

# Logging eating up water catchment area, says corp

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**GEORGE TOWN** — The Ulu Muda water catchment area in Kedah is shrinking and giving way to timber production, the Penang Water Supply Corporation said.

It has shrunk by 87.3 per cent from 98,400ha in 1969 to 12,484ha this year, the corporation's chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa claimed.

"In 2008, a Kedah Forestry Department report stated the gazetted water catchment for the dam was 22,611ha while 78,052ha

of forest lands were allocated for timber production," he said at a press conference in Komtar yesterday.

In August last year, the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry stated that only 12,484ha of the 106,418ha Ulu Muda Forest Reserve were gazetted as forest water catchments.

"This meant the water catchment area has been reduced to only 12,484ha while more areas have been opened to logging," he said.

Jaseni called on the ministry to curb logging and deforestation at the water catchment area.

"They must act now, otherwise they will be regarded as an accomplice to the

destruction of the Ulu Muda forests that serve as an important water catchment for Perlis, Kedah and Penang," he said.

Jaseni said Putrajaya must step in to intervene before it is too late.

"Hydrologists, engineers and experts must be appointed to ascertain the impact of logging in the Ulu Muda catchment areas," he said.

He suggested that the federal government compensate Kedah for gazettement and conserving Ulu Muda as the most important water catchment area in the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER).

"If this is not done, logging will continue to threaten water supply in Perlis, Kedah and

Penang, and affect 4.09 million consumers and the economy of NCER," he said.

Jaseni said the Muda Dam was built to release raw water into Sungai Muda for extraction by Kedah and Penang during dry seasons when river levels were low.

"Raw water from the dam is also pumped via the Salong water transfer tunnel for treatment and supply to Perlis and Langkawi," he said.

Jaseni said the maximum capacity of the Muda Dam was 160 billion litres, 8.3 times more than the maximum capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam (19.24 billion litres) and 61.3 times that of the Air Itam Dam in Penang (2.61 billion litres).