

Penang water company says still waiting for upgrades to major dam

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PBA CEO Jaseni Maidinsa (right) with Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow (centre) and Seberang Perai City Council mayor Rozali Mohamad (left) at the Mengkuang Dam during a recent visit. (PBA pic)

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBA) voiced hope today that the federal government would complete overdue works on the Mengkuang dam expansion project to ensure that the facility is fully functional.

Its CEO Jaseni Maidinsa said key work on the pipeline and pumping station worth some RM180 million remained uncompleted and might prove troublesome if left undone.

In a statement, he said both were necessary to meet the state's water consumption which stood at 843 million litres a day (MLD) as of last year.

Without them, he added, the dam would only be able to draw up to 300 MLD.

Although the overall expansion project worth RM850.5 million and undertaken by the federal government in 2011 had been completed in 2017, he said Penang had yet to accept the official handover of the project as these phases remained unfinished.

"We have advised the Penang government to accept a conditional handover of the dam, provided that the federal government confirms its commitment to completing and commissioning the remaining phases of the expansion," he said.

He also said PBA had sent an official letter to the water, land and natural resources ministry on March 25, outlining Penang's terms for a conditional handover.



According to him, another RM100 million had also been allocated in April 2018 for a new barrage at Sungai Muda on the Seberang Perai side near Penaga, the cost of which was to be borne by Putrajaya as well.

Adding that the current barrage was 47 years old and in need of urgent replacement, he said such projects were needed to provide for future dry spells.

Between Sept 1 last year and March 1 this year, he said rainfall had decreased by 62% at water catchments near the Air Itam dam. Likewise, there had been a 49.8% drop in rainfall at areas near the Teluk Bahang dam.

He said these numbers were significantly lower than the average figures from three years before. “The effective capacities of the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams are abnormally low, at 46.5% and 24.2% respectively yesterday,” he added.