

## Penang water authority urges Kedah to ban logging in Ulu Muda forest to protect water supply

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BY OPALYN MOK



*PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said only a total logging ban can safeguard the 163,103 hectares of rainforest land. — Picture by KE Ooi*

GEORGE TOWN, May 16 — The Kedah government must protect the rainforest in the greater Ulu Muda Forest Complex by banning all logging works there, the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) said today.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said only a total logging ban can safeguard the 163,103 hectares of rainforest land, which serves as a water catchment area.

“There must be zero logging in Ulu Muda, with no exceptions. There should be no forest production area or any licensed logging area by any other name, in Ulu Muda,” he said in a statement.

Kedah provides water supply to the northern region, mainly Perlis and land-strapped Penang, which is a major manufacturing hub.

Jaseni said the Kedah Forestry Department must stop issuing logging permits in Ulu Muda while all previous logging permits must be cancelled.

He called on the government to empower a government agency to protect Ulu Muda and enforce strict laws against illegal logging.

Jaseni said Kedah should also gazette Ulu Muda as a regional water catchment area first before gazetting it as a state park.

He said by gazetting Ulu Muda as a northern water catchment area (NRWCA), it can seek fair federal compensation for protecting and conserving Ulu Muda.

“The Penang State Government and PBAPP are ready and willing to support Kedah in seeking Federal compensation for gazetting and protecting Ulu Muda as a NRWCA. Perlis should lend its support as well,” he said.

He noted that the federal government’s estimated tax revenue from Perlis, Kedah and Penang was RM18.6 billion in 2017.

He said water demand in all three states will continue to grow so Ulu Muda must be protected now to ensure water supply sustainability.

“In this context, a Federal Government investment to compensate Kedah for gazetting of Ulu Muda as a NRWCA is a sound investment,” he said.

He said it will be an investment to protect the future of the people of Perlis, Kedah and Penang and to ensure healthy GDP contributions and tax revenue from this region in the future.