

Water dispute: Kedah, Penang must come to an agreement – CAKE

KUALA LUMPUR (March 29): In the interest of the people [Kedah](#) and [Penang](#), both state governments should immediately come to an agreement on the issue of raw water charges that has been going on since 2010, said Consumers Association of Kedah (CAKE) secretary Mohd Yusrizal Yusoff.

He said although the issue which is deemed as quite complex, as both parties have their own stand and views, a win-win situation between the two states can be achieved if the welfare of the people is given priority.

Mohd Yusrizal Yusoff, hoped that the federal government would intervene to find a solution to the issue that would benefit both parties.

“As a representative of consumers of this state (Kedah), we hope that the two state governments can come to an agreement on the issue soon,” he told Bernama.

The Kedah state government has repeatedly demanded the Penang government to pay RM50 million a year for extracting raw water from Sungai Ulu Muda, but this had been ignored by the latter.

Mohd Yusrizal said there was a justifiable reason for Kedah to make the demand because the Ulu Muda water catchment area in the state has been well maintained, enabling Penang to enjoy raw water supply from Sungai Muda.

However, he said there were some areas in Kedah where residents still do not have access to good water supply, possibly due to unsatisfactory water supply-related infrastructure facilities.

“If the Kedah state government gets the raw water payments from Penang, it may be used to repair the water supply infrastructure for the benefit of the people in this state (Kedah),” he said.

Echoing a similar sentiment, Water Watch Penang (WWP) president Prof Dr Chan Ngai Weng opined that the water issue should also be discussed by the Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA) or at the National Water Services Commission (SPAN) level.

“Another solution is through the formation of the Sungai Muda Basin Council...Kedah Menteri Besar (Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor) and Penang Chief Minister (Chow Kon Yeow) must sit together to discuss the issue instead of issuing statements through the media. There is no problem that cannot be solved,” he said.

Muhammad Sanusi has recently announced that Kedah intends to build 14 water tanks along Sungai Muda to save water for padi irrigation and to ensure adequate water supply for the people in the state in times of drought.

In response to the announcement, Chow said that the Penang government would call for legal action against Kedah if any project implemented on the Sungai Muda threatens the water supply in Penang.

Meanwhile, Chan said the Kedah state government’s proposal to build 14 water tanks along Sungai Muda would affect the economy and the livelihoods of the people of Penang.

He said that although the Kedah’s plan would ensure that the water supply in the state is safe and guaranteed, the project would drastically reduce the water supply to Penang.

“This is because the quantity and quality of water flowing in Sungai Muda to Penang will be significantly reduced. WWP sees that the current water issue dispute between the Kedah and Penang state governments is getting more intense and alarming,” he said.

Meanwhile, Muhammad Sanusi, when contacted by Bernama, did not deny Penang's right to water supply from Sungai Muda, but said that the Penang government is required to pay to Kedah for the continuous preservation of Sungai Muda.

“That is why it is important for them to pay for the price of raw water to Kedah, to enable us to safeguard the interests of those who also pay for the flow of water from Ulu Muda to Sungai Muda,” he said.

He said the Kedah state government would not stop voicing their demand for payment from Penang which according to him had been extracting most of the water from Sungai Muda even though Kedah had been conserving the catchment areas.

Muhammad Sanusi said Kedah should be enjoying more of the water supply from Sungai Muda not only for domestic use but in the agricultural sector especially for padi cultivation as Kedah produces 43 per cent of the country's rice supply.

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