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Water project with Perak will supply 80,000 consumers in Seberang Perai, Penang utility firm says

GEORGE TOWN, May 8 — The Perak-Penang Water Project will directly supply consumers in South Seberang Perai (SPS), said Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer K. Pathmanathan.

He said this will improve and stabilise water supply for about 79,956 consumers in that district.

“In 2023, water consumption in SPS was estimated to be 182 million litres per day (MLD).Water demand in this district is projected to reach 285 MLD by 2030,” he said in a statement today.

He was responding to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim’s statement that the Sultan of Perak and the menteri besar of Perak have agreed to provide water supply to Penang, through the Kerian Integrated Green Industrial Park.

Pathmanathan said water supply from Perak will also ensure that consumers in SPS are no longer “threatened” by Sungai Muda incidents.

“In 2022 and 2023, there were three ‘Sungai Muda Incidents’, originating in Kedah, that affected water supply for 465,000 water consumers in Penang,” he said.

He said Penang urgently needs a second major water resource to meet its water needs as it has become highly dependent on Sungai Muda as its one and only raw water resource for the last 51 years.

He said the Sungai Muda water scheme was the last major water supply project implemented for Penang by the federal government that was launched by the second prime minister, the late Tun Abdul Razak Hussein in 1973.

Once the Perak-Penang Water Project is completed, he said PBAPP no longer needs to pump water to SPS from the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP) in North Seberang Perai (SPU).

“Accordingly, a higher volume of treated water from the Sungai Dua WTP may then be re-directed to about 491,153 water consumers in SPU, Central Seberang Perai and Penang Island,” he said.

He said it will also be more cost effective to buy treated river water from Sungai Perak than undertaking projects to desalinate sea water or recycle wastewater in Penang.

He used Singapore as an example where the neighbouring country had deployed desalination and water recycling technologies to achieve a high level of water supply security.

“However, Singapore’s average domestic water rate for the first 35 cubic metres per month is RM9.60 (SGD2.74) per cubic metre, as compared to the RM0.86 per cubic metre that PBAPP is charging in Penang,” he said.

“It is cheaper and more rational for Penang to buy water from Perak, so that PBAPP may continue to bill reasonable water rates in the future,” he added.

He also said the Perak-Penang Water Project will also ensure the state’s water supply sufficiency beyond 2030.

“In February 2024, Penang’s water consumption was 927 MLD,” he said.

He said water demand is projected to reach 1,532 MLD by 2030 and 1,844 MLD by 2040.

“PBAPP is implementing its Water Contingency Plan 2030 (WCP 2030) to ensure water supply sufficiency until 2030 but beyond 2030, Penang needs the Perak- Penang Water Project and/or strategic desalination and wastewater recycling projects,” he said.

The project will also reduce climate change risks that has altered the rainfall patterns in Penang’s water catchment areas,

“With access to water from Perak in SPS, PBAPP may safely pump more water from the Sungai Dua WTP to Penang Island in the future to better defend the reserves of the two dams that may only be replenished by rainfall,” he said.

As at May 6, Air Itam Dam’s effective capacity was 37.3 per cent while the Teluk Bahang Dam’s effective capacity was 54.7 per cent.