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Dam consultant gets directive

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KUANTAN, Fri. - The State Government has ordered the consultant company involved in the development of the Sungai Chini dam to submit a report on the shortcomings in the structure of the facility so that corrective measures can be taken.

The RM7-million dam is said to have caused water to rise way above the desired level and had submerged the roots of trees along the river. As a result, many of the trees have died.

The water quality was also said to have been affected as many dead leaves had fallen into the river, thus increasing the acidity level.

Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Hasan Arifin said the report would be discussed by the State Executive Council which would decide on what should be done to solve the problems.

"If it is established that the problems are due to a mistake by the consultant, appropriate action will be taken (against the company)," he said yesterday.

It is learnt that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, during his visit to Tasik Chini on Monday, had expressed his dissatisfaction with the situation and ordered immediate steps be taken to rectify the problems.

Sources said the dam was too high, resulting in the water level to increase to 2.8 metres when the ideal level was only 1.4m.

For boatmen ferrying tourists, the high water level makes it easier for them to navigate along Sungai Chini. Before that, the river was shallow and the boatmen and their passengers had to go down into the water to push the boat along several stretches of the river. But the high water level has also submerged the roots of many trees along the river.

Sources said the Pahang Tenggara Regional Development Authority's general manager Mohamad Yusof Johor, when briefing Dr Mahathir, outlined three proposals to reduce the water level.

These are through hacking of the dam for the purpose of lowering it, constructing a RM3-million by-pass and building a RM4.5-million water lock-gate.

The State Government announced the dam project in 1994 to replace an old dam. The project incorporated a RM660,000 transit jetty located near Sungai Chini estuary. The river is a tributary of Sungai Pahang.

The new dam was to increase the water level along the river, thus allowing boatmen to ferry tourists from the jetty to Tasik Chini with ease.

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