

Malaysia

Penang tells Kedah to gazette Ulu Muda before seeking compensation

BY OPALYN MOK
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Jaseni insisted that Penang has the right to extract raw water from Sungai Muda without paying Kedah. — Picture by KE Ooi

GEORGE TOWN, May 24 — Penang urged the Kedah government today to gazette the Ulu Muda water catchment before seeking compensation from Putrajaya.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa, however, voiced his support for Kedah to demand compensation from the federal government.

"Kedah should gazette the water catchments in Ulu Muda before asking for compensation," he said, adding that compensation would only be relevant once the Ulu Muda catchments are properly surveyed, mapped out, gazetted and protected by law.

Jaseni was responding to a statement by Kedah Menteri Besar Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah asking for compensation from the federal government.

Ahmad Bashah had also claimed that Penang has been "freely" taking raw water supply from Sungai Muda, which is supplied by the Muda Dam in Kedah.

Jaseni insisted, however, that Penang has the right to extract raw water from Sungai Muda without paying Kedah.

He listed eight reasons why Penang need not pay Kedah for this, including among others the fact that the state's use of the river has not affected Kedah's extraction of water through 14 water treatment plants and six irrigation intakes.

"Penang has been extracting water from the river for 43 years and this has not in any way affected or compromised Kedah's capability to abstract water upstream," he said.

Jaseni also called on Putrajaya to continue with cloud seeding activities in the northern region to fill up the dams, namely the Beris Dam and Muda Dam in Kedah and Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam in Penang.

Water levels at the Penang dams are now at about 50 per cent while the water levels at Beris Dam and Muda Dam are 29 per cent and 32 per cent respectively.

"We remain on alert and concerned over the water levels at these dams until it reach at least 60 per cent in Penang and 50 per cent in Kedah," he said.

He said all four dams needed to be above 50 per cent capacities by year end to prepare for the next dry spell early next year.