

Penang pours cold water on Kedah's demand

State won't yield on no payment stand for raw water of Sungai Muda

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GEORGE TOWN: Penang stands by its riparian rights to extract raw water from Sungai Muda without payment being made to Kedah.

Penang Water Supply Corporation Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa (*pic*) said the state has been abstracting water from the river at its own cost with its own infrastructure.

"The river defines the boundary between Penang and Kedah, and we are not two countries. Both states contribute to Malaysia's gross domestic product.

"The river is a natural flowing river. Unlike Johor which is charging Malacca for pumping raw water to the latter, Kedah is not pumping raw water to Penang.

"We are only taking the balance of the water that is flowing into the sea from our side of the river," he said at a press conference after the 16th annual general meeting of PBA Holdings Bhd at Jen Hotel yesterday.

An English daily had earlier quoted Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah as ticking off the Penang government for not paying compensation despite benefiting from water cached in Kedah.

He said the source of water was from Kedah which generated income for Penang. As such,



the Penang government should pay Kedah.

To this, Jaseni said Sungai Muda did not exclusively belong to Kedah.

He said that during a parliamentary debate related to the realignment of Kedah-Penang state borders to the middle of Sungai Muda in 1985, it was noted that Kedah had agreed that Penang may draw raw water from the

river.

"There was no mention of charges. This 'water guarantee' is, in fact, a precondition for a 1973 Asian Development Bank loan arranged by the Federal Government for the Sungai Muda Water Scheme," he said.

Jaseni said they had no plans to build another dam near Sungai Muda, but to expand Mengkuang Dam and boost Penang's water supply by three folds.

He said that upon completion, the new Mengkuang Dam will be the size of 27 Air Itam dams.

Jaseni said Penang always supported Kedah's bid to seek compensation from the Federal Government for gazetting and protecting the water catchments in Ulu Muda.

"This is for the benefit of 3.8 million people in the northern region.

"However, Kedah should gazette the water catchments in Ulu Muda before asking for compensation," he said.