

Penang seeks fed govt intervention to solve water dispute with Kedah

Saturday, 27 Mar 2021



Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said he hoped that the ministry involved could play its role in safeguarding the public interest regarding the issue. — Picture by Sayuti Zainudin

BUKIT MERTAJAM, March 27 — The Penang state government has urged the Federal Government to intervene to overcome its water dispute with Kedah.

Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said he hoped that the ministry involved could play its role in safeguarding the public interest regarding the issue.

“We (the Penang state government) really hope that the responsible ministry can play its role to look into what is proposed or what is announced (by the Kedah Menteri Besar) in order to safeguard the interests of all parties.

“In fact, we are not preventing Kedah from building any dams or other structures to store water in efforts to prevent floods or (for the purpose of) water treatment, but they (Kedah) need to remember the same rights exist for other states based on the principle of riparian rights. ... that is what we are fighting for,” he told a press conference here today.

He said this when asked to comment further on the Penang state government’s plan to consider taking legal action against Kedah if any project implemented involving Sungai Muda threatened water supply in Penang.

Chow said the statement made by Kedah Menteri Besar Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor before on the possibility of Penang getting “muddy water” from Sungai Muda if it refused to pay raw water charges to Kedah disrespected the principle of riparian rights.

On March 24, Muhammad Sanusi was reported as saying that the Kedah government planned to implement a riverside water catchment project known as Takungan Air Pinggiran Sungai (TAPS) to stabilise Sungai Muda’s water level during the dry season.

He said new barrages will also be built to stabilise the river water level to ensure state water concessionaire Syarikat Air Darul Aman Sdn Bhd's pumps would not be rendered inoperable when water levels drop.

Muhammad Sanusi also said that the Kedah government had never closed its doors on Penang for negotiations over the water supply issue and welcomed discussions to set the rate for raw water charges.

In response, the following day, Chow said the Penang government would call for legal action against Kedah if any project implemented on the Sungai Muda threatens the water supply in Penang.

Penang mainly relies on Sungai Muda for its raw water needs and draws water from it where it flows from Kedah through the mainland part of the state.

Earlier, Chow had officiated the "Gotong Royong Perdana" programme in conjunction with the state-level World Water Day 2021 celebration which was also attended by Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) Chief Executive Officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa, near Sungai Juru, here.

Riparian water rights is a system for allocating water among those who possess land along its path. It has its origins in English common law. — Bernama