

Bar logging at all water catchments, Putrajaya told

BY OPALYN MOK



The Penang Water Supply Corporation's chief executive officer called on the federal government to ban logging in the vicinity of all water catchment areas. — File pic

GEORGE TOWN, May 16 — Putrajaya must restrict logging activities at all water catchment areas in the country to safeguard supply, said Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa.

The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer told Putrajaya to gazette these areas to ban logging in the vicinity, and pressed for an immediate moratorium in places such as Ulu Muda.

Uncontrolled logging could hurt the efficacy of water catchments and jeopardise the economies of affected areas, he added. "It is illogical to allow logging at water catchment areas because we needed the forest reserves to maintain the quality of water supply," he said in a press conference at the state legislative assembly today.

"Kedah reportedly received RM30.1 million in forest premium in 2014. What is RM30.1 million compared to the RM135.3 billion GDP contribution from Penang and Kedah in 2014," he said. He said Putrajaya and Kedah must protect the interests of more than two million people, thousands of businesses and padi farmers in a Penang and Kedah.

Jaseni reminded Kedah that the Ulu Muda forest reserve is the primary water catchment area for Sungai Muda, which is the main source of raw water for south Kedah and Penang. Logging at the forest reserve will threaten water supply to the people in south Kedah and Penang as 80 per cent of Penang's raw water is abstracted from the river while 14 Kedah water treatment plants abstract water from the river.

In total, Penang and Kedah abstract about 1.56 billion litres from Sungai Muda daily.

Jaseni urged federal agencies such as the National Water Services Commission, Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry (KeTTHA), the National Water Commission (SPAN) and Natural Resources and Environment Minister (NRE) to act on the logging activities.

On the current water levels, Jaseni said the two dams on the island, Air Itam and Paya Terubong are still at 50 per cent while Kedah's Beris and Muda Dams are only at 30 per cent.

The water levels at the Penang Dams should be above 60 per cent and Kedah dams at above 50 per cent in preparation for dry weather next year, he said.