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Penang urges ministry to complete two parts of dam expansion project to ease high water risk



GEORGE TOWN: Penang has urged the Energy Transition and Water Transformation Ministry (Petra) to complete two more components of the Mengkuang Dam Expansion Project (MDEP) to mitigate high water risk.

Earlier today, Petra undersecretary of development division Amisam Ismail visited the Expanded Mengkuang Dam (EMD) site in Seberang Prai.

Three MDEP packages have been completed by the federal government and handed over to the Penang government and the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP).

Petra is also implementing a RM200 million project to build a new barrage and related components in Rantau Panjang, Seberang Prai, to replace an outdated 51-year-old barrage.

The new barrage should enable more effective and efficient management of Sungai Muda river water levels for optimal raw water abstraction.

PBAPP chief executive officer K. Pathmanathan, however, said two more MDEP components were needed for the EMD to function fully as a "major back-up raw water resource" for Penang towards 2030.

He today said there were three factors driving the need for these components.

"The first is the higher water consumption in Penang from 877 MLD in 2023 to 927 MLD in February 2024.

"Another is climate change where rainfall in the water-catchment areas (WCAs) of Penang's dams have become less consistent.

"Climate change is also affecting rainfall in the WCA for Sungai Muda (Penang's one and only primary raw water resource), as well as WCAs for the Muda Dam and Beris Dam in Kedah that release water into Sungai Muda.

"Finally, the Sungai Muda mishaps — the Baling Flood Waters 1 incident in July 2022, the Sudden Drop in Sungai Muda Level incident in May 2023 and the Baling Flood Waters 2 incident in September last year.

"All of these mishaps happened in Kedah, but affected water supply for about 465,000 water consumers in Penang."