

Gazette Ulu Muda as water catchment area before seeking compensation - PBAPP

Last update: 22/06/2019



GEORGE TOWN, June 22 (Bernama) -- The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) fully supports Kedah's claim for Federal compensation to conserve the Ulu Muda forest reserve, but only after it is gazetted as a "Northern Region Water Catchment Area" (NRWCA).

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said although the Kedah government has halted all logging activities in the area by revoking existing permits and suspending new ones, extra measures needed to be taken to ensure protection of the area.

He said Kedah's claim must be backed by a sustainable commitment to conserve Ulu Muda for good.

"We fully support Kedah's claim but compensation should be paid only after Ulu Muda is gazetted and permanently protected by laws," he told reporters at a staff appreciation day here today, held in conjunction with PBAPP winning the Best Contingent category at the 2019 National Workers Day Celebrations in Putrajaya last month.

Jaseni was responding to Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir's statement last Thursday that the state is seeking compensation from federal government for stopping logging activities at the Ulu Muda Forest Reserve since last year, a matter which the Kedah government had raised at the National Finance Council Meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Jaseni said to date, no state or federal law has been proposed or enacted to conserve Ulu Muda permanently.

He also suggested three key terms for federal government compensations, including for laws to be enacted to permanently protect Ulu Muda, strict enforcement of the laws and zero tolerance for logging or any other large-scale economic activity that threatens the environment in Ulu Muda.

"The primary focus should be to conserve Ulu Muda in a permanent and sustainable manner because it is an irreplaceable natural asset," he said.

Meanwhile, Chow also supported the calls by PBAPP, saying gazetting Ulu Muda would also mean a stop to illegal logging, adding that it should be done before seeking compensation.

About 70 percent of Perlis' raw water, 96 percent of Kedah's raw water and more than 80 percent of Penang's raw water originate from Ulu Muda.

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