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Penang CM urges cloud seeding as critically low Sungai Muda levels threaten state water supply



GEORGE TOWN, April 24 — The Penang state government hopes cloud seeding operations can be carried out in upstream Kedah to raise water levels in Sungai Muda.

Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said the measure was important to ensure sufficient raw water supply in the state.

“The river’s water level has dropped to a critical stage,” he said at a press conference after launching the Penang ATE campus at Olive Tree Hotel here today.

Chow said the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) had contacted authorities in Kedah to coordinate immediate action.

Apart from cloud seeding, he said releasing water from Beris Dam in Kedah had also been proposed as a short-term measure.

He added that Penang would channel water from the Expanded Mengkuang Dam to treatment plants to ensure consumer supply remains unaffected.

Earlier today, PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk K. Pathmanathan said Sungai Muda’s level at Lahar Tiang fell to a danger level of 1.27 metres yesterday, compared with the safe level of two metres.

He said under normal conditions, PBAPP abstracts about 1,300 million litres per day (MLD) of raw water from Sungai Muda for use at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant.

“From 4.30pm yesterday, PBAPP’s abstraction capacity was limited to 1,000 MLD, or 30 per cent below the normal level due to the abnormally low river level,” he said.

He said PBAPP immediately began drawing water from the Expanded Mengkuang Dam to supplement supply to the Sungai Dua plant.

He said the drop in river level could be due to irrigation drawdowns in Kedah upstream of the Lahar Tiang intake.

“As of April 23, the capacity of the Beris Dam (which is releasing water into the Sungai Muda system) was 49.6 per cent,” he said.

He said the release rate was reportedly 864 MLD, meaning reserves may last 70 days before reaching the critical 20 per cent level.

He added that reserves at Muda Dam, another key source for the Sungai Muda system, had fallen to 9.5 per cent.

He called on the National Water Services Commission (SPAN) and the Ministry of Energy Transition and Water Transformation (PETRA) to intervene in managing the Sungai Muda system.

“The security of water supply services in Penang and Kedah must be prioritised over irrigation matters under the present circumstances,” Pathmanathan said.