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Burst water main will cost RM5M to replace, says Penang chief minister

Chow Kon Yeow says the new pipeline will be built over the river, making it easier to maintain in future.



GEORGE TOWN: Penang will spend RM5 million to replace the water main that ruptured earlier this week, causing dry taps to more than 100,000 homes and businesses over the past four days, chief minister Chow Kon Yeow said.

He said the new pipeline will be built over Sungai Perai, as opposed to the twin pipes under the riverbed, making maintenance easier in the future.

“The new pipeline will be easier to maintain in the future because it will be supported by a structure above Sungai Perai,” Chow said in a statement.

He said the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) will take eight months to complete the new pipeline.

The two riverbed pipes from Butterworth supply treated water to most of Penang Island through submarine pipes across the channel.

Meanwhile, PBAPP said it was working to restore water from 2pm today.

Chow said the pipe rupture was an “emergency response incident”, with PBAPP doing its best to repair the pipe in a dangerous and unfamiliar environment.

He said the riverbed pipelines were buried 3.5m deep and laid in 1996 by the Penang Water Authority before PBAPP took over.

Chow said he was aware of anger from consumers as the pipe repairs took too long, saying PBAPP CEO K Pathmanathan had apologised for the delay.

“I have told Pathmanathan to accept all constructive criticisms and complaints in good faith because water supply is an essential public service.

“He and his team must strive to do better in January 2024, in terms of meeting deadlines,” he said.

Meanwhile, the planned water cut, from Jan 10 to Jan 14, will be a major exercise.

About 590,000 water consumers on the island and Seberang Perai will be affected. This will involve 80% of the state’s population.

The cuts are to replace key valves at a water treatment plant in Butterworth.

Presently, a fleet of 15 additional outstation water tankers from Air Kelantan, Air Selangor, Lembaga Air Perak, Pengurusan Air Pahang, Syarikat Air Johor, Syarikat Air Melaka and Syarikat Air Terengganu have been deployed to help those without water.