

Guan Eng: Govt must ensure 'water security' for northern region

Predeep Nambiar | June 3, 2016

Penang Chief Minister outlines proposal to Putrajaya to ensure raw water supply that is essential to success of Northern Corridor Economic Region.



BUTTERWORTH: The Federal Government must be proactive in ensuring steady raw water supply for the Northern Corridor Economic Region in view of the dry spell that has been forecast, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said.

He said Putrajaya must urgently attend to regional raw water issues, as well as address the challenges of increasing raw water demand that could affect future progress in Perlis, Kedah, Penang and North Perak.

“To become a world-class economic region, we must ensure ‘water security’.

“In this context, water security refers to the overall stability, sustainability and availability of sufficient water supply to meet the needs of the regional community.

“If regional growth is truly the priority, we should collectively ‘leverage’ on all the raw water resources in the Northern Region for our mutual benefit,” he said in a press conference here today.

Lim added all regional raw water resources must be protected, optimised and shared among all states in the region. Later, he proposed a three-pronged approach to ensure raw water demands of the northerners were met.

First, the Federal Government should implement the Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Scheme, which would benefit both Perak and Penang.

Lim said, if the scheme is implemented, it would meet the raw water demands of both states until 2050.

Second, was to stop all logging activities in the Ulu Muda Forest Reserve and to ensure the sensitive water catchment was safe from destruction. He also called for the government to gazette it as a protected site.

“After marking the site protected, the government should compensate the Kedah government for the maintenance of the catchment area,” Lim said.

Third, to have the Federal Government more involved in managing raw water sources, regionally, especially in the northern region. “With billions of ringgit at stake, and the lives of four million people in the northern region at stake, we hope the Federal Government would act quickly.”

Lim’s comment on the compensation to Kedah had also been addressed by Kedah Menteri Besar Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah recently.

Bashah had last month expressed hope the Federal Government will consider compensating Kedah for its raw water supply in Sungai Muda, which he said is being consumed freely by Penang.