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Media Release

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Chief Minister of Penang.

SUNGAI PERAI: RM5 million “RIVER CROSSING” PIPELINE TO REPLACE DAMAGED 27-YEAR-OLD UNDERWATER PIPELINE

- **Emergency steel plate clamp is a temporary solution to resume high pressure pumping of treated water from Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP) to Penang Island.**
- **Water supply to about 70% of 120,000 affected consumers in the South-West District (DBD) of Penang Island normalised at 2.00pm today.**

PENANG, Friday, 22 December 2023: The emergency steel plate clamp to repair the leaking underwater 1,350mm pipeline at Sungai Perai has worked to restore water supply services to about 70% of 120,000 affected water consumers at 2.00pm today.

Water supply recovery for the remaining 30% of water consumers, including those in the end-of-line (EoL) and higher ground areas, will be gradually restored in stages later today.

A total of 14 PBAPP, Pasukan Bomba Sukarela (PBS) and MBPP tankers have been hard at work delivering water to affected consumers since 20.12.2023.

From 10.30am this morning, a fleet of 15 additional out-station water tankers from Air Kelantan, Air Selangor, Lembaga Air Perak, Pengurusan Air Pahang, Syarikat Air Johor, Syarikat Air Melaka, and Syarikat Air Terengganu are being deployed to fetch water to affected consumers.

While striving to achieve 100% water supply services recovery as soon as possible, the PBAPP team is also carefully monitoring the performance of the repaired section of the pipeline to ensure that it will not burst again.

Long-term solution: a new RM5 million “river crossing pipeline section”

Please note that the emergency pipe clamp is a temporary solution to recover water supply services for the affected water consumers in the shortest possible time. There is still a small leak on-site that will affect Penang’s NRW or water loss.

However, the important result is that PBAPP is able to continue pumping sufficient water to meet the needs on Penang Island from today, in time for the year-end festive season.

PBAPP data indicates that this 1,350mm underwater pipeline was laid by the previous Pihak Berkuasa Air (PBA) in 1996, before PBAPP was corporatised.

We do not know how or when it was damaged. It is difficult to investigate the cause because the pipeline is resting on the riverbed, 3.5m below the river surface.

According to PBAPP, the rational long-term solution to prevent another Sungai Perai incident is to replace that section of pipeline.

Hence, PBAPP is proposing to undertake a RM5 million project in 2024 to lay a new 200m section of pipeline that will be mounted on a “river crossing” structure. This means that the new pipeline will be easier to maintain in the future, because it will supported by a structure above the Sungai Perai river.

It will take about 8 months to complete this proposed Sungai Perai river crossing pipeline project. This urgent matter will be tabled to the PBA Holdings Bhd (PBAHB) Board for approval soon because it involves a major pipeline that delivers water daily from the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant to more than 100,000 water consumers on Penang Island.

Acknowledgements

This Sungai Perai Underwater Pipeline incident is an emergency response incident. When this mishap occurred, PBAPP tried its best to respond to a time-sensitive issue in a dangerous and unfamiliar environment, under difficult circumstances.

PBAPP’s initial plan to weld a plate to cover a hole on the pipeline failed because it is likely that the welds could not withstand the huge water pressure exerted to pump treated water from Sungai Dua WTP to Penang Island through a 1,350mm pipeline.

Thankfully, Plan B, or the steel plate clamp solution, is working for now.

Many affected water consumers are angry and disappointed because PBAPP delayed the normalisation of water supply services twice since December 19, 2023.

PBAPP has apologised repeatedly to the people. I have told PBAPP and PBAHB CEO Ir. Pathmanathan K. to accept all constructive critique and complaints in good faith because water supply is an essential public service. He and his team must strive to do better in January 2024, in terms of meeting deadlines.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the assistance from the following organisations who are helping Penang in this time of need:

- Pasukan Bomba Sukarela (PBS) and MBPP;
- The National Water Services Commission (SPAN) for arranging for water tanker aid from all over Malaysia; and
- The water operators of Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Melaka, Pahang, Perak, Selangor and Terengganu for sending in their tankers.

Thank You.