

## **PBAPP chief: Rare earth mining in Kedah will affect water supply for 4.2 million consumers**

Monday, 07 Dec 2020 12:38 PM MYT BY OPALYN MOK



*PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the mining will endanger water supply for a combined population of 4.2 million people. — Picture by KE Ooi*

GEORGE TOWN, Dec 7 — The Kedah state government's approval for large-scale mining of rare earth elements in Ulu Muda, Sik and Baling will jeopardise water supply in the three northern peninsular states of Penang, Kedah and Perlis, Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) said today.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the mining will endanger water supply for a combined population of 4.2 million people.

“The Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy (NRE) and the National Security Council (MKN) must work together to stop this dangerous venture immediately,” he said in a statement today.

He said Kedah Menteri Besar Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor, in approving the permit, had forgotten that Ulu Muda is the largest and most important water catchment area in the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER).

Jaseni was referring to news reports of Muhammad Sanusi confirming the approval of the permit for a company to explore large-scale mining of minerals in Ulu Muda, Sik and Baling.

He said large-scale mining operations in the 163,000-hectare Greater Ulu Muda Forest Complex will involve large-scale land clearing wherever the minerals are found.

“The fallout from cutting down trees, flattening hills, establishing huge quarries and digging into the earth will be monumental destruction in the rainforest environment,” he said.

Jaseni said mining will also adversely affect Sungai Muda, a strategic raw water resource.

“There is no way to conduct large-scale mining enterprises in Ulu Muda without decimating rainforests that catch the rainwater which flows into Sungai Muda as raw water,” he stressed.

He reminded Kedah that about 70 per cent of Perlis’ raw water and 96 per cent of Kedah’s raw water were extracted from Ulu Muda.

Meanwhile, more than 80 per cent of the raw water that PBAPP abstracts from Sungai Muda, at the Lahar Tiang Intake in Penang, daily were from Ulu Muda.

He added that the potential damage to the rainforests in Ulu Muda due to rare earth minerals mining will be permanent and put water supply for the three states at risk.

“Thousands of businesses seeking to survive and revive their operations during this Covid-19 global pandemic will be burdened with unnecessary risks,” he said.

Jaseni said the threat from large-scale mining will not only be a shortage of raw water from Ulu Muda but also on the quality of raw water from the river.

He said large-scale mining operations will generate large amounts of toxic waste, debris and polluted earth which could lead to negative environmental and health impact and contamination of surface water systems in the Muda River basin.

Additionally, it will be difficult for the company to dispose of by-products.

He called on the government and relevant ministries to ensure that Kedah does not jeopardise the water supply security of Perlis, Kedah and Penang.