

Penang agrees to handover of dam expansion project from federal govt, says state water company

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Penang Water Supply Corporation chief executive Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa speaks to the press at the SPICE Convention Centre in Bayan Lepas September 8, 2020. — Picture by Sayuti Zainudin

GEORGE TOWN, Sept 30 — Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) has agreed to the handover of the Mengkuang Dam Expansion Project (MDEP) from the Federal Government effective October 26.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the Penang government had agreed to the handover of Phase 1 and Phase 2A of the MDEP during a meeting between Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow and Environment and Water Minister Datuk Seri Ibrahim Tuan Man in Putrajaya on September 24.

“MDEP is a federal government project funded by a federal grant. Its implementation was one of the main conditions agreed upon when Penang migrated to the National Water Services Restructuring Initiative (NWSRI) in 2011,” he said in a statement today.

He said although MDEP was still not fully operational, the move to take over the management of the Mengkuang Dam was important, as the very low rainfall due to climate change since 2019 has reduced the effective capacity of the Air Itam Teluk Bahang dams in Penang to unusually low levels.

“We need full access to the raw water reserves at the Mengkuang Dam to manage continuous water supply services in the next dry season, which is expected to begin in January 2021. Therefore, the main reason for the handing over of MDEP, is risk management,” he said.

Jaseni added that Environment and Water Ministry had stated that the land acquisition for Phase 2B was in the final stages while consultants for the feasibility study of Phase 2C have been appointed, and the construction of a new barrage in Rantau Panjang (Penang) will be discussed with the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in the Prime Minister’s Department.

“Without Phase 2C, namely the Lahar Yooi pumping station, we will not be able to pump raw water from Sungai Muda to refill the Mengkuang Dam quickly during the rainy season every year.

“Penang needs a fully functional MDEP as soon as possible because we are a state which faces significant raw water scarcity risks in this era of climate change,” he added. — Bernama