

Help us to get 'timber' money, Kedah tells Penang
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Kedah wants Penang to stop gnawing at the proposed logging of six forests, but rather help it get the RM100 million compensation promised by the federal government.

MCPX

water catchment area in kedah 260608The rice bowl state has enough of Penang's cries over the proposed heli-logging in the Ulu Muda forest, encompassing catchment areas of Pedu, Muda and Ahning.

Its Menteri Besar Azizan Abdul Razak asked his Penang counterpart Lim Guan Eng to join him in persuading Putrajaya to deliver the compensation money promised to Kedah.

In 2003, the government agreed to compensate Kedah for revenue loss when they halted logging - as a cabinet issued directive to all state government asking them to gazette and ban logging in catchment areas.

"We would drop the idea to log out the forest if the federal government were to give us the promised money," the straight-talking Azizan told journalists after officially opening the new SC1 plant of Fuji Electric Semiconductor (M) Sdn Bhd in Kulim Hi-Tech Park today.

He requested for some Pakatan Rakyat solidarity over the matter.

penang kedah timber logging azizan abdul razak 310708 01He was amused by the "over-reaction" from Penang, and assured Penang of its water needs.

"It's baseless. After all, Kedah too need water. I don't understand why there is so much outcry from Penang people over the issue.

"Surely we aren't diverting the Muda River from flowing into Penang, right?" he rhetorically asked.

Last week Penang Deputy Chief Minister I Mohammad Fairus Khairuddin led a eight-man delegation to meet Kedah executive councillor Phahrolrazi Mohd Zawawi and other Kedah officials. Phahrolrazi is the exco in charge of public works, agricultural and rural development portfolios.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) CEO Jaseni Maidinsa on that occasion presented Penang's case.

When contacted today, Jaseni said Penang opposed the proposed logging due to concerns of environment, water supply, human development and township growth.

"It's now up to the Kedah government to fulfill its social responsibility not to log out catchment areas," he added.

Azizan was responding based on feedback he received from those who met the Penang delegation - as he was not disposed to attend.

"I can ensure that water supply will not be disrupted.

"Penang need not worry," he assured.

Shelved project

The previous Kedah government of BN Menteri Besar Syed Razak Syed Zain on July 2003 approved a 22,798-hectare timber concession to Sibu-based WTK Holdings Sdn Bhd and Yayasan Islam Kedah to 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

The project was shelved in accordance to a 2003 cabinet directive.

Last month, Azizan announced his government's interest to revive the projects, so that Kedah could offset the delay of federal funds and escalating operations cost.

A federal environment impact assessment (EIA) report revealed that the proposed project involved a 404km road network through the felling of four million trees which poses a grave threat to industrial and township developments in the Northern Corridor Economic Region.

Green groups are adamant catchment area logging would jeopardise water supply to five million inhabitants in the northern corridor within five years. Kedah also produces 53 percent of the nation's rice supply, which would be affected without proper and adequate water supply.

The Malaysian Nature Society, Sahabat Alam Malaysia, Water Watch Penang and Kedah's Friends of Ulu Muda II (FoUM II) movement are part of the 17 green groups demanding the gazetting of Ulu Muda forest reserves as a state or national park, and to setting up an Ulu Muda Trust Fund to protect the catchments.

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