

Penang moots regional raw water management network

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PBAPP chairman Chow Kon Yeow speaks to reporters after the 2018 PBA Annual General Meeting in George Town June 28, 2018. — Picture by Sayuti Zainudin

GEORGE TOWN, June 28 — The Penang state government and Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) has proposed for raw water resource management programme encompassing the northern states of the peninsula.

Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said there were 6.69 million people in Perlis, Kedah, Perak and Penang, and that it was imperative to provide secure and reliable water supply to the region.

“A regional raw water management programme must be drafted and implemented to better protect and manage important raw water resources,” he said in a press conference after chairing the PBA Holdings Bhd annual general meeting today.

He said this is because regional raw water demand will continue to increase, noting that this has risen by 11 per cent in Penang over the last decade.

The water demand in Penang rose from an average of 744 million litres per day (MLD) in 2008 to 826 MLD in 2017.

Chow, who is also PBA Holdings and PBAPP chairman, said the programme can better manage the 163,103ha Greater Ulu Muda Forest Reserve in Kedah, the Sungai Muda Water System and Sungai Perak. The Greater Ulu Muda Forest Reserve is the primary water catchment area in Perlis, Kedah and Penang while the Sungai Muda Water System has eight irrigation intakes and 15 water supply intakes in Kedah and Penang.

Chow said Sungai Perak is an under-optimised raw water resource that can be tapped to meet the water supply needs of North Perak and Penang until year 2050.

He said PBAPP also proposed that a northern region raw water crisis plan be drafted to minimise the risks of a regional water crisis during prolonged dry spells.

Chow said PBAPP and the Penang state government have raised concerns with various federal government authorities to address issues such as the logging activities in Ulu Muda, implementation of the Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Scheme (SPRWTS) and better coordination of raw water releases from the Muda Dam and Beris Dam Sungai Muda Water System.

“Following the appointment of new ministers to head the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water and the Ministry of Natural Resources, PBAPP and the state government will resubmit proposals related to Ulu Muda, Sungai Muda and the SPRWTS,” he said.

He added that PBAPP will submit its proposals to the new National Water Resources Council that will be chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

Chow said the state will also start new “raw water talks” with the Kedah state government regarding Ulu Muda and Sungai Muda and with the Perak state government regarding the SPRWTS.

He hoped Putrajaya and the new state governments of Kedah and Perak would be receptive and responsive to the proposed regional raw water management programme, adding that PBAPP will work with Putrajaya and neighbouring states to achieve water supply security by year 2050.