

Penang water authority to conduct cloud seeding in Air Itam Dam catchment area

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According to PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa, a series of 15 cloud seeding operations will be happening between April and August this year. — Picture by Sayuti Zainudin

GEORGE TOWN, April 16 — The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) will be undertaking a series of 15 cloud seeding operations to induce rainfall in the water catchment area of Air Itam Dam.

According to PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa, this will be happening between April and August this year.

“These cloud seeding operations are endorsed by the Penang state government and will be implemented by the State Water Regulatory Body with assistance from PBAPP,” he said in a statement today, referring to the Badan Kawal Setia Air (BKSA).

He said PBAPP had written to infrastructure and transportation state exco Zairil Khir Johari on April 12 requesting cloud seeding.

“On April 15, Zairil informed PBAPP that BKSA will carry out cloud seeding as per PBAPP's request,” he said.

He said the focus of the cloud seeding is to specifically induce rainfall in the Air Itam Dam water catchment area (WCA).

He said the WCA encompasses 5.75 square kilometres of protected forest lands surrounding the dam.

As at April 15, the effective capacities for Air Itam Dam is at 39 per cent, Teluk Bahang Dam at 69.5 per cent and Mengkuang Dam at 90.9 per cent.

Jaseni said there was some rainfall in Air Itam recently but the Air Itam Dam is still under “alert status” due to low effective capacity of 39 per cent. He said the primary cause was due to low rainfall since January while the secondary cause is high daily water demand in Air Itam township.

He said the main objective of the cloud seeding operations is to prevent a water supply crisis in Air Itam and its surrounding areas for the period of April to August if insufficient rainfall in the dam's WCA and persistent high water demand continues.

Another objective is to refill as much raw water as possible before the September rainy season as the dam may only be refilled by rainfall in its WCA.

He hoped they could achieve 90 per cent effective capacity or higher for the Air Itam Dam by December to prepare for the next dry season which is expected in January next year.

“It will take a significant amount of rainfall to increase the dam's effective capacity from 39 per cent to 90 per cent,” he said. He said cloud seeding operations are essential for PBAPP to sustain continuous good water supply services in Air Itam and its surrounding areas in 2022 and 2023.

The Penang state government funded a cloud seeding campaign back in 2020 to prevent a water crisis in Penang when the Teluk Bahang Dam's effective capacity dropped to its lowest at 16 per cent.

Jaseni said the 2020 cloud seeding campaign helped to ensure continuous good water supply services with no water rationing in Penang.