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Press Statement

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Call To Urgently Gazette Ulu Muda As Water Catchment Forests

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) and the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) call on the newly elected Kedah State Government to urgently gazette the Ulu Muda Forest Reserves as water catchment forests and protect them for the vital functions these forests provide to society.

We also call on the State Government to review and revoke any logging licenses that may have been approved by the previous government and halt all such activities within the area which threaten its life-supporting functions.

The Ulu Muda Forest Reserve and surrounding forested areas (referred to as the Greater Ulu Muda Forest in brief) is of national importance. Covering a total land area of 106,418 hectares (ha), the Ulu Muda Forest Reserve (UMFR) is the largest water catchment area in the northern region, filling the three major dams in Kedah – the Ahning Dam, the Muda Dam and the Pedu Dam.

Raw water from the Ulu Muda also flows through Sungai Muda to Penang. These forests are critical in meeting the water needs of Perlis, Kedah and Penang, and serving an estimated population of 4.09 million people in three states.

The raw water originating from Ulu Muda is also essential for double cropping in the rice fields of Kedah, Perlis and Penang, which includes the nation's rice bowl.

The forests also play a major role as a 'carbon sink' critical for addressing climate change.

Under the previous government, logging has damaged areas in the UMFR, and there should be no logging at all permitted in the area, including extractive activities such as mining or quarrying.

Given that the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government in its manifesto has promised to conserve our forests, it is imperative that the Kedah State Government take urgent action to protect the UMFR.

Since the Federal Government is also under PH, measures must be taken to compensate the Kedah State Government for keeping its forests intact for the larger public good, in exchange for the loss of revenue from logging or other activities.

There are funds that are available internationally for the protection of our forests for the purposes of combatting climate change and conserving biodiversity, and the Federal and State governments must avail themselves of these resources.

There should not be any more excuses to not take action in gazetting the UMFR as water catchment forest.

Act now and Save Ulu Muda!

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