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Penang will draw water from Mengkuang Dam if levels in Sungai Muda drop too low



GEORGE TOWN: Penang will draw water from the Mengkuang Dam if levels in Sungai Muda fall too shallow and cannot provide sufficient raw water.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer K. Pathmanathan said a maximum of 600 million litres of raw water per day (MLD) would be drawn from Mengkuang Dam (EMD) if it cannot abstract sufficient raw water from Sungai Muda.

"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.

"On Tuesday (Apr 16), the level of Sungai Muda at PBAPP's Lahar Tiang Intake dropped to 1.72m, which is below the 2.0m safe level.

"In Kedah, Syarikat Air Darul Aman (SADA) announced that Kedah Water Supply Board (LSANK) and Sungai Muda River Basin Management (PLSM) have increased the volume of water released from the Beris Dam into Sungai Muda, from 864 MLD (10 cumec) to 1,296 MLD (15 cumec)," said Pathmanathan in a statement Thursday (April 18).

He added that although the Sungai Muda river level fell to 1.61m at Lahar Tiang on Wednesday (Apr 17), PBAPP continued to abstract sufficient raw water from the river without tapping the EMD.

He said however, in preparation for a "worse case" scenario, PBAPP has conducted a trial run for drawdown from EMD and it was successful.

Pathmanathan explained that the EMD serves as a "back-up" dry weather resource which may be tapped if PBAPP cannot abstract sufficient water from Sungai Muda.

"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% of the treated water that is distributed in Penang daily.

"The maximum drawdown capacity from the EMD is 600 MLD, or about 50% 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 said.

Pathmanathan further clarified that there is currently no immediate threat but PBAPP will operate on "high alert" status.

As of Tuesday, the effective capacity of the Beris Dam was 80.19%.

On Wednesday, the effective capacity for the Muda Dam, which may also release water into Sungai Muda, was 35.69%, while the effective capacity of the EMD was 89.7%.

Earlier, SADA had announced that there is a risk of water supply interruptions in Kuala Muda if the level of Sungai Muda continues to drop due to dry weather.