

7th April 2016

PRESS STATEMENT

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NOTHING WRONG WITH SUNGAI MUDA WATER SCHEME BARRAGE

PENANG, Thursday, 7/4/2016: The Sungai Muda Water Scheme Barrage (SMWSB) at Rantau Panjang in Seberang Prai Utara (SPU) is still in good condition and is functioning normally.

PBAPP does not understand why a Kedah Exco Member was quoted recently as saying that the SMWSB lacked maintenance and that its specifications have to be checked to meet “current needs”.

This concrete barrage in SPU was opened in June 1973 to facilitate the Sungai Muda Water Scheme for Penang.

Since then, it is quite normal for water to overflow, slightly and occasionally, at the barrage so as to ensure that Sungai Muda does not dry up before it reaches the Straits of Malacca.

This slight overflow is required and prescribed by the Water Act to provide a minimum flow, in order to ensure the Sungai Muda continues to flow to the sea.

As such, this overflow is a normal occurrence. It is not due to maintenance issues or outdated specifications. The barrage is designed to work in this manner. To my recollection, there has been no issue with regard to the slight overflow in the past 43 years.

Since its incorporation in 1999, Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) has been managing the barrage. It helps to sustain good river levels for drawing raw water at the Lahar Tiang Intake and prevents the intrusion of saline water from the sea.

Other than PBAPP, Kedah is extracting raw water for 14 water treatment plants from Sungai Muda. Meanwhile, the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) also extracts raw water via eight irrigation intakes: six in Kedah and two for Penang.

As per standard operating procedure, PBAPP opens the gates of the SMWSB for drainage purposes upon request from the DID to prevent flooding during the wet seasons.

Even during this Super El Niño season, this barrage allows PBAPP to efficiently draw sufficient raw water from Sungai Muda daily to avoid rationing in Penang.

The SMWSB has 6 gates that are 1.8m (6 feet) in height. In 2004, the DID built a new barrage that is slightly higher, next to the SMWSB. As we understand it, Kedah is proposing for Penang to raise the height of the SMWSB.

This proposal should not be taken lightly. Kedah should submit this request officially to the Penang State Government for consideration.

Consequently, a feasibility study can be carried out which incorporates a comprehensive engineering study that takes into consideration the impact on the entire Sungai Muda river basin.

We have to be careful because raising the height of the barrage may lead to flooding in Penang, in the SPU area, and also in southern Kedah, during the wet seasons.

The DID, Lembaga Sumber Air Negeri Kedah (LSANK), Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) should be also consulted because they are involved in the overall Sungai Muda Scheme.

Moreover, there is the issue of cost and financing for such a project.

Meanwhile, please allow me to reiterate that there is nothing wrong with the SMWSB. The slight overflow has been occurring in the past 43 years and this is the standard operating procedure.

Most importantly, the SMWSB, in its current form and with its present specifications, ensures that Penang and Kedah are able to draw sufficient raw water from Sungai Muda to meet all the water supply and irrigation needs of both states on a daily basis.

Thank You.

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