

Pay Kedah to protect water supply: PBA

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GEORGE TOWN: Penang wants the federal government to pay Kedah to stop logging in the Ulu Muda water catchment area.

Chief executive officer of the Penang Water Authority (PBA) Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said Kedah would lose substantial revenue if it stopped issuing logging concessions.

To help the state cover the loss, the federal government should offer some compensation, he added. Apart from Kedah, Penang and Perlis also depend on Ulu Muda for a substantial portion of their water supply.

Jaseni feared that Kedah would be enticed to continue approving logging concessions in the area if it was not adequately compensated.

“It needs to raise funds to cover its administrative cost,” he said.

Last year, Kedah gazetted 106,418ha in Ulu Muda as permanent forest reserves under Section 7 of the National Forestry Act (NFA) 1984, accounting for only 16% of the total area. The law permits “timber production under sustained yield” in the areas not gazetted as a permanent forest reserve.

“We have to stop Kedah from issuing more logging permits to ensure that the conservation efforts are sustainable in the long run,” Jaseni said.

He said that once Kedah has been compensated the laws to protect Ulu Muda should be strictly enforced for the benefit of the people. He said the destruction of the Ulu Muda rainforest would cause a water supply crisis not just in Kedah but in Penang and Perlis as well.

“The conservation of Ulu Muda as a regional water catchment area is essential to safeguard socio-economic initiatives under the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) plan. The NCER covers the three states as well as Perak.

To qualify as a world-class economic region, it needs adequate infrastructure, including secure water supply.