

Penang to look into alternative technologies to shore up water supply after Kedah govt's Sungai Muda project announcement



GEORGE TOWN: Alternative water technologies are among the measures being looked at when reviewing the Penang Water Supply Initiative 2050 (PWSI 2050) projects, says Chow Kon Yeow.

The Chief Minister said the PWSI 2050 projects were originally conceptualised by the Penang Water Supply Corporation Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) to ensure water supply security for the state over the next 30 years, with the continuing availability of a certain volume of raw water from Sungai Muda and the potential of the Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Project.

"We will now look into implementing more strategic projects under the PWSI 2050 to mitigate the risks of potential 'mishaps' involving Sungai Muda that may affect water supply services in Penang in the future.

"These measures may involve alternative water technologies and incur higher water supply costs and tariffs in the future," he said in a statement on Thursday (March 25).

Chow was responding to the Kedah government announcement on Wednesday (March 24) on its plan to build a riverside water catchment project that will throttle water in the Sungai Muda river in several areas in the state.

The project known as Takungan Air Pinggiran Sungai (TAPS), however, could lead to the river at the southern end of Kedah-Penang border to dry up.

About 80% of Penang's water is extracted from the part of the river that flows in Penang territory.

Chow, who is PBAPP chairman, said the state will submit an objection to the Federal Government or initiate legal action if Kedah Menteri Besar Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor implements a project that threatens the water supply in the state.

He said Penang will continue to follow the law in abstracting raw water from Sungai Muda without payment to Kedah.

"On its part, Kedah must comply with state and national laws in implementing projects involving Sungai Muda," he said.

According to Muhammad Sanusi, there will be 14 TAPS throughout, with depths up to 20m to 30m and up to a kilometre wide.

He reportedly said the project would kick off sometime this year and the state government has identified several suitable contractors for the project.

Chow said any projects undertaken by Kedah involving Sungai Muda, upstream of the Lahar Tiang Intake in Penang, must comply with the laws and regulations.

"Since 1973, Penang has been legally abstracting raw water from Sungai Muda without paying Kedah as no payment is applicable because there is no legal or valid reason to pay," he said.

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

Meanwhile, Kedah water supply, water resources and public works committee chairman Datuk Suraya Yaacob said the state government is applying RM238mil to fund the project from the Federal Government.

"The state sent the application under the 12th Malaysia Plan's (12MP) second rolling plan of 2021," she said when contacted.