



PRESS STATEMENT

OFFICIAL OPENING OF 37TH WORLD CONGRESS OF INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR HYDRO- ENVIRONMENT ENGINEERING AND RESEARCH (IAHR) 2017 “Managing Water for Sustainable Development – Learning from the Past for the Future”

BY

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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MALAYSIA**

14 AUGUST 2017

1. The IAHR World Congress is an international forum held once every two years and has been held in 36 other countries. The last three congresses were conducted in Netherlands two years ago, Chengdu, China in 2013 and Brisbane, Australia in 2011. For the first time, Malaysia is hosting the IAHR World Congress and it will also be the first time such a congress is held in the South-East Asian region.
2. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Malaysia (NRE), National Hydraulics Research Institute of Malaysia (NAHRIM), Department of Irrigation and Drainage Malaysia (DID), the River Engineering and Urban Drainage Research Centre (REDAC) and the University of Science Malaysia (USM) are collaborating with IAHR to organise the 37th IAHR World Congress 2017.
3. The congress with the theme "Managing Water for Sustainable Development - Learning from the Past for the Future" will be convened for 5 days from 14 - 18 August 2017. A total number of 12 keynotes, 756 paper presentations that cover all the 7 congress themes will be divided into 120 sessions for the 5-day programme. The Opening Keynotes will be presented by Yang Berhormat Dato Sri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Malaysia and Dr. Tyler A. Erickson from Google. Other than that, more than 30 exhibitors are showcasing their technical products and services in the field of water management.

4. The number of participants are 1,200 from 60 countries. A large number of stakeholders, researchers and experts in the field of water management in Malaysia as well as international scientific communities have come together to share their views and experiences on water management towards sustainable development. This is the largest number of participant countries in the history of the IAHR World Congress.
5. The objective of this international congress is to enhance understanding of complex issues in managing water for sustainable development. The congress serves as an excellent platform to expose local consultants, practitioners, scientists, researchers and NGOs to state-of-the-art know-how and technology in water management and practices. For Malaysia, it is a good place to enhance networking with related International Bodies and the scientific community as well as to showcase and share the findings from Malaysia's research and development efforts.
6. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become a global agenda when the United Nations introduced 17 goals to be achieved by 2030 that were endorsed during the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015.
7. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No.6 is specifically related to water and contains six targets on outcomes across the entire water cycle. Two targets specifically address drinking water and basic sanitation needs which our country has already successfully fulfilled. The remaining targets look into the broader water context such as water quality and wastewater management, water scarcity, water use efficiency, integrated water resources management and the protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems.
8. Various challenges are faced in managing water resources in our country. Water governance issues, coordination of the implementation of the National Water Resources Policy, the absence of uniform laws between states in water resource management, climate change and financial constraints for implementing various projects in the water sector is a major challenge. However, the Government sees opportunities in resolving issues arising through close collaboration between the Federal Government, the State Government, higher education institutions, NGOs and the private sector including taking a more innovative and beneficial approach to all.

9. Efficient and effective water resource management is the key focus for the sustainability of water resources in the country as we are also facing a variety of issues and threats such as floods and droughts that occur when the country experiences a dramatic climate change from the uncertain rainy, hot and dry seasons.
10. The Government is always concerned and has been implementing various initiatives and efforts in managing water resources in our country. Among them is the National Water Resources Policy launched in 2012 with the concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and outlines a clearer future direction to achieve the sustainability and security of the country's water resources for all sectors. It is hoped that the Government through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, will implement the IWRM concept towards achieving a sustainable and holistic water resource management as 97% of the current water are derived from rivers.
11. Among the Government initiatives in managing our country's water resources are:
 - a. Empowering water management policies and legislation through the National Water Resources Bill.
 - b. Implementation of the National Flood Forecasting and Warning Programme or *Program Ramalan dan Amaran Banjir Negara* (PRAB)
 - c. Implementation of National Water Balance Management System (NAWABS) to assess and ensure that water availability in a basin is adjusted to the needs and demands of the various stakeholders.

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