

Concerns raised over EIA report on airport project



GEORGE TOWN: The proposed Kulim International Airport (KXP) will have a sewage treatment plant that will discharge into Sungai Muda, the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report of the project now on public display reveals.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP), which pointed this out, said the proposed discharge point is only a few kilometres upriver from 13 water intake points of both Kedah and Penang.

Its chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said three of these points are in Kedah and one in Penang, with seven irrigation intake points in Kedah and two in Penang.

“The proposed plans show that water from the sewage treatment plant will be discharged 6km upriver from Penang’s Lahar Tiang water intake point,” he said, adding that 80% of Penang’s water supply comes from Sungai Muda.

Jaseni described the planned discharge as “too risky, very dangerous and intolerably distasteful”. He called for KXP to be relocated to a site far from Sungai Muda.

“Raw water extracted from Sungai Muda is treated using conventional water treatment technologies.

“The Sungai Dua water treatment plant is not equipped to deal with water of unknown or high levels of chemical or microbiological content,” he said in a statement yesterday.

KXP’s EIA report noted the potential critical impact on Sungai Jerong, a small tributary of Sungai Muda, which is earmarked as the discharge point of the planned sewage treatment plant.

The report states that as the project will be developed over 30 years, the sewage treatment plant will be constructed on a modular basis, starting with 50,000 population equivalent (PE) capacity.

As demand increases and the plant expands up to 500,000 PE, among the options to be studied is to discharge the remaining 450,000 PE into Sungai Muda at a stringent quality set by law.

But Water Watch Penang president Professor Dr Ng Chai Weng, a geography professor at Universiti Sains Malaysia, raised concerns.

“Such a high volume discharge of 450,000 PE is highly risky in itself without the added risk of a malfunction or breakdown of the sewage treatment plant,” he said.