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Penang activates contingency plan as Muda dam level dips to 20%

PBAPP CEO K Pathmanathan attributed this drop to the hot and dry season, as well as the aggressive release of water for irrigation since Jan 1.



The fall in the capacity of the Muda dam in Kedah to just 20% has triggered a water contingency plan by the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) to ensure sufficient supply.

PBAPP CEO K Pathmanathan said the water level at the Muda dam was at 84.6% on Jan 1, and the Beris dam was at 78.1% on Feb 16 compared to 100% early this year.

“Both 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’s capacity has dropped to a critical level,” Bernama quoted him as saying in a statement.

“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.”

Pathmanathan said the Beris dam reserves will be used if the Muda dam is affected.

With the Beris dam’s current capacity at 78.1%, he said, it could support the water supply needs of Kedah and Penang until the rainy season forecast for April.

He said the forecast comes with uncertainties, including the actual onset of the rainy season, because of climate change.

He said the contingency plan would involve abstracting as much raw water as possible from Sungai Muda as long as the river level does not fall below 1.5m at the Lahar Tiang intake to support the production of treated water at the Sungai Dua water treatment plant.

“PBAPP is also implementing strategic raw water releases from the expanded Mengkuang dam 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 407 MLD of treated water from Sungai Dua to ensure the Air Itam dam and Teluk Bahang dam do not run dry.”

He said that if the plan works as planned, Penang could go through this year without a water supply crisis.

However, the plan may not fully protect the state if it cannot abstract any water from Sungai Muda, since the expanded Mengkuang dam’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 seeks the support and cooperation of consumers in Penang to use water prudently to ensure sufficient supply for everyone throughout the year,” he said.