

## Penang issues its first water alert, dam reserves are low

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PENANG is facing one of the worst situations with regard to the abnormally low rainfall in the state and the current effective capacities of its two key dams – the Air Itam Dam and the Teluk Bahang Dam.

Ideally, the effective capacities of both dams should be full by December each year. Unfortunately, due to climate change, Penang experienced abnormally low rainfall from September to December last year (2019).

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam was 39.5% as of Jan 14 this year, while the Air Itam Dam recorded 62%.

“The effective capacities of the Teluk Bahang Dam and the Air Itam Dam on Jan 14 last year (2019) were 81.4% and 88.7% respectively.

“Back on Jan 14, 2018, the Teluk Bahang Dam recorded 98.6% while the Air Itam Dam showed 97.5%.



“The Teluk Bahang Dam recorded 100% on Jan 14, 2017, while it was 99.4% at the Air Itam Dam,” Jaseni issued the first Penang water alert during a press conference in Komtar today.

Jaseni said the total rainfall recorded at the Air Itam Dam from September to December last year (2019) was only 702mm.

“It is equivalent to 44.5% of the three-year average of 1,577mm, recorded in the corresponding periods of 2016, 2017 and 2018.

“Meanwhile, the total rainfall recorded at the Teluk Bahang Dam was 1,732mm from September to December last year (2019). It is equivalent to 55.9% of the three-year average of 3,101mm, recorded in the corresponding periods of 2016, 2017 and 2018,” he said.

According to the data provided, the total rainfall recorded at the dam catchment areas for the period from September to December has been on the decline over the years.

Over at the Teluk Bahang Dam, the total rainfall (from September to December) registered 4,040mm in 2016; while in 2017 it was 2,673mm. The amount declined to 2,590mm in 2018 and 1,732mm in 2019.

Similar situation observed at the Air Itam Dam where the total rainfall (from September to December) was 1,982mm in 2016 and 1,599mm in 2017. The dam catchment area received 1,150mm in 2018 and only 702mm in 2019.

Jaseni said that PBAPP has been minimising raw water drawdowns from the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam since November last year (2019).

“We have optimised the production of treated water in the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant on the mainland and pumped more water to the island to meet the demand of water users during the year-end festive period last year (2019).

“We appeal to the consumers to reduce water consumption to ensure that our dam reserves can last until the rain arrives in April or May,” he said.

He added that rain is expected to arrive in April or May, based on the 70 years of rainfall records.



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He said the corporation would advise the state government to request for cloud seeding from the Federal Government at the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam should the effective capacities drop to about 30%.

Jaseni advised the public to avoid using a hose to clean their homes or to wash their vehicles.

“Use a broom and a mop instead to clean your home; and use a bucket and sponge when you wash your car or motorcycle.

“Do not use a hose to water your garden, use a watering can instead. Shut off every tap after use and teach your children to follow your example,” he urged.



Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said that climate change had impacted the dam reserves in Penang.

“We need the cooperation from everyone to prevent water rationing in Penang during the dry season,” he said.

Story by Christopher Tan  
Pix by Darwina Mohd Daud and courtesy of PBAPP  
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