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## PRESS STATEMENT

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## HAS THE MUDA DAM'S WATER CATCHMENT AREA BEEN REDUCED BY 87.3%?

Year	Kedah's Muda Dam Water Catchment in hectares (ha)
<b>1969</b>	<b>98,400</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>22,611</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>12,484</b>

- **The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) must act now to prevent more deforestation. Otherwise, it will be regarded as an “accomplice” to the destruction of the rainforests.**

PENANG, Thursday, 26/10/2017: The water catchment area for the Muda Dam in Ulu Muda, Kedah, seems to be shrinking in size while timber production areas are growing larger.

As we understand it, when the Muda Dam was built in 1969, its water catchment area was specified to be **98,400 hectares (ha)**.

According to a 2008 Kedah Forestry Department report, the gazetted water catchment for this dam was **22,611ha**, while 78,052ha of forest lands in the nearby Ulu Muda areas were allocated for timber production.

In August 2017, the Ministry of Natural Resources (NRE) stated that only **12,484ha** of the 106,418ha Ulu Muda Forest Reserve were gazetted as “forest water catchments”. This was in a written reply to a Parliamentary question raised by YAB Tuan Lim Guan Eng (Member of Parliament for Bagan).

Somehow, the water catchment area for the Muda Dam has been **reduced by 87.3%, from 98,400ha in 1969 to 12,484ha in 2017.**

*(Please refer to “Appendix A” for a graphical representation of how the Muda Dam water catchment area has been “reduced” in size).*

These statistics reflect a disturbing and dangerous trend in Ulu Muda. It appears that more and more areas in Ulu Muda have been opened to logging activities, including forest lands that may have been originally identified as water catchment areas when the Muda Dam was built.

Logging destroys rainforests that catch water for the dam, thereby making it harder for the dam to fill up. Logging also creates tracts of exposed hill land that are prone to landslides and mudflow, increasing the amount of sediments and debris deposited in the dam.

In these ways, logging in Ulu Muda adversely affects the quantity and quality of water stored in the Muda Dam.

## THE MUDA DAM AND ITS ROLE

The Muda Dam is an important strategic drought reserve for Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

This dam was built to release raw water into Sungai Muda for abstraction by Kedah and Penang during dry seasons, when the river level is low. Raw water from the dam is also be pumped via the Salong water transfer tunnel for treatment and supply to Perlis and Langkawi.

The maximum capacity of the Muda Dam is 160 billion litres. This volume of storage is 8.3 times more than the maximum capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam (19.24 billion litres) and 61.3 times more than that of the Air Itam Dam in Penang (2.61 billion litres).

In April 2016, during the 2016 Super El Niño phenomenon, Penang raised the alarm when the levels of the Muda Dam and the Beris Dam (which is also built to release water into Sungai Muda) dropped to critical levels.

Logging the Muda Dam’s water catchment areas in Ulu Muda will adversely affect the dam’s performance as a strategic drought reserve for 3 states.

An estimated population of 4.09 million people live in Perlis, Kedah and Penang. Thousands of businesses, including multinational manufacturing corporations and 5-star resorts, operate in Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

When logging affects the Muda Dam's ability to store sufficient raw water, 3 states will face a catastrophic water crisis in the next dry season.

## THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST INTERVENE

Kedah will not voluntarily stop logging in Ulu Muda without Federal Government intervention. This is because Kedah regards most of the rainforests in Ulu Muda as a source of income from logging, instead of a critical water catchment area or an eco-tourism resource.

According to the 2014 Auditor-General's Report, Kedah approved a total of 46,264 ha of forests for logging in the period 2009 – 2014, for a forest premium of RM230.34 million.

The Kedah Forestry Department focuses on forest management, and not raw water resource management. As such, this department cannot be allowed to arbitrarily "reduce" water catchment areas to increase potential timber revenue.

Has the Muda Dam's water catchment area been reduced by 87.3%?

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) must act now to prevent more logging and deforestation. Otherwise, it will be regarded as an "accomplice" to the destruction of the Ulu Muda forests that also serve as an important water catchment for Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

The Federal Government must step in to intervene in Ulu Muda before it is too late. Hydrologists, engineers and experts must be appointed to ascertain the impact of logging in the water catchment areas of Ulu Muda.

Evidently, the best sustainable solution to the Ulu Muda logging issue is for the Federal Government to compensate Kedah for gazetted and conserving Ulu Muda as the most important water catchment area in the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER).

If this is not done, logging will continue to threaten water supply in Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

The well-being of 4.09 million people and the economy of the NCER is at risk.

Thank You.

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APPENDIX A:  
**MUDA DAM WATER CATCHMENT AREA IN ULU MUDA, KEDAH (HECTARES)**

■ Catchment Area   ■ Timber Production   ■ Unclassified Forests

