

Compensate Kedah after it gazettes Ulu Muda, says Penang water utility company

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GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) fully supports Kedah's claim for Federal compensation to conserve Ulu Muda forest, provided they first gazette it as a water catchment area, says its chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa.

He said the money for the compensation towards Kedah could be derived from the tax pool in which the Federal Government obtained from economic activities from Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

"As of 2017, economic activities worth RM139bil came from the Perlis, Kedah and Penang, giving the government a derived tax of about RM18bil.

"So why not take some money from the tax pool and pay Kedah?" Jaseni asked.

Earlier, it was reported that Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir stated his hopes that Kedah would be compensated as the state government had to bear losses upon stopping logging activities in Ulu Muda.

Jaseni said Kedah's decision on a logging ban in Ulu Muda in September last year (2018) was beneficial to Perlis, Kedah and Penang in terms of raw water security.

"As such, we strongly support Kedah being compensated, but only after they gazette Ulu Muda as a water catchment area.

“This is to protect against logging in future, as logging may start again when a new Mentri Besar comes in future,” he said during a press conference after awards ceremony and Family Day celebration at Tech Dome in Komtar today (June 22).

Jaseni said Kedah should first gazette Ulu Muda as a water catchment area, then initiate steps to stop logging and issuance of future logging licences, including revoking existing licences.

“The primary focus should be to conserve Ulu Muda in a permanent and sustainable manner, as it is an irreplaceable natural asset as the largest and most important water catchment area in the northern region,” he added.

On the Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Scheme (SPRWTS), Jaseni said the Water, Land and Natural Resources Ministry had appointed a consultant to do a study on it.

“As there are several options, they are looking to make a comprehensive study so we can only look at it after the study is complete.

“The study has just started, and it will take nine months to complete, so we are expecting results only next year.

“But we are pushing for it to move faster as we need phase 1 to be commissioned by 2025.

“This is because from 2025 onwards, Sungai Muda cannot meet anymore additional demands,” he added.

On another note, Jaseni said they were still waiting for Water, Land and Natural Resources Minister Dr A. Xavier Jayakumar to table the tariff-setting mechanism to the Cabinet.

“We can only look at it after Dr Xavier tables it to the Cabinet, as the tariff-setting was established by the previous government.

“So now the new government must look at it properly as once they approve it, it will be implemented in the whole country,” he said.