

Water supply resumes for majority consumers in Penang, 40,000 still facing dry taps

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Penang chief minister Chow Kon Yeow (2nd left) and PBAPP Chief Executive Officer K. Pathmanathan (right) are seen during a visit to the Lahar Tiang Water Intake station in Kepala Batas

SEBERANG PERAI, May 15 — Water supply has resumed for about 400,000 consumers in Seberang Perai and parts of Penang island today.

Penang chief minister Chow Kon Yeow said that as of 11.30am, raw water abstraction operations from Sungai Muda at Lahar Tiang has reached 83 per cent.

“Along with the decision to release water from Mengkuang Dam and the 83 per cent abstraction, water production at Sungai Sua Water Treatment Plant is now back to normal at 100 per cent,” he said in a press conference after visiting the Lahar Tiang Water Intake station here.

He said water supply is back to normal for 90 per cent of water consumers in Seberang Perai and Penang island.

“It has to go through a normalisation process and will take time to reach all consumers,” he said

About 40,000 water consumers are still affected and facing low water pressure or no water supply.

He said those at the end of the line and at higher grounds will have to wait until Wednesday for water supply to resume.

The affected areas are mostly in the south-west district of Penang island such as Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, Penang International Airport, Bayan Lepas, Bayan Baru, Teluk Kumbar, Sungai Batu, Gertak Sanggul and Pulau Betong.

He said when the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) first detected the issue, they expected the water supply to resume to normal only on Wednesday.

“However, PBAPP managed to resume full operations in 36 hours,” he said.

He said what happened at the Sungai Muda barrages that led to the drop in water level at Sungai Muda was beyond the state’s control.

It was reported that one of the barrages experienced an automatic sensor failure that led the flood gate to open and large quantities of water flowed out to the sea.

Chow said the barrage mishap occurred in Kedah and not in Penang even though Penang experienced the impact of it.

“I would like to suggest that the National Water Services Commission conduct a full investigation on this mishap as it has affected 400,000 consumers in Penang,” he said.

He said the state needs to know the cause for the mishap since it affected the state.

“Not only 400,000 Penang consumers were affected but 250,000 consumers in Kedah were also affected,” he said.

He said SPAN need to investigate to ensure this does not happen again.

“We hope SPAN order all relevant authorities in Penang and Kedah to check all the systems in all the barrages to see if anything needs to be replaced or upgraded as preventive maintenance,” he said.

Chow reiterated his call to the federal government to set up the Ulu Muda Basin Authority to manage the Ulu Muda Basin effectively.

When asked about the dams’ effective capacity, PBAPP Chief Executive Officer K. Pathmanathan said Air Itam Dam has supply that can only last for 40 days while Teluk Bahang Dam is 100 days.

He said Mengkuang Dam will only be used during emergency such as yesterday when they had to release water from the dam after water level at the river dropped.

When asked if the Penang is considering other raw water resources, Chow said PBAPP are exploring other water sources.

“We will explore Sungai Prai, Sungai Krian, Bukit Panchor and building more reservoirs on the island,” he said.

Meanwhile, Penang will be resuming discussions with Perak on the Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Scheme (SPRWTS).

State exco Zairil Khir Johari said the Minister of Natural Resources will be visiting Penang on June 1.

“Among the topics to be discussed is the SPRWTS,” he said.