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PBAPP Concern Over Logging Activity At Ulu Muda

GEORGE TOWN, May 9 (Bernama) -- Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) is concerned over the logging activity happening in Ulu Muda, Kedah which responsible for 80 per cent of Penang's water supply.

Its chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said Ulu Muda is a water catchment area for Sungai Muda and it supplies 80 per cent of raw water to Penang, 96 per cent for Kedah and 50 per cent to Perlis.

He said that the cutting down of trees in Ulu Muda will affect its ability to catch rainwater and the chain effect will be felt by all three states.

"Clearing the rainforests in Ulu Muda causes soil erosion and sedimentation. As such, logging affects the quantity and quality of raw water available from Sungai Muda," he told a press conference here today.

Jaseni was responding to an English daily report yesterday that quoted Kedah Water Resources, Housing and Local Government Committee Chairman Datuk Badrol Hisham as claiming that the logging area involved is 12,484 hectares or 30 per cent of the total area of the 41,375-hectare Ulu Muda Forest Reserve.

Jaseni said logging in Ulu Muda is not merely a "Kedah state affair" because it affects water supply and irrigation in Perlis Kedah and Penang, which are in the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) conceived by the federal government.

He said gazettement and conserving Ulu Muda should rightly be regarded as a NCER (Northern Corridor Economic Region) issue as it involves three states in the northern region.

"Since the federal government views the NCER as one integrated economic region, it should ban logging in Ulu Muda to protect the interests of about 4.05 million people and the economies of three NCER states," he said.

He said fortunately this year, there was no prolonged dry season in the northern region but the level of Kedah s Muda Dam only stood at 48.1 per cent as of yesterday compared to the capacities of Penang s Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang dam, which were at 83.6 per cent and 97.3 per cent respectively.

He explained that a dam need to be full up to 80 per cent in water level to get ready for the next dry season.

"Last year, during the six-month-long Super El Nino dry season, irrigation activities in Kedah and Penang had to be postponed because of the volume of raw water stored in Kedah s Muda Dam and Beris Dam dropped below critical levels in April," he said.

However, Jaseni said Penang will support any move by Kedah to seek compensation such as in lieu of forest premiums after it gazettes Ulu Muda as regional water catchment area.

-- BERNAMA