

## Gazette Ulu Muda as most important catchment for NCER, Kedah told

ulumuda watercatchment

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Kedah has been told to gazette the Ulu Muda Forest Reserve as the most important water catchment for the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER).

Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) CEO Jaseni Maidinsa said logging in Ulu Muda is a "regional threat", as it affects water supply and irrigation in Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

"After the gazetting, Kedah may seek Federal compensation in lieu of 'forest premiums' to protect and conserve the most important water catchment in the (NCER)," he said.

"After all, Ulu Muda already serves as the unofficial water catchment for rivers and dams that provide raw water for Perlis, Kedah and Penang," he added.

### Penang supports Kedah's action to gazette Ulu Muda

Jaseni noted that Penang has repeatedly stated it will support Kedah's action to gazette Ulu Muda and seek Federal compensation.

Kedah may also expect support from Perlis, which would benefit from the initiative as well, he said.

On March 12, Kedah Menteri Besar Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah was quoted in Berita Harian as alleging that the Penang government was quick to criticise, but did not give any concrete solutions to the allegedly illegal logging issue in Ulu Muda.

In January, Ahmad Bashah said the Kedah government will seek assistance from the federal government if water levels in the state's main dams reached a critical state.

### Ban all logging in Ulu Muda

As the licensed water operator that serves Penang, Jaseni said PBAPP would like to reiterate its stand that all logging activities should be banned in Ulu Muda.

He also proposed allocating a portion of the federal funds to monitor and conserve Ulu Muda.

"As it stands, logging may have already compromised the performance of the Ulu Muda Forest Reserve to catch rainwater for Sungai Muda, the primary raw water resource for South Kedah and Penang," Jaseni cautioned.

He reminded that despite cloud seeding in Kedah since December last year, the level of water at the Muda Dam dropped from 60.3% on Jan 1 to 24.2% on March 13 this year.

"This 160 billion-litre dam was built by Kedah to store water for release during dry seasons.

"Today, due to the Muda Dam's low level, the Beris Dam (at 74.8% capacity) has to be deployed to release water into Sungai Muda. In comparison, the effective capacities of the Air Itam Dam and the Teluk Bahang Dam in Penang were both 96.9% on March 13," he said.