



# Glimmer of hope for Bukit Merah reservoir

The Bukit Merah reservoir has been classified as being in the 'stage three' critical level. — Picture by Marcus Pheong



By John Bunyan

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**IPOH** — The water level in Bukit Merah reservoir will rise above critical levels if it rains until the end of the month, said Perak Public Utilities, Infrastructure, Energy and Water Committee chairman Datuk Zainol Fadzi Paharudin.

He said the water level had improved considerably since Saturday.

"Rain over the past week have raised the water level by 0.40m since May 1. The water level in the reservoir on May 1 was 6.31m, but now, it has increased to 6.71m," he told

Malay Mail yesterday.

"This is a positive sign. It is the highest increase recorded since early March."

Zainol said rainfall for the past few days was the reason behind the increase of water in the reservoir, which is about 90km from Ipoh.

"The cloud seeding operations produced rain in the areas around the reservoir," he said, adding a sudden change in the monsoon winds could be another contributing factor to rainfall in Kerian.

Perak Drainage and Irrigation Department director Datuk Abdul Razak Dahalan said water supply for agriculture in Kerian would still be shut off.

"At the moment, we cannot supply

water to 22,000ha of padi fields in Kerian. The department would need to assess the situation before resuming water supply for irrigation," he said.

The department gradually stopped water for irrigation to conserve supply for consumer use.

At a press conference later, Zainol said the state government would assist the 1,800 farmers who are affected in Kerian, but did not elaborate.

It was reported that a meeting was held by the Kerian Drainage and Irrigation Department yesterday to decide whether farmers would get water supply from the Bukit Merah reservoir following the water level increase.

## Penang not out of danger zone, says PBAPP chief

By Opalyn Mok and Mohamed Basyir

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**GEORGE TOWN** — Penang is still in the "danger zone" from the prolonged dry spell despite recent rainfall, Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said yesterday.

He said the Beris and Muda dams in Kedah are still at critical levels, while the two Penang dams, Air Itam and Teluk Bahang, still needed to replenish water levels.

"We need to make sure the dams are full by the end of the year to get ready for the next dry season in January," he said.

The prolonged dry spell due to the El Nino phenomenon had depleted the dams so both states needed to increase storage at dams, added Jaseni.

The Beris and Muda dams are at 26.4 per

cent and 32 per cent capacity respectively, while the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang Dams are above 50 per cent.

"We don't know how long the Muda and Beris dams will last," he said, adding that water from the Beris dam provides supply for consumers while water from the Muda dam is for irrigation.

"Kedah, Penang and north Perak is dependent on Sungai Muda and the river is dependent on the dams when there is no rain."

Jaseni said PBAPP could not release raw water into Sungai Muda as it does not have any dams that feed directly into the river.

"Only the Beris and Muda dams are able to do so."

Jaseni said they needed to extract one billion litres of water per day from the river to supply water to Penang consumers.

Penang has stopped water supply for irrigation and reduced the release of water from its dams in efforts to conserve water to last until the dry spell is over.

Jaseni refuted claims that PBAPP had been releasing raw water into Sungai Muda or the sea. He said the corporation could not do so since it does not have any dams near the river, and that the situation was caused by the overflow of river water from the Sungai Muda Water Scheme Barrage.

He said the overflow was due to heavy rainfall upstream in the Greater Muda Catchments and the release of water from Beris and Muda dams in Kedah.

"The farmers are expressing their anger and frustration at the wrong party. We are not responsible for release of the raw water," he said.

Some 100 farmers near Sungai Muda held a demonstration on Saturday to demand PBAPP raise the barrage to reduce water flow to the sea and to ensure sufficient water was channelled into padi fields.

In response, Jaseni said the barrage cannot be raised or modified without a proper in-depth engineering study.

### Temperature forecast today

Kota Baru

Max: 33°C

Kuala Terengganu

Max: 34°C

Kuantan

Max: 33°C

George Town

Max: 33°C

Ipoh

Max: 35°C

Alor Star

Max: 33°C

Kangar

Max: 36°C

Putrajaya

Max: 34°C

Kuala Lumpur

Max: 34°C

Petaling Jaya

Max: 34°C

Seremban

Max: 34°C

Malacca

Max: 34°C

Johor Baru

Max: 34°C

Kuching

Max: 33°C

Kota Kinabalu

Max: 34°C

Labuan

Max: 33°C