

**Logging: Penang to thrash it out with Kedah**  
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Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng will lead a state delegation next month to Alor Star to discuss with Kedah Menteri Besar Azizan Abdul Razak about the controversial logging plans MCPX for the Ulu Muda forest in Kedah.

Penang is planning the meeting after Kedah failed to respond to an official letter from Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP)'s CEO Jaseni Maidinsa in June. He is expected to join the delegation.

The letter outlined Penang's concern on the logging planned for water catchment areas of Pedu, Muda and Ahning. PBAPP has also written to the Ministry of Energy, Water and Telecommunications and the National Water Service Commission (Span).

Last month, the Kedah state executive council approved a 22,798-hectare timber concession to Sibu-based WTK Holdings Sdn Bhd and Yayasan Islam Kedah

The companies will carry out 'heli-logging' in six forest areas at Ulu Muda, Pedu, Padang Terap, Chebar Besar, Bukit Keramat and Bukit Saiong, encompassing 36 percent of Kedah's forest reserves.

Lim is disappointed that Kedah had been obstinate to log up its economy at the expense of Penang's water security, despite numerous pleas from his government and various green groups.

A federal Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report for the heli-logging in Ulu Muda reserves in 2003 revealed that the proposed extensive 404km road network would fell four million trees, posing a grave threat to industrial and township developments in the Northern Corridor Economic Region.

The Kedah government however is carrying out its own EIA on the proposed project.

Mute reaction

The Penang government is equally frustrated with the deafening silence of the ministry and Span over the issue "when both the federal authorities should have imposed their power to log out Kedah government on the disastrous timber project."

Penang has implored - through its letters - the ministry and Span to invoke the cabinet directive of March 18, 2003, which requires states to gazette their water catchment areas and use it as a basis to halt the planned logging.

On this note, Jaseni feels his letter should have spurred Ketta and Span to act.

"I am shocked, like the chief minister, on the mute reaction of the ministry and Span over the controversial issue.

"It's dreadful that the federal government has been so nonchalant, undaunted and tepid on

such a contentious subject involving a region housing millions of lives," he told Malaysiakini today.

Penang has already gazetted 62.9 sq km of its catchment areas in 2004, while Kedah has received brickbats from green groups for increasing, not reducing, its logging zones.

The Malaysian Nature Society, Sahabat Alam Malaysia, Water Watch Penang and Kedah's Friends of Ulu Muda II (FoUM II) movement - comprising 17 green groups - are appalled that "the state government was even thinking of logging in the area."

Mohd Nizam Mahshar of FoUM II secretariat wants the Kedah government to gazette Ulu Muda forest reserves as a state or national park, and to set up an Ulu Muda Trust Fund to protect the catchments.

"Beneficiaries of water sourced from Ulu Muda should contribute to this fund," he said, adding the federal government should keep its promise made in 2003 to compensate the Kedah government for not logging in the area.

A committee comprising representatives from state and federal agencies, the private sector, farmers and NGOs should be formed to ensure the funds are effectively used to conserve and preserve Ulu Muda for future generation, he added.

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