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## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **PREVENT A WATER CRISIS THAT THREATENS MORE THAN 4 MILLION PEOPLE IN 4 STATES**

PENANG, Sat (23/4/2016): The Federal Government should implement preventive measures to address the threat of a potential ‘Super El Niño’ water crisis that threatens more than 4 million people in Malaysia’s 4 Northern States.

Penang Chief Minister YAB Lim Guan Eng said Penang’s dam reserves could last until June 2016 to outlast the ‘Super El Niño’ phenomenon but dam reserves in other states might not last until then.

“This is not a Penang crisis. It is a crisis that threatens 4 Northern Region states in Malaysia.

“It has been reported that the reserves of Muda Dam and the Beris Dam in Kedah will last for less than 30 days without rain. These two dams are releasing water daily into Sungai Muda daily to support irrigation and water supply needs.

“The priority must now be on sustaining the level of Sungai Muda. If Kedah and Penang cannot draw water from this river, there will be a catastrophe with strong and lasting repercussions,” he said in a speech read out by YB Prof. Dr. P. Ramasamy, Penang Deputy Chief Minister II, during a World Water Day 2016 commemoration event at the Air Itam Dam here today.

While Penang was concerned about water supply, he said, Kedah had decided to go ahead with irrigation works for padi planting from last month.

“In Penang, we decided to postpone padi planting for one good reason: we prioritise the needs of the people over agriculture,” YAB Lim added.

## **MILLIONS WOULD SUFFER, BUSINESS LOSSES WOULD BE COUNTED IN THE BILLIONS**

Millions of people would face hardships if a serious water crisis occurred in Kedah and Penang.

“When rationing was imposed in Selangor in 2014, people were willing to pay more for water supply. However, there was no water to supply,” YAB Lim said.

“Moreover, the operations of thousands of factories that employ hundreds of thousands of Malaysian workers, in the Kulim High-Tech Park and Penang’s industrial areas, would also be affected. The business losses would be counted in billions of ringgit,” YAB Lim said, adding that it would be impossible to host tourists and visitors properly without sufficient water.

“If news breaks on the international front that there is a water crisis in Kedah or Penang, the damage to our reputation, and Malaysia’s reputation, as an international centre for manufacturing, tourism and services will be compromised for years to come.

“As such, the Federal Government must not allow a water crisis to occur in the Northern Region,” he said.

## **6 OFFICIAL LETTERS SENT TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

The Penang State Government and Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) have sent 6 official letters, highlighting the threat, to Federal authorities this week.

PBA Holdings Bhd (PBAHB) and PBAPP Chief Executive Officer Dato’ Ir. Jaseni Maidinsa said the letters were addressed to:

- the Deputy Prime Minister (as Chairman of the National Water Resources Council),
- the Minister of Energy, Green Technology and Water (KeTTHA),
- the Chief Secretary of KeTTHA,

- the Chief Secretary of the Ministry of National Resources and Environment,
- the Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, and
- the CEO of the National Water Services Commission (SPAN).

## **POSTPONE IRRIGATION AND INTENSIFY CLOUD SEEDING NOW**

The preventive measures mentioned in all the 6 letters, Dato' Ir. Jaseni said, were:

- Postponement of irrigation activities in all Northern States to ensure that our dwindling reserves can outlast Super El Nino. Postponing irrigation will allow a reduction in the release of water reserves from the Muda River and the Beris Dam. This will help to prolong dam reserves until June 2016.
- Implementation of continuous large-scale cloud seeding in the Northern Region. Depleted dam reserves may only recover if there is heavy rainfall.

## **PENANG ASKING KEDAH TO RELEASE LESS, NOT MORE, WATER**

Dato' Ir. Jaseni also responded to "misleading comments" attributed to the Kedah Menteri Besar, as reported in news reports dated 22/4/2016. The Menteri Besar was quoted as saying that Penang should ask Kedah to release more water "via proper channels", instead of through press statements.

"Perhaps, the Menteri Besar is mistaken. Penang is not asking Kedah to release more water. We are asking Kedah to release less water," Dato' Ir. Jaseni said.

"This is why we are asking for a postponement of irrigation activities. Without irrigation concerns, the Muda Dam and the Beris Dam may release less water into Sungai Muda daily, to cater only for water supply needs in Kedah and Penang. This way, we can prolong the depleting reserves of the Muda Dam and the Beris Dam to outlast Super El Niño," he added.

On Kedah's comments regarding the Mengkuang Dam in Seberang Prai, Dato' Ir. Jaseni said that dam site was being managed by the Federal Government for the Mengkuang Dam Expansion Project that is on-going.

"Since February 2014, PBAPP has not used any water from this dam. To date, the Mengkuang Dam Expansion Project has not been completed by KeTTHA. The dam is still being managed by KeTTHA, and has not been handed back to the Penang State Government," Dato' Ir. Jaseni explained.

## **TIME RUNNING OUT**

Dato' Ir. Jaseni reiterated that there was no water crisis in Penang or the Northern Region yet. "Yesterday, the Sungai Muda level was 2.54 metres, and PBAPP was able to abstract sufficient raw water for Penang's use," he said.

However, without sufficient rainfall, he said, time could be running out for Kedah and Penang. Rationing had commenced in some parts of Perlis and Johor, while North Perak was also facing the same threat.

"We hope that the Federal Government will act on this opportunity to implement the proper preventive measures and avoid a serious water crisis in the Northern Region," he said.

"In water supply management, prevention is always better than cure," he added.

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