

Sungai Muda water issue: Respect rights of other states, Chow tells Kedah

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BUKIT MERTA JAM: Kedah must respect the riparian (river) water rights and keep in mind that other states have the right to draw water from the same river, said Chow Kon Yeow (*pic*).

The Penang Chief Minister said the riparian water rights are a system for allocating water among states or countries who possess land along the river's path.

"Kedah has the right to get water from the river for their own use, but they should keep in mind that the other states share the same right.

"States and countries have the rights to use the water flowing through their area without affecting their neighbours.

"This is the principle we are fighting for," he said during a press conference at the state level World Water Day celebration at Rumbai River here on Saturday (March 27).

Chow was responding to the project implemented by Kedah Menteri Besar Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor which may affect the water supply in Penang.

Sanusi had earlier planned to build water tanks along Sungai Muda to ensure there was enough water for Kedahans and padi farmers along the river.

Chow said that the related ministry can look into what was suggested and announced, and make a decision which maintains the interests of all parties.

"We do not obstruct the construction of dams and other structures to store water for future use and as a flood preventive measure.

“Sungai Muda has at least three big dams to store water for future usage and to prevent floods.

“When a river is shared by several states or countries, such as in Europe and Indochina, the principle is that countries on the upstream can use the water taking into consideration the rights of other countries on the downstream.

“Kedah has the right to build any structures, and in fact, they have built several dams along Sungai Muda and also pump houses to get water for treatment.

“For Penang, we have our rights to take Lahar Tiang Intake in Penang, which is the last pit stop, ” he said.

Meanwhile, Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the riparian water rights are important and have existed since civilisation.

“Many civilisations in the world started next to rivers. When a river flows through several states, to avoid misunderstanding, there will be an agreement to take care of the country on the upstream as well as downstream.

“For example, the Danube River in Europe flows from Austria to the Black Sea in Ukraine through 17 countries.

“A committee was set up by the 17 counties to take care of the usage and quality of water, ” he said.

Jaseni added that any projects proposed by Kedah and needs funding from the Federal Government, have to go through the Irrigation and Drainage Department (JPS), who will study the situation.

“When we draw water from upstream, it should not threaten the water security of the states downstream.

“Sungai Muda supports the gross domestic product (GDP) of billions of ringgits and is used by millions of people.

“These points will be taken into consideration by the government, ” he said.