



Penang may go to court to stop Kedah from throttling its water needs

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Penang draws water from this part of Sungai Muda at Lahar Tiang in Kepala Batas. The raw water is later treated in Butterworth before being supplied to consumers. (PBA pic)

GEORGE TOWN: Penang today said it would consider taking Kedah to court to stop its neighbour from carrying out a water retention project along Sungai Muda which will choke 80% of its water needs.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said if the project causes suffering for the people of Penang, the state may also sue Kedah menteri besar Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor for costs and damages.

Yesterday, Sanusi shocked Penang when he said Kedah intended to build 14 water tanks along Sungai Muda to conserve water for padi irrigation and allow enough supply of water during the drought.

He wanted Penang to pay for water drawn from Sungai Muda so as to avoid facing “drinking muddy water” as a result of the water tank project.

This statement is widely seen as a threat to slow down water flow from upstream of the river, leading to some political leaders calling it an “act of war” against Penang.

Penang relies on Sungai Muda for 80% of its water needs and it processes the raw water in Butterworth.

In a statement, Chow said Sanusi was wrong to assume that he could carry out any water project he liked as Putrajaya must first give the nod and also federal funding for such projects.



An aerial view of Sungai Muda. In the background is the Lahar Tiang water intake, where Penang draws water from Sungai Muda to supply the needs of 80% of its residents. (PBA pic)

“Any ‘new’ Sungai Muda project in Kedah, upstream of Penang’s Lahar Tiang water intake, must comply with relevant laws.

“Such a project must not adversely affect or compromise water supply services for 1.77 million people in Penang.

“In short, Kedah may not implement any project involving Sungai Muda that is illegal by law or unapproved by the federal government.

“If his project causes suffering for the people of Penang and losses for the businesses that operate in Penang, we may sue him for costs and damages,” he said.

Chow said besides an injunction, other options being considered were to submit an official objection against the project to the federal government and raising the matter in Parliament.

He said Penang stood by its earlier insistence at not paying any money to Kedah for water drawn from its side of the Sungai Muda that flows into the sea.

Chow said in the meantime, the Penang Water Supply Corporation would review its future plans to ensure water security, which included a desalination plant and a raw water transfer pipeline from Sungai Perak.

He said contingency plans would be formulated, taking into account “risks of potential mishaps” involving Sungai Muda which may arise in the future.