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PBAPP stands ready to tap drought reserve from expanded Mengkuang Dam



GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) is on stand-by to draw down the strategic drought reserve of the Expanded Mengkuang Dam (EMD) if it cannot abstract sufficient raw water from Sungai Muda.

This is after Syarikat Air Darul Aman (Sada) announced that there was a risk of water supply interruptions in Kuala Muda if the level of Sungai Muda continues to drop due to dry weather.

PBAPP chief executive officer K. Pathmanathan said they would draw down a maximum of 600 million litres of raw water per day (MLD) from the EMD if it could not abstract sufficient raw water from Sungai Muda.

On Tuesday, the level of Sungai Muda at PBAPP's Lahar Tiang Intake in Seberang Prai dropped to 1.72m, which is below the "2.0m safe level."

In Kedah, Sada announced that Lembaga Sumber Air Negeri Kedah (LSANK) and Pejabat Lembaga Sungai Muda (PLSM) increased the volume of water released from the Beris Dam into Sungai Muda, from 864 MLD (10 cumec) to 1,296 MLD (15 cumec).

Yesterday, the Sungai Muda river level fell to 1.61m at Lahar Tiang.

"PBAPP continues to abstract sufficient raw water from the river without tapping the EMD.

"However, PBAPP also conducted a successful EMD drawdown trial run in preparation for a 'worse case' scenario.

"The EMD serves as a 'back-up' dry weather resource which may be tapped if PBAPP cannot abstract sufficient water from Sungai Muda," he said today.

Presently, PBAPP abstracts about 1,200 MLD from Sungai Muda for the optimal production of treated water at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP).

This WTP produces about 85 per cent of the treated water that is distributed in Penang daily.

The maximum drawdown capacity from the EMD is 600 MLD, or about 50 per cent of the raw water required by the Sungai Dua WTP to operate optimally.

"As such, so long as PBAPP is able to abstract 600 MLD of raw water from Sungai Muda and draw down 600 MLD from the EMD, there should be no unscheduled water supply interruption in Penang," he added.

Pathmanathan said, as of today, there was no immediate threat to water supply in Penang in relation to the Sungai Muda river level, due to the following six key considerations:

- * Yesterday, when the river level was 1.61m, PBAPP managed to abstract about 1,200 MLD from Sungai Muda to support optimal treated water production at the Sungai Dua WTP;
- * SADA has announced that more water is being released from the Beris Dam to "defend" the Sungai Muda river level;
- * The effective capacity of the Beris Dam was 80.19 per cent on Tuesday;
- * The effective capacity of the Muda Dam, which may also release water into Sungai Muda, was 35.69 per cent yesterday;
- * PBAPP may draw down a maximum of 600 MLD from the EMD if it is not able to abstract sufficient raw water from Sungai Muda; and
- * The effective capacity of the EMD was 89.7 per cent yesterday.

Pathmanathan said, nevertheless, PBAPP was now operating on "high alert" status because Sungai Muda was Penang's primary raw water resource.

"PBAPP will monitor the river level carefully.

"We will provide public updates, as and when the Sungai Muda scenario improves or worsens," he said.

Yesterday, the Penang government said it was closely monitoring the water level at Sungai Muda, Kedah, which has been experiencing a drop following a prolonged dry spell.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said, to date, Penang had not experienced any water issue following the drop in the Sungai Muda water level.