

## PBAPP calls for action to protect Ulu Muda



GEORGE TOWN, April 25 (Bernama) -- The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) is calling on the Federal and Kedah government to act swiftly and precisely to guarantee the safety of the Ulu Muda water catchment area.

PBAPP Chief Executive Officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said proper legislation, strict enforcement and fair compensation to Kedah are needed to keep Ulu Muda safe, in perpetuity.

He said a law, or laws, must be passed to protect Ulu Muda as the largest, and most important, water catchment area in the Northern Region.

"The law must then be enforced by a government department that is empowered to protect Ulu Muda, without fear or favour and for the protection to be sustainable, some form of Federal compensation must be paid to Kedah to keep Ulu Muda free from loggers," he said in statement here today.

Jaseni's statement came in response to the recent report by an English daily on logging activities near the Ahning Dam in Bukit Keramat, Kedah.

He said PBAPP was very concerned about a recent logging expose at Bukit Keramat after the Kedah government and Water, Land and Natural Resources Ministry's announcement that logging was banned in Ulu Muda last year which did not provide real protection to the site.

Jaseni also called on the federal and Kedah governments to investigate how much forest reserve land, including water catchment areas, was approved for logging by the former state government, if the reported statements were true on logging activity at Bukit Keramat.

"Are these approvals still valid with the change in state government Is the Kedah Forestry Department issuing more permits for logging "independently"" he said.

He also asked if the ban on logging in Ulu Muda covered all 163,103 hectares of the greater Ulu Muda Forest Complex and which department was enforcing the ban since the announcement was made last September.

"The Bukit Keramat scenario should be taken as a clear warning of how far things may go wrong, due perhaps to administrative or legislative oversight and such a mishap must not ever happen in Ulu Muda," he said.

He explained that the importance of Ulu Muda as a regional water catchment area could not be overstated and if its rainforests were stripped bare, the damage would be felt beyond the environmental sphere over millions of people in Perlis, Kedah and Penang who would face a water crisis on an unprecedented scale.

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