

First alert out on possible water shortage in Penang

By Audrey Dermawan - March 12, 2021



Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa issued a first alert of a looming water shortage in the state following insufficient rainfall since the beginning of this year. -NSTP/ AUDREY DERMAWAN

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) has issued a first alert of a looming water shortage in the state due to insufficient rainfall since the beginning of this year.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the rainfall for this year was the lowest compared to the last four years, with no rainfall recorded last month.

He said the effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam, at 77.3 per cent, would only be able to last for 75 days while the effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam, at 56.7 per cent, would only be able to last 170 days, without rainfall.

"We need our dams' effective capacity to last until August, when the real rain arrives in September, although next month, we will have some rain due to the inter-monsoon.

"In the meantime, we advise all consumers to use water wisely during this dry season.

"We will also recommend to the state government to conduct cloud seeding operations, just like last year, to achieve a minimum of 80 per cent effective capacities in the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam by the end of the year," he said during a visit to the Air Itam Dam today.

The effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam yesterday was 77.3 per cent compared to 95.2 per cent, a drop of 17.9 per cent.

The effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam yesterday was 56.7 per cent compared to 58.7 per cent, a drop of 2 per cent.

The rainfall at the Air Itam Dam area between Jan 1 and March 11 this year was 123mm compared to 315.3mm on average during the corresponding period between 2017 and 2020, a drop of 61 per cent.

Within the same period, for the rainfall at the Teluk Bahang Dam area was 53.5mm compared to 555.5mm on average during the corresponding period between 2017 and 2020, a drop of 90.4 per cent.

Last year, the Air Itam Dam recorded the lowest effective capacity of 31.4 per cent on Oct 2 while the Teluk Bahang Dam recorded the lowest effective capacity of 16 per cent on Sept 5.

The state conducted a total of 15 cloud seeding operations last year, at a cost of RM450,000.

PBAPP, Jaseni said, had implemented several dry weather control measures to sustain the storage capacities of the two dams, which included monitoring dam capacities in Penang and Kedah, as well as Sungai Muda river levels, on a daily basis.

"This is because more than 80 per cent of our raw water supply comes from Sungai Muda.

"PBAPP is also optimising daily drawdowns from both dams while maximising water abstraction from Sungai Muda at the Lahar Tiang Intake and pumping the raw water to the Sungai Muda Water Treatment Plant for treated water production.

"We are also optimising water production from the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (Penang's largest water treatment plant) in Seberang Prai and pumping treated water from the plant to Penang island, via submarine pipelines, to ensure water supply sufficiency.

"Lastly, we are also drawing down raw water from the Mengkuang Dam in Seberang Prai to support water production at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant as necessary. The effective capacity of the Mengkuang Dam was 94.9 per cent yesterday," he said, adding that Penang was the only state in Malaysia to have a strategic dam.

Both the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang Dams are daily dams.