

## Penang water authority says Air Itam Dam reserves at alert level, warns consumers to conserve water

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31.3.2022: Air Itam Dam effective capacity at 38.5% (Penang Water Supply Alert 2022)

GEORGE TOWN, April 2 — The effective capacity of Air Itam Dam has dropped to an alert level of 38.5 per cent, said Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) Chief Executive Officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa.

Calling on consumers to conserve water for the months of April and May, he said the effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam was at 89.3 per cent on January 1 this year before dropping by 50.8 per cent due to low rainfall in the dam's water catchment area.

“In the period between January 1 and March 31, PBAPP recorded abnormally low rainfall amounting to 250mm of rainfall in the Air Itam Dam water catchment area,” he said in a statement issued today.

In comparison, he said the amount of rainfall recorded in the Teluk Pahang Dam water catchment area was 366mm while the rainfall at the Mengkuang Dam water catchment area amounted to 1,128mm. The effective capacities of Teluk Bahang Dam and Mengkuang Dam remained above 50 per cent at 73.5 per cent and 91.4 per cent respectively.

“The secondary cause is high daily water demand in the Air Itam township and surrounding areas,” Jaseni said. He stressed that the only way to replenish the Air Itam Dam is to wait for seasonal rainfall or to induce rainfall through cloud seeding in its water catchment area. He said PBAPP has recorded consistently high water consumption in Penang in the last three months.

“On March 31, metered water consumption was almost 900 million litres per day (MLD), as compared to the average of 860 MLD in 2021,” he said. He said water pumped from the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant in Seberang Perai to the Bukit Dumbar Reservoir on Penang island

daily, via three sets of twin submarine pipelines, is being drawn down fast. “Water demand in southern areas of Penang island is significantly high,” he said. As such, he said the treated water levels in the Bukit Dumbar reservoirs are low.

“Since the treated water levels are low, PBAPP cannot pump water at adequate pressures to all end-of-line and higher ground areas,” he said. He said PBAPP is implementing various short-term solutions to address complaints of no water supply or low water pressure in several areas in Southern Seberang Perai, in the Air Itam hillside areas and a few blocks of five-storey apartments at Bukit Gedung.

Among the solutions are to ramp up treated water production at all nine water treatment plants in Penang to meet the daily high water demand, he said. He said PBAPP will also be increasing treated water production at the Air Itam water treatment plant, Guillemard water treatment plant and Batu Ferringhi water treatment plant to support a gradual build-up of treated water reserves in the Bukit Dumbar reservoirs.

PBAPP has installed taps at fire hydrants to provide water supply to affected residents in Bukit Gedung. “Due to low water pressure, water supply can now only reach the ground floor and first floor of several apartment blocks,” he said. PBAPP is also advising building management corporations, including the management corporation of the Bukit Gedung apartments, to install residential pumping systems at higher ground areas to mitigate issues of low water pressure during dry seasons.

“The long-term solution to water supply issues in the end-of-line and higher ground areas in southern Seberang Perai, Air Itam and Bukit Gedung is the timely implementation of PBAPP's raw water contingency plan 2030,” he said. He said the targeted yield of the RWCP 2030 projects is 569 MLD and the availability of this additional volume of water should help to minimise water issues throughout Penang during future dry seasons. He advised consumers to use water wisely until the inter-monsoon season in April or May brings rainfall to the dam water catchment areas.