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Despite increased rainfall, effective capacity of Teluk Bahang Dam remains abnormally low

By Audrey Dermawan - October 7, 2020 @ 3:09pm

The Teluk Bahang Dam was an important component of the water supply system that served about 38,000 water accounts in the areas of Teluk Bahang, Batu Ferringhi and around Tanjung Bungah. - NSTP/DANIAL SAAD.

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) is concerned over the abnormally low effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam despite increased rainfall over the past month.

The Teluk Bahang Dam's effective capacity increased from 16 per cent on Sept 5 to 22.6 per cent on Oct 6.

Its effective capacity is targetted to be 45 per cent by month's end to ensure water sufficiency during the 2021 dry season.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the increase was partly due to the successful implementation of the Sungai Pinang raw water contingency project by PBAPP since Sept 10.

Nevertheless, he said, PBAPP was still very concerned with the abnormally low effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam.

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"We are targetting an effective capacity of 45 per cent by month's end, in preparation for the next dry season in Penang, which is expected to commence in January.

"The effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam was 41.8 per cent on Jan 1. It was with this level of effective capacity that we managed to weather through the dry months, from January to August this year.

"As such, we need the Teluk Bahang Dam to reach an effective capacity of 45 per cent or higher by the end of this year, to sustain normal water supply services in the period between January and August next year.

"As things stand, we are not out of the danger zone yet," he said, adding that more rainfall and cloud seeding were needed to refill the dam

Although there has been rainfall recently, Jaseni said PBAPP had advised the Penang government that it would not be prudent to rely purely on natural rainfall to refill the dam.

Earlier this year, the state government had approved cloud-seeding operations over key water catchment areas in Penang and Kedah.

Eight of the 16 cloud seeding operations were put on hold since July this year, due to technical issues.

Apparently, the cloud seeding contractor recommended by MetMalaysia, AFJETS, had not received the "flares" needed for cloud seeding from another MetMalaysia contractor, MTO.

As such, all cloud seeding operations for Penang in August and September were postponed.

During a meeting with the Ministry of Environment and Water in Putrajaya on Sept 24, Jaseni said the state government had sought the assistance of the ministry to liaise with MetMalaysia to expedite the remaining eight cloud seeding operations.

"These eight outstanding cloud seeding operations will primarily target the water catchment areas of the Teluk Bahang Dam.

"As such, these operations are critical operations that must be carried out before year's end to refill the dam with as much rainwater as possible," he added.

More than 80 per cent of the raw water that PBAPP abstracts daily for its state-wide water supply operations comes from Sungai Muda in Seberang Prai.

Yesterday, the river level of Sungai Muda was satisfactory at 2.46m, while the effective capacity of the Mengkuang Dam (Penang's primary strategic drought reserve dam) was 89 per cent.

Jaseni said the Teluk Bahang Dam was an important component of the water supply system that served about 38,000 water accounts in the areas of Teluk Bahang, Batu Ferringhi and around Tanjung Bungah.

"Since its commissioning in 1999, this dam has helped to sustain continuous good water supply for communities living in the northern tourism belt of Penang island.

"Nevertheless, water consumers in the supply areas of the Teluk Bahang Dam are advised to conserve water and use it wisely to help ensure that the Teluk Bahang Dam can store enough water by year's end to meet the water supply needs during the dry months of 2021," he stressed.