

Dam capacity up but water worries linger

METRO NEWS

Thursday, 08 Oct 2020

By R. SEKARAN

THE water level at Teluk Bahang dam is still abnormally low although incessant rain over the past month has increased its capacity to 22.6% from 16% last month.

Penang Water Supply Corporation Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said they were targeting an effective capacity of 45% for the dam by Dec 31 in preparation for the dry season next year.

“We are still very concerned by the abnormally low effective capacity of the dam although it has increased by 6.6%.

“In January, the effective capacity was 41.8%, which allowed us to weather the dry months until August.

“We need an effective capacity of 45% or higher by Dec 31 to sustain normal water supply services until August next year,” he said.

Jaseni said the rise in capacity was also partly due to the Sungai Pinang raw water contingency project which was implemented on Sept 10.

“As a result, the dam is now being refilled with raw water from the Teluk Bahang and Sungai Pinang water catchment areas,” he said.

Jaseni said that earlier this year, Penang approved cloud-seeding operations over key water catchment areas in Penang and Kedah.

He, however, said eight of the 16 cloud seeding operations had been put on hold since July due to a technical issue.

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

“During a meeting with the Environment and Water Ministry in Putrajaya on Sept 24, the Penang government sought assistance in liaising with MetMalaysia to expedite the remaining eight cloud seeding operations,” he said.

“The operations are critical as they will primarily target the water catchment areas of the Teluk Bahang Dam,” he said.

Jaseni said more than 80% of the raw water that PBAPP extracts daily comes from Sungai Muda in Seberang Prai.

On Oct 6, 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%.

“The key reason for the ‘abnormal status’ of the Teluk Bahang dam now is the abnormally low rainfall from Sept 11, 2019 to Sept 18 this year.