

Kedah must get its priorities straight, says PBA

Predeep Nambiar | June 3, 2016



BUTTEWORTH: Why is Kedah referring to Penang as if it is another country, a water supply company chief lamented over the state's call to seek payment for water drawn from its rivers.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBA) CEO Jaseni Maidinsa said instead of demanding for compensation, Kedah should get its priorities straight.

He said Kedah should put off all logging activities in the Ulu Muda water catchment area and gazette it as a permanent reserve immediately.

"We are the only country in the world who allows logging in a water catchment area.

"So, we have raised this issue many times. Malaysia signed the Rio Convention. The Cabinet instructed Kedah to gazette the water catchment area. What is happening?

"They (Kedah) are talking as if we are from another country. And yet they talk about 1Malaysia. What are they talking about?

"We are not politicising (the water issue), we are just concerned about the lives of four million people," he said in a press conference here today.

Jaseni gave an example of Danube, Europe's second longest river, which spanned 10 countries from Germany to Ukraine. He said the countries did not bicker over payments, but had a committee supervising the quantity and quality of the waterway.

Meanwhile, Jaseni said the Federal Government must put an end to the "unhealthy" logging practices of Kedah before the National Water Resources Policy is passed in Parliament later this year.

He said at the rate Kedah was going, logging activities would render the Ulu Muda forests barren in 12 years if not stopped now.

"Very serious. Because Mother Nature is very unforgiving. You cut trees and your country can become a desert. Then it is a bit too late.

"What is going to happen to our children and grandchildren in the northern region," he asked.

In a Bernama report, Kedah Menteri Besar Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah appealed to the Federal Government to compensate his state, as the raw water supply from Sungai Muda was being "freely consumed" by Penang.

Bashah said the raw water drawn by Penang belonged to the Kedah Government as it was let out from the Muda Dam in the east into Sungai Muda. The Muda Dam is located within the Ulu Muda Forest Reserve.

PBA is currently drawing water from Penang's side of Sungai Muda, the current Kedah-Penang boundary demarcated by the "centre line" of the river.