depth investigation:

- A Kedah State Forestry Department spokesman was quoted as saying that the former State Government had approved the logging of 1,400 hectares of forest reserve land on 1.8.2017. However, logging of 700 hectares was only carried out recently due to the change of government. Moreover, 700 hectares are in the process of being logged.
- The Kedah State Department of Environment (DoE) reportedly said no EIA application had been made for the logging of 1,400 hectares of forest reserve land.
- Two Kedah State Executive Councillors reportedly stated that they did not have any details on the case.

If these reported statements are true, the Federal Government and the present Kedah State Government should investigate the following:

1. How many hectares of "forest reserve lands" had been approved for logging by the former Kedah State Government in water catchment areas (including the 163,103 hectares of rainforests in Ulu Muda)?
2. Are these approvals still valid with the change in State Government?



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3. Is the Kedah Forestry Department issuing more permits for logging “independently”?
4. Is the ban on logging in Ulu Muda a blanket ban that covers all 163,103 hectares of the Greater Ulu Muda Forest Complex that serves as a regional water catchment area?
5. Which government department is enforcing the ban on logging in Ulu Muda, as announced in September 2018?

The Bukit Keramat scenario should be taken as a clear warning of how far things may go wrong, due perhaps to administrative and/or legislative oversight. However, such a mishap must not ever happen in Ulu Muda.

The importance of Ulu Muda as a regional water catchment area cannot be overstated. If its rainforests are stripped bare, the damage will be felt beyond the environmental sphere... millions of people in Perlis, Kedah and Penang will face a water crisis at an unprecedented scale.

Thank You.

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