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Stop logging or water supply will deplete, Kedah told

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) has asked the Kedah government to stop logging activities in the Ulu Muda water catchment area.

In response to *The Star's* report yesterday on the rampant logging activities there, PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the destruction of the Ulu Muda forest reserve was threatening the water supply of more than two million people, thousands of businesses as well as padi irrigation.

"We extract 80% of Penang's raw water (one billion litres) from Sungai Muda daily. There are also 14 Kedah water treatment plants that extract water from Sungai Muda.

"In total, Penang and Kedah extract about 1.56 billion litres from Sungai Muda daily. Without this raw water, there will be a massive water supply crisis in Penang and south Kedah," he told a press conference on the sidelines of the Penang state assembly sitting yesterday.

Jaseni also said billions of ringgit could be lost as thousands of businesses that were dependent on good water supply would be affected if the logging continued.

"In 2014, both Penang and Kedah contributed RM135bil to Malaysia's GDP. The reported RM30.1mil forest premium that the Kedah government received in 2014 is a pittance compared to it," he said.

He expressed hope that the Federal authorities would be able to advise Kedah to stop the "dangerous and disastrous" business venture.

Jaseni said Ulu Muda should also be gazetted as a water catchment area so that it could be protected.

He added logging should not be allowed in water catchment areas as it would disrupt the forest's ability to help retain rainwater.

It was reported that forest roads, just 9km from the Forest Ranger's office in Gulau, Alor Setar and after crossing Sungai Sok, showed that many trees had been cleared to make way for heavy-duty vehicles plying the paths to transport logs out of the forest.

The Star managed to find at least five logging depots with thousands of high-quality logs such as meranti, cengal and merbau lying around, waiting to be transported to their processing destinations.