

## TOP-level meeting between Putrajaya and northern states on Ulu Muda on the cards



Penang will initiate a top-level meeting between Putrajaya and the northern states to find an amicable solution to logging activities in Ulu Muda, which has threatened the most important water catchment area in the north said its Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow (left). Pic by SHAHNAZ FAZLIE SHAHRIZAL

By [Audrey Dermawan](#)  
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GEORGE TOWN: Penang will initiate a top-level meeting between Putrajaya and the northern states to find an amicable solution to logging activities in Ulu Muda, which has threatened the most important water catchment area in the north.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said the meeting would be coordinated by Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa once the minister concerned has been appointed.

Besides the minister, Chow said the meeting would also involve his counterparts from Kedah and Perlis. He said PBAPP had been championing the cause to "Save Ulu Muda" since 2009 but to no avail as the previous federal administration was unwilling to co-operate.

"This is a serious issue as continuous logging in Ulu Muda will affect the water catchment area, which triggers a potential regional water crisis, involving 4.09 million people in the three states and thousands of businesses.

"With the new federal government in place, we can see a glimmer of hope.

"As such, the top-level meeting should be given priority so that the issue can be resolved once and for all," he told newsmen after officiating at the Penang World Water Day 2018 commemoration event at the Taman Bandaraya here today.

Present were state Environment Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh and Jaseni.

Ulu Muda provides 96 per cent of the raw water that is used for water supply in Kedah, including in Pulau Langkawi; 70 per cent of raw water in Perlis; and more than 80 per cent of the raw water in Penang.

Chow said the Penang government and PBAPP were committed towards the "Save Ulu Muda" campaign for the benefit of the three states.

"We intend to reach out to Kedah and Perlis to seek a consensus on how we can work together to ban logging in Ulu Muda and protect it as a northern region water catchment area.

"In seeking to completely ban logging in Ulu Muda, we must be fair and realistic. No logging means potential loss of income to the Kedah state government.

"If possible, we look forward to working with Kedah to request for federal compensation in lieu of 'forest premiums' for logging as well as ask for federal assistance to gazette, manage and protect Ulu Muda as a regional water catchment area," he said, urging all lawmakers in Penang to support the cause to further strengthen the state's case.

Meanwhile, Jaseni said the 'Save Ulu Muda' campaign had seen them gathering over 150,000 signatures against logging in Ulu Muda.

The Ulu Muda Forest Reserve covers 106,418ha. The previous Kedah government had constantly maintained that state-sanctioned logging was under control and did not affect the water supply.