

Penang eager to work with Fed, state gov'ts to manage raw water resources



Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow at the PBA Holdings Bhd's (PBAHB) 18th annual general meeting held at Penang today. Pix by Mikail Ong

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June 28, 2018 @ 3:14pm

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang government hopes to work with Putrajaya and other northern states to implement the regional raw water resource management programmes for the mutual benefit of all.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said raw water resources should be managed regionally to ensure long-term water supply security for Perlis, Kedah, Penang and Perak, which currently has a total population of 6.69 million people.

He said with the growing population and increasing diversification in socio-economic activities, the regional raw water demand would continue to increase.

In Penang for example, he said, water demand increased by about 11 per cent in the past 10 years from an average of 744 million litres per day (MLD) in 2008 to 826 MLD last year. "As such, a regional raw water management programme must be drafted and implemented to better protect and manage important raw water resources, among them the 163,103ha Greater Ulu Muda Forest Reserve in Kedah that serves as the primary water catchment area for Perlis, Kedah and Penang.

"Others include the Sungai Muda Water System with eight irrigation intakes and 15 water supply intakes in Kedah and Penang and Sungai Perak, a relatively under-optimised raw

water resource that may be tapped to meet the water supply needs of northern Perak and Penang until the year 2050.

“The Penang government and the Penang Water Supply Corporation Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) are looking forward to working with the Federal Government and the neighbouring states on sustainable and people-friendly solutions,” he told a press conference after PBA Holdings Bhd’s (PBAHB) 18th annual general meeting here today.

Present was PBAHB and PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa.

Chow said since 2008, PBAPP had worked with the Penang government to highlight the importance of:

- * banning all logging activities in Ulu Muda and gazettement Ulu Muda as a regional water catchment area for Perlis, Kedah and Penang;
- * better coordinated raw water releases from the Muda Dam and Beris Dam Sungai Muda Water System for the benefit of Kedah and Penang, especially during dry seasons; and
- * implementing the proposed Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Scheme (SPRWTS) for the benefit of northern Perak and Penang.

He added that PBAPP had also proposed the drafting of a northern region raw water crisis plan to minimise the risks of regional water crisis during prolonged dry spells caused by climate change, such as the 2016 Super El Nino phenomenon.

“These issues had also been raised to various federal authorities including the National Water Resources Council (MSAN), the Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry, the Natural Resources Ministry and the National Water Services Commission (SPAN) in the past but to no avail.

“With a new Federal Government, Penang will re-submit proposals related to Ulu Muda, Sungai Muda and the SPRWTS to the ministries concerned.

“PBAPP also hopes to be able to present its proposals to the new MSAN, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail,” he added, noting that at the same time they would support new “raw water talks” between the Kedah and Perak state governments.