

Penang faces water crisis amid pandemic and ailing economy

Penang Water Supply Corporation to recommend more than 20 cloud seeding ops starting next month

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Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa (left) says that without rainfall and the proposed cloud seeding initiatives, the dam in Air Itam can only supply water for 75 days, the Teluk Bahang Dam for 120 days and the largest Mengkuang Dam for over 120 days. – Facebook pic, March 12, 2021

GEORGE TOWN – Water conservation is more crucial than ever now in Penang as the state battles the Covid-19 crisis, a sluggish economy, and a seasonal drought worsened by effects of global warming.

“Without water, you cannot fight Covid-19 because you need to wash your hands and to practise hygiene,” said Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBA) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa.

Jaseni held a press conference at the Air Itam Dam to drive home the point that without rainfall and the proposed cloud seeding initiatives, the dam in Air Itam can only supply

water for 75 days, the Teluk Bahang Dam for 120 days and the largest Mengkuang Dam for over 120 days.

So besides depending on the frequency of pumping from the Sg Muda catchment area, Jaseni said that they will recommend to the state government to underwrite more than 20 cloud seeding operations from next month.

This is in order to achieve a minimum of 80% capacity in the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams by year-end.

“Cloud seeding saved us last year.

“We are on track to record the lowest rainfall since 2017 and we need help. But it is not easy as each flight costs the state RM30,000,” said Jaseni.

He appealed to consumers to practise water saving measures amid their fight against the pandemic.

Among the measures include avoiding using a hose to clean homes or wash vehicles and instead use a broom and a mop.

Buckets and sponges are also a better option to clean cars.

Consumers are also advised to use a watering can to water plants instead of the hose and to avoid leaving a tap running at all costs.

Meantime, the water authority has implemented measures to sustain the storage capacities of both dams, which include monitoring dam capacities in Penang and Kedah, as well as the Sg Muda river level daily.

They are also optimising daily drawdowns from the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam.

The authority is also drawing raw water from the Mengkuang Dam in Seberang Prai to support water production at the Sg Dua Water Treatment Plant. – The Vibes, March 12,