

13-12-2023

Penang water authority says 33pc consumers can turn taps on 48 hours after next month's scheduled cut



SEBERANG PERAI, Dec 13 — An estimated 33 per cent of affected consumers in Penang will get their water supply back by January 12, two days after the scheduled four-day disruption set to start on January 10.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer K. Pathmanathan said the taps should flow again for a total 197,025 consumers in Seberang Perai, including Butterworth and Perai, within 48 hours of the disruption.

He said a majority of the remaining consumers in Seberang Perai and on the island, totalling 495,065 consumers, will get their water supply by the third day.



“Consumers in areas such as George Town, Bayan Baru, Bayan Lepas Free Industrial Zone and Penang International Airport will get supply in 72 hours,” he said in a press conference at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP) here.

He said by the fourth day, water supply will have resumed for 99 per cent of all affected consumers in Penang.

Water resumption for the remaining 1 per cent are consumers at the end of the line and higher ground will be on a case by case basis.

“Water supply resumption will be in time for Ponggal Festival on January 14,” he said, referring to the harvest festival celebrated by Tamils.

PBAPP will shut down the Sungai Dua WTP on January 10 to start major valve replacement works along with maintenance works at 22 other locations throughout the state.

Pathmanathan said the physical repair and maintenance works takes 24 hours but normalisation of water supply takes a longer time to reach consumers due to various factors.

He said major pump houses could only be restarted after the reservoirs are refilled with sufficient water.

“Treated water from the Sungai Dua WTP will have to be pumped through 6,200km of underground pipelines to reach the 590,000 affected consumers,” he said.



Penang Water Supply Corporation chief executive officer K. Pathmanathan and his team check on another valve at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant that needs to be replaced, December 13, 2023. — Picture by Opalyn Mok

He added that as the water supply resumes, there may also be other issues such as pipeline pressurisation, potential burst pipes and air-locks in all pipelines that PBAPP has to address to achieve 100 per cent water supply recovery status.

In preparation for the scheduled water supply interruption, he said PBAPP will fill up all reservoirs, the two dams on the island and tanks with treated water two days earlier.

“We are requesting for water tankers from the National Water Services Commission to provide water to affected consumers during the period,” he said.

As for claims by factories that they stand to lose billions of ringgit due to the scheduled water supply interruption, he said PBAPP gave them ample time to prepare for this.

“This is unlike sudden water disruption that happens without warning, this early notification allows factories to start planning now to avoid or minimise losses,” he said.

He said the factories can start storing water in their 48-hour storage now so they can use that during the water disruption.

He said PBAPP is also facing losses of RM10 million, for the repair works and revenue during that period.

He said the scheduled water supply interruption is an urgent breakdown prevention initiative.



One of the valves at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant that needs to be replaced, December 13, 2023. — Picture by Opalyn Mok

“The two units of 1,200 control valves in Sungai Dua WTP are leaking significantly and must be replaced,” he said.

He said the valves may burst and cause a burst pipe incident at any time if not replaced.

“We understand that consumers do not want water supply disruption and we would prefer to avoid public critique and complaints but this is a necessary initiative,” he said.