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Penang to table raw water management bill this month, says Chow

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang government will table a bill on raw water resource management at the upcoming state Legislative Assembly sitting scheduled for this month, said Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow.

He said the bill will form the foundation for a new water management enactment aimed at strengthening governance and regulatory control over raw water resources in the state.

He said under the enactment, a board will be established and granted full authority, including enforcement powers, issuing licences and permits, and approving applications related to water abstraction activities according to set conditions.

"Currently, the Penang Water Regulatory Division (BKSA) only performs limited functions related to raw water management and does not have enforcement or prosecutorial powers.

"Therefore, we believe it is time for Penang to have a dedicated enactment for raw water management. The board will take over BKSA's responsibilities and be granted legal authority to act against any violations under the proposed enactment," he told reporters after officiating at the World Water Day celebration at the Air Itam Dam here Saturday (May 3).

Chow said the establishment of the board is expected to ensure a more sustainable, efficient and legally grounded raw water management system for the future of Penang.

State Infrastructure, Transport and Digital Committee chairman Zairil Khir Johari had earlier announced that the Penang state executive council had, in principle, approved the proposal to upgrade BKSA to the Penang Water Resources Board on Sept 25, 2024.

On a related matter, Chow said the state government is still awaiting a letter from the Perak government to initiate negotiations on the Perak-Penang Water Project.

He said the state also noted that a joint venture company between the Perak State Development Corporation and Gamuda has been formed to implement the project on the Perak side.

"We are now just waiting to begin negotiations (with Perak) on the tariff, volume of water to be channelled to Penang, terms, duration of the concession, and so on. That (letter) is what we are waiting for to enable both states to begin discussions," he said.

On March 14, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said planning for the project to channel raw water from Sungai Perak to the Bukit Merah Dam - partly to support the Kerian Integrated Green Industrial Park and supply treated water to Penang - is now in its final stages. - Bernama