

# Outrage over Ulu Muda logging plan

## Objections to Kedah's proposal to clear rainforest

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**GEORGE TOWN:** Up to 15% of the Ulu Muda water catchment area would be destroyed by the proposed move by the Kedah government to log 25,000ha of the rainforest, says Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa.

He said the destruction of rainforest on such a scale threatened water supply security in Perlis, Kedah and Penang, especially during the annual dry seasons.

“The impact of such a plan would be great as 70% of Perlis raw water and 96% of Kedah’s raw water originates from Ulu Muda’s rainforest.

“PBAPP also abstracts more than 80% of the raw water that Penang needs daily from Sungai Muda.

“Since Ulu Muda is the water catchment area for Sungai Muda and the Muda Dam in Kedah, cutting down 25,000ha of rainforest may cause Sungai Muda and the Muda Dam to ‘dry up’ during prolonged dry seasons,” he said in a statement.

Kedah Menteri Besar Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor had said that 25,000ha of rainforest in Ulu Muda may be logged under a “logging allowance”.

Jaseni said the Federal Government must not ignore the scope and importance of Ulu Muda as a water catchment area, alongside the unpredictable nature of climate change in the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) and the potential “socioeconomic fallout” from a regional water crisis.

“Only the Federal Government can stop him (Kedah Menteri Besar) from creating an environmental and socio-

economic disaster of epic proportions in the NCER,” he said.

Sanusi, while on a trip into Ulu Muda on Dec 28, announced that the 25,000ha logging area was not within the water catchment area.

He said the logging area has a 4km buffer zone away from the rivers in the jungle, adding that the state enforced a strict yearly logging quota and several protected species of trees needed by the wildlife were not allowed to be felled.

Penang and Kedah are at loggerheads over water supply with Kedah demanding compensation for raw water extracted from Sungai Muda.

The state had demanded RM50mil in annual payment for the raw water abstracted by PBAPP, which was rejected by Penang saying the water drawn was from its side of Sungai Muda.