

Penang to implement projects under Raw Water Contingency Plan 2030

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GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) will be implementing several projects under the Raw Water Contingency Plan 2030 (RWCP 2030), says its chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa.

He said that to ensure water supply security for Penang, there will be five key RWCP 2030 projects commissioned from 2022 to 2028 to ensure that the PBAPP is able to meet the growing water demand until 2030.

"PBAPP plans to complete two upgrading projects at Penang's award-winning Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant; build two new water treatment plants near the Mengkuang Dam and Sungai Muda and start tapping Sungai Perai as an additional raw water resource for Penang," said Jaseni.

"These five projects are the key components of PBAPP's RWCP 2030 and will yield 569 million litres a day (MLD), thus increasing the maximum design capacity from the current 1,599 MLD to 2,168 MLD," he added in a statement on Monday (March 7).

Jaseni said in 2021, Penang's water consumption was 860 MLD and added that projections from an independent water study completed in 2021 indicate that Penang's water demand may be driven by socioeconomic factors to increase by 78.1% (672 MLD) and reach 1,532 MLD by 2030.

"As such, it will help to ensure that Penang has a healthy "reserve margin" and can avoid a water crisis until 2030," he said.

On March 1, a Penang government delegation led by Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow met with a Perak government delegation headed by Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad to discuss the Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Scheme (SPRWTS).

Jaseni said Chow tabled a conditional offer for Penang to buy raw water from Perak during the meeting.

"Penang's objective was to secure a deal for the SPRWTS, after which an official agreement could be signed later this year," he said.

"An agreement would provide the necessary impetus for the Federal Government to commence works on the SPRWTS in 2023 (after detailed engineering studies are conducted) and commission the scheme to deliver raw water to Penang by 2030," added Jaseni.

He added that at the meeting, the Perak delegation said that the state may not have excess raw water to sell to Penang.

"The meeting ended with both parties agreeing to wait for the outcome of the final report of the Environment and Water Ministry's engineering study which is expected to be completed in April 2022," he said.

Meanwhile, Jaseni said PBAPP has planned ahead to help Penang to overcome potential scenarios such as this latest SPRWTS scenario.

"In 2019, PBAPP proposed the Penang Water Supply Initiative 2050 (PWSI 2050) to the state government as a water supply engineering roadmap to ensure water supply security for Penang until 2050," said Jaseni.

He added that the PWSI 2050 has been revised several times to address scenarios wherein the SPRWTS is further delayed and/or cannot be implemented by 2030.

"In the face of these scenarios, PBAPP proposed the commissioning of desalination plants to meet Penang's projected raw water demand," he said.

Looking ahead, Jaseni said the commissioning of desalination plants in Penang may be implemented in phases, beginning from 2030.

"As an island state surrounded by the sea, Penang may utilise desalination technology (like Singapore) to theoretically tap an unlimited amount of raw water for the future," said Jaseni.

"It should be borne in mind that the water supply is an essential public service that affects the daily lives of 1.776 million people in Penang, as well as the operations of thousands of businesses," he added.

On March 3, Environment and Water Minister Datuk Seri Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man said the Perak government's decision not to continue supplying raw water to Penang was made under the state's jurisdiction.

He said this was because water resources were under the respective state governments, and Perak had provided an explanation on the decision.

"Perak has to give priority to the needs of the state as it will have a population of three million by 2035," he said.