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PBAPP Activates Contingency Plan As Muda Dam Level Falls To 20 Pct



GEORGE TOWN, Feb 23 (Bernama) -- The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) has activated its Sungai Muda Contingency Plan 2026 (SMCP 2026), following the sudden reduction in the capacity of the Muda Dam in Kedah, to ensure sufficient water supply in the state.

Its chief executive officer, Datuk K. Pathmanathan, said the decision was taken after the Muda Dam water level was reported to have dropped to 20 per cent capacity as of Friday (Feb 20), compared to 84.6 per cent on Jan 1, 2026, and the Beris Dam's level standing at 78.1 per cent capacity as of Feb 16, compared to 100 per cent early this year.

"Both these dams release water into Sungai Muda, which is Penang's main source of raw water. Due to the hot and dry season, as well as the aggressive release of water for irrigation since Jan 1, the Muda Dam capacity has dropped to a critical level.

"We do not expect this dam to be able to release significant volumes of raw water into the Sungai Muda system in the near future, most probably as early as next month," he said in a statement today.

He added that if the Muda Dam is affected, the Beris Dam reserves will be used, and with its current capacity at 78.1 per cent, the dam could support the water supply needs of Kedah and Penang until the rainy season forecast for April.

Pathmanathan, however, said the forecast comes with several uncertainties, including the actual onset of the rainy season due to climate change, the distribution of rainfall and its impact on the capacity of the two dams for the remainder of this year.

He said that among the key elements of SMCP 2026, which was formulated to minimise the potential impact of a Sungai Muda crisis on Penang, is to abstract as much raw water as possible from Sungai Muda, as long as the river level does not fall below 1.5 metres (m) at the Lahar Tiang intake, to support the production of treated water at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (LRA).

"PBAPP is also implementing strategic raw water releases from the Expanded Mengkuang Dam (EMD) in Seberang Perai Tengah when there is a shortfall in supply from Sungai Muda, with a maximum release capacity of 600 million litres per day (MLD).

"PBAPP is also continuing its Double Dam Defence Programme on the island by continuously pumping about 407 MLD of treated water from Sungai Dua to ensure the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam do not run dry," he said.

He said that if the plan works as planned, Penang could go through this year without a water supply crisis, as long as PBAPP can abstract at least 50 per cent of the total raw water abstracted in 2025, which was 500 MLD.

However, he said, SMCP 2026 may not fully protect the state if PBAPP cannot abstract any water from Sungai Muda, since the EMD's maximum release capacity is 600 MLD, while the Sungai Dua LRA requires about 1,000 MLD to operate at the optimum level.

As such, PBAPP is seeking the support and cooperation of consumers in Penang to use water prudently throughout the Chinese New Year festive season and Ramadan month to ensure sufficient supply for everyone throughout the year.