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PRESS STATEMENT

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**MAY 2023 SUNGAI MUDA INCIDENT: PENANG NEEDS A “COMPLETED”
MENGGUANG DAM EXPANSION PROJECT AND SPRWTS URGENTLY**

- **Without Federal Government support and assistance, Penang will remain at risk of a major water supply disruption whenever there is a mishap involving Sungai Muda.**

PENANG, Wednesday, 14.6.2023: Penang urgently needs strong Federal Government support and assistance to complete the Mengkuang Dam Expansion Project (MDEP) and implement the Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Scheme (SPRWTS).

The recent May 2023 “Sungai Muda Incident” which caused suffering for 453,954 water consumers in Penang underscores the urgency of MDEP and SPRWTS.

In submitting its post-mortem report on this incident to the Penang State Government, PBAPP has highlighted the following key recommendations:

Recommendations	Action
<p>1. MDEP: Fast-tracking the completion of the “missing components” needed to enable 1,000 million litres per day (MLD) drawdowns from the dam during emergency scenarios involving Sungai Muda.</p>	<p>Federal Government</p>
<p>2 SPRWTS: Expediting the implementation of the SPRWTS for Penang to tap a second major raw water resource other than Sungai Muda.</p>	<p>Federal Government, Penang State Government and Perak State Government.</p>
<p>3. Water Supply Contingency 2030 (WCP 2030): Speeding up implementation of projects to tap Sungai Kerian, Sungai Perai and the EMD as additional raw water resources for Penang</p>	<p>PBAPP</p>

4.	Establishing an “early warning” emergency communications network involving all key organisations in Penang and Kedah that are involved in water supply and irrigation activities related to Sungai Muda.	Jabatan Pengairan dan Sungai (JPS), Badan Kawal Selia Air (BKSA), Lembaga Sumber Air Kedah (LSANK).
5.	<p>Setting up a Sungai Muda Strategic Monitoring Centre (SMSMC) in Penang to monitor the river, 24/7, focusing on anomalies that may affect optimal water abstraction at the Lahar Tiang Intake.</p> <p>In terms of river water level, a 0.5m drop in river levels will trigger an alarm. In terms of river water turbidity, a reading of 1,000 NTUs (nephelometric turbidity units) will also trigger an alarm.</p>	PBAPP

Summary of May 2023 Sungai Muda Incident

- At 5.00am on 14.5.2023, the level of Sungai Muda at PBAPP’s Lahar Tiang Intake dipped below 1.0m. PBAPP was unable to abstract water from Sungai Muda for pumping to the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP).
- The cause of the mishap was reportedly a faulty automated barrage gate in Kedah (and not in Penang). This barrage is managed by Pengurusan Lembaga Sungai Muda (PLSM), a division of the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID). The faulty gate was reportedly “opened” for 11 hours, causing large volumes of river water to flow into the Straits of Malacca.
- PBAPP activated its Emergency Response Plan (ERP) which included raw water drawdowns from the Expanded Mengkuang Dam (EMD). However, drawdowns from the dam were limited to 300 MLD, about 24% of 1,254 MLD that was pumped from Sungai Muda to the Sungai Dua WTP for treatment in March 2023.
- Since there was a 76% shortfall in the volume of raw water channeled to the Sungai Dua WTP for treatment, water supply to 453,954 Penang water consumers in Seberang Perai and Penang Island was compromised.
- PBAPP managed to achieve 90% water supply recovery in about 36 hours (9.30am on 15.5.2023) and 99% water supply recovery in about 64 hours (9.00pm on 16.5.2023).

High risk

Another “Sungai Muda incident” will inevitably compromise water supply for up to 453,954 consumers in Penang (including multinational manufacturing companies operating in the Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone and Bukit Minyak Industrial Area).

The Penang State Government and PBAPP cannot directly and fully reduce the risk of a recurrence because:

- Penang only has one major raw water resource: Sungai Muda. PBAPP abstracts raw water from the river at Lahar Tiang in Seberang Perai.
- Part of Sungai Muda lies within Kedah territory. This river’s water catchment area (the Greater Ulu Muda Forest Complex) is also located in Kedah, beyond the jurisdiction of the Penang State Government and PBAPP.
- Raw water resource development for Penang is the responsibility of the Federal Government. Water supply services are also regulated by the Federal Government under the Water Supply Industry Act 2006 (Act 655) and the SPAN Act 2006 (Act 654).
- Only the Federal Government has the funds, governing power and resources to facilitate an inter-state raw water transfer project like the SPRWTS.
- The MDEP is an incomplete Federal project undertaken by the Federal Government, funded by a RM1.2 billion Federal grant. Clearly, the existing 300 MLD drawdown capacity from the EMD is not enough. Penang needs a viable 1,000 MLD “back-up” option whenever things go awry at Sungai Muda.

Without a completed MDEP and the SPRWTS, Penangites will suffer whenever there is a mishap involving Sungai Muda. Therefore, on behalf of Penang people and businesses, PBAPP would like to appeal to the Federal Government to kindly intervene to mitigate our high water risks as soon as possible.

Thank You.

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