

Save Ulu Muda reserve, says Penang water chief

[Melissa Darlyne Chow](#) | June 23, 2018

A water crisis caused by deforestation in Ulu Muda cannot be easily remedied as rainforests do not grow overnight, says Jaseni Maidinsa.



Penang Water Supply Corporation CEO Jaseni Maidinsa warns that when the rainforests in Ulu Muda are wiped out by logging, there will be an unprecedented water crisis.

GEORGE TOWN: Despite Ulu Muda being officially labelled as a “forest reserve”, the previous Barisan Nasional-led Kedah government had licensed logging there to earn money, Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Jaseni Maidinsa said today.

Citing the 2014 Auditor-General’s Report, Jaseni said Kedah had approved logging of 42,264ha of forests in the state, between 2009 and 2014.

“In August last year, the natural resources and environment ministry stated that only 12,484ha out of 100,000ha of rainforests in Ulu Muda had been gazetted as ‘water catchments’.

“However, 88,232ha have been gazetted for ‘timber production’.

“Does this mean that 84% of Ulu Muda catchments will be logged?” he said in his speech at the state-level World Water Day celebrations held at the Penang Municipal Park here today.

Present were Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, State Environment Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh, Bukit Bendera MP Wong Hon Wai, Permatang Pauh MP Nurul Izzah Anwar, Bayan Baru MP Sim Tze Tzin, and Water Watch Penang president Prof Chan Ngai Weng.

The theme for this year’s celebration is “Save Ulu Muda”.

The state, together with NGOs and civil societies, will campaign to save the forest reserve. Ulu Muda is 163,103ha of rainforests and is 1.5 times the size of Penang.

In his speech, Jaseni said Ulu Muda is the largest natural habitat for wildlife and indigenous plants in the northern part of the country.

Animals that live in Ulu Muda include the rare clouded leopard, Asian elephant, the Malayan tapir, Malayan sun bear and 10 species of hornbills.

Jaseni said the forest reserve is the largest carbon sink in the region, with millions of plants absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen into the air daily.

“Please note that plants and wildlife are not the only lifeforms that are dependent on Ulu Muda. Human beings depend on Ulu Muda too for our daily water supply.

“In fact, Ulu Muda is nature’s gift to 4.09 million people living in Perlis, Kedah and Penang. Its rainforests catch rain water that is used for water supply in our three states.”

Jaseni stated that Ulu Muda supplied 96% of Kedah’s raw water, 70% of the needs of Perlis and 80% of Penang water.

To avoid a water crisis in Penang, Jaseni said PBAPP had helped build up water treatment reserves of 34.8%, the highest in the country.

This, he explained, meant that the state’s water treatment capacity is 34.8% above the water demand in the state for last year.

“However, we cannot supply sufficient treated water if we are not able to extract sufficient raw water from Sungai Muda, which originates from Ulu Muda.

“So, when the rainforests in Ulu Muda are wiped out by logging, there will be an unprecedented water crisis that will affect 4.09 million people in three northern states.

“A water crisis caused by deforestation cannot be easily remedied. Rainforests do not grow overnight. There are not enough water tankers in Malaysia to supply water daily to 4.09 million people.”

Jaseni hoped the new Pakatan Harapan government will be able to resolve the water issue in 100 days.

“Please support the call for a complete ban on logging in Ulu Muda. If we can change the federal government in 2018, I believe we can stop logging in Ulu Muda.”