

## NATION

By LIEW JIA XIAN

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### Use water wisely during dry spell, Penang folks urged



GEORGE TOWN: Penang is going through a dry spell and consumers have been warned to use water wisely as supply at the dams in the state has dropped drastically.

Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa urged water consumers to use water wisely in April and May 2022, as the water capacity at the Ayer Itam Dam is low while the water demand is high.

“As of March 31, the effective capacity of the Ayer Itam Dam is 38.5% compared to 89.3% on Jan 1. Since Jan 1, 2022, the effective capacity of the Ayer Itam Dam has dropped by 50.8% to a critical level of 38.5%,” he said.

Jaseni added that the primary cause is low rainfall in this dam’s water catchment area (WCA). “In the period between Jan 1 to March 31, PBAPP recorded abnormally low rainfall amounting to 250mm of rainfall in the Ayer Itam Dam WCA. “In comparison, the amount of rainfall recorded in the Teluk Bahang Dam WCA was 366mm, while the rainfall at the Mengkuang Dam WCA amounted to 1,128mm,” he said in a statement on Saturday (April 2).

Jaseni added that the secondary cause is high daily water demand in the Ayer Itam township and surrounding areas. “The only way to replenish the reserves of the Ayer Itam Dam is to wait for seasonal rainfall or to induce rainfall via cloud seeding in its WCA,” he said.

Jaseni also said PBAPP has also been recording consistently high water consumption in Penang over the past three months while striving to implement dry weather controls to “defend” the effective capacities of Penang’s dams.

“On March 31, 2022, metered water consumption was almost 900 million litres per day (MLD), as compared to the average of 860 MLD in 2021. Water demand in the southern areas of Penang Island is significantly high,” said Jaseni.

He then added that 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 (EOL) and higher ground areas. The water pumps will trip or shut down automatically and may possibly be damaged,” he said.

Meanwhile, PBAPP has been implementing various short-term solutions to address complaints of no water supply or low water pressure in several areas in South Seberang Prai, in the Ayer Itam hillside areas and at a few blocks of five-storey apartments at Bukit Gedung.

“The solutions include ramping up treated water production at all nine water treatment plants in Penang to meet daily high water demand.

“We will be increasing treated water production at the Ayer Itam WTP, Guillemard WTP and Batu Ferringhi WTP to support a gradual build-up of treated water reserves in the Bukit Dumbar reservoirs.

“At Bukit Gedung, PBAPP has installed taps at fire hydrants to provide water supply to the residents of affected apartment blocks.

“Due to low water pressure, water supply can now only reach the ground floor and first floor of several apartment blocks.

“PBAPP had also been advising building management corporations including the management corporation of the Bukit Gedung apartments to install residential pumping systems at EOL or higher ground areas to mitigate issues of low water pressure during dry seasons,” he said.

Jaseni also pointed out that the long-term solution to water supply issues in the EOL and higher ground areas in South Seberang Prai, Ayer Itam and Bukit Gedung is the timely implementation of PBAPP’s Raw Water Contingency Plan 2030 (RWCP 2030).

“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 said. Saarani and Chow had, earlier in March, met to discuss water transfer between the two states.