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## Minister should focus on federal compensation for conservation of Ulu Muda, Sungai Muda : PBAPP



Environment and Water Minister (Kasa) Datuk Seri Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man should work on securing federal compensation for Kedah instead of trying to force Penang to pay Kedah for water from Sungai Muda. - BERNAMA pic

GEORGE TOWN: Environment and Water Minister (Kasa) Datuk Seri Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man should work on securing federal compensation for Kedah instead of trying to force Penang to pay Kedah for water from Sungai Muda.

Penang Water Supply Corporation chief executive officer Datuk Seri Jaseni Maidinsa said it was the job of the minister to secure federal funds from the Federal Government to conserve Ulu Muda and Sungai Muda instead of trying to force Penang to pay Kedah.

According to Jaseni, Tuan Ibrahim is a federal minister, his salary is paid by the Federal Government and his ministry has access to federal funds.

He said Tuan Ibrahim should know the people and businesses in Penang paid billions of ringgit in federal taxes to the Federal Government every year.

Penang accounted for an estimated RM94.7 billion in GDP contribution and an estimated RM10.5 billion in federal tax revenue in 2019.

On the other hand, the Penang government tabled a 2022 state budget with a projected deficit of RM449.8 million.

"As such, asking Penang to pay Kedah for raw water is akin to an act of trying to squeeze water from a stone.

"If the minister feels strongly that Kedah should be compensated to conserve Ulu Muda, he should focus on federal compensation for Kedah. It is his job and his responsibility.

"Instead of talking about 'a moral obligation', he should also face the facts: Penang does not pay Kedah for raw water from Sungai Muda because there is no legal obligation that compels Penang to pay for raw water abstracted from Sungai Muda," he said today.

Jaseni said there was a good reason there was no legal obligation for Penang to pay Kedah for raw water from Sungai Muda.

"The mid-point of a stretch of Sungai Muda defines part of the boundary of Penang and Kedah.

"On its part, PBAPP abstracts raw water from Sungai Muda in Penang territory.

"PBAPP's Lahar Tiang Intake is in Seberang Prai, and not in Kedah.

"As such, PBAPP pays the Penang government raw water fees for abstracting raw water from Sungai Muda that flows through Penang," he added.

Jaseni said it was a fact that Ulu Muda, the water catchment area for Sungai Muda, was located in Kedah.

He, however, said the conservation of Ulu Muda benefits not only Penang.

"Kedah and Perlis equally depend on rainwater collected in Ulu Muda rainforests that subsequently flow into Sungai Muda.

"Perlis, Kedah and Penang are three states within Malaysia's Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER).

"In this context, Ulu Muda and Sungai Muda should be rightfully regarded as 'NCER water assets' that serve three NCER states.

"The minister should leverage on this 'NCER water assets' angle in seeking to secure compensation for Kedah," he said.

Jaseni said as far as the Penang government and PBAPP are concerned, they fully supported the provision of Federal Government funds to Kedah for the sustainable and long-term conservation of Ulu Muda and Sungai Muda.

"However, it is up to the minister to get the job done," he reiterated.

Last week, Tuan Ibrahim said Penang was morally obliged to pay Kedah for the water it took from Sungai Muda.

He had said that Penang had every right to draw water from Sungai Muda in its territory, but should realise that Kedah had also made efforts to protect the water catchment areas in the Ulu Muda forest.