

Penang seeks federal intervention to reduce risk of state facing another water problem

July 12, 2022 19:04 pm



GEORGE TOWN (July 12): The Penang government and Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) are urging the federal government to intervene by taking immediate action to reduce the risk of another water supply problem in the state.

This comes in the wake of a recent incident where thousands of households in the state were left without water because the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (LRA) had to be shut down due to the extreme turbidity of Sungai Muda, caused by floodwater from Baling, Kedah.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, in a statement Tuesday (July 12), said more than 80% of raw water abstracted daily by PBAPP came from Sungai Muda.

Therefore, he said, any incident involving Sungai Muda would affect the water supply services of about 80% of the population and business in Penang.

“The effects of the recent flash floods in Baling have proven that this is a fact. On July 6, the floods (in Baling) caused the turbidity of raw water from Sungai Muda to suddenly increase to 3,000 NTU (Nephelometric Turbidity Unit).

“[Because of this] turbidity, PBAPP was forced to stop work at the [LRA]. The biggest and most important LRA closure in Penang affected water supply services here for six days,” he said.

To minimise the risk of the incident happening again, Chow, who is also PBAPP chairman, suggested for the federal government to set up the Ulu Muda Basin Authority (UMBA) to conserve, manage and protect the Sungai Muda river basin as a water asset in the Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER).

For the purpose of developing NCER, he said focus should be given to water resources as the water supply problem is not good for businesses and would cause millions of people to suffer.

Chow said the federal government should also speed up the completion of the Mengkuang Dam Expansion Project, implement the Sungai Perak Raw Water Distribution Scheme, stop logging in Ulu Muda, and prevent Kedah from implementing the Kulim airport project and proposed rare earth mining.

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