

OPINION

Kedah's plan for 14 water tanks along Sg Muda ill-conceived – Water Watch Penang

It will drastically reduce Penang's water supply and has been described as an 'act of war'

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All words, actions, and suggestions by the menteri besar must not only be good and beneficial to the people of Kedah, but also must not harm, endanger, or cause any potential hazard to anyone or any state. – File pic, March 26, 2021

WATER Watch Penang (WWP) views Kedah's plan to build 14 water tanks along the Sg Muda to ensure there is enough water for Kedahans and padi farmers along the river as ill-conceived and unlawful, endangering the livelihoods of all Penangites and Penang's economy.

Although the Kedah government's plan appears to ensure water security to Kedahans and its padi farmers, there is no denying that this plan will drastically reduce water supply in Penang as the quantity and quality of water flowing into Penang from Sg Muda would be significantly reduced.

Hence, this outrageous plan has been described as an "act of war" and a form of political vengeance "to throttle Penang's water supply" by some politicians/leaders.

As the Kedah menteri besar and Syarikat Air Darul Aman chairman, two highly acclaimed and respected positions, Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor must speak, act and carry himself with the highest respect and responsibility.

He must negotiate, work out, and propose workable plans and solutions with his counterparts in other states when issues arise, and not approach anything in a confrontational way.

All words, actions, and suggestions by the MB must not only be good and beneficial to the people of Kedah, but also must not harm, endanger, or cause any potential hazard to anyone or any state.

We strongly believe the MB of Kedah is a respectable leader with an equally high responsibility, and will act in a responsible manner.

As a water non-governmental organisation that works on water issues in the country, WWP views the current water dispute between Kedah and Penang as escalating towards dangerous territory.

This spat between the two states will not benefit anyone, but will bring disaster to all. WWP appeals to the MB of Kedah to immediately cancel the plan to build 14 water tanks before it is too late.

In the past, WWP has thanked the Kedah state government for its promise not to issue any new logging concessions and its stand to continue the previous state government's policy to protect the Ulu Muda forests (the main water catchment for the three northern peninsular states of Kedah, Perlis, and Penang).

We hope the MB will also heed our appeal this time to shelve this current plan. Although based in Penang, WWP is working on various national and inter-state water issues for the protection of water resources and its sustainability.

WWP would like to applaud Sanusi and the Kedah government if this plan for 14 water tanks is cancelled. Sg Muda supplies drinking water to more than four million people in the three states of Kedah, Perlis, and Penang.

WWP believes no issue is unsolvable. This water issue between Kedah and Penang should be taken up by the National Water Resources Council, Water and Environment Ministry, or the Water Management Authority to work out a solution. Forming a Muda River Basin council may be another solution. – The Vibes, March 26, 2021

Professor Chan Ngai Weng is the president of Water Watch Penang

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