

NATION

14 Apr 2023

Penang seeks Nadma's help for cloud seeding

R. SEKARAN



Going down: The water level at the Air Itam dam has dropped and is a cause for concern for Penangites. — LIM BENG TATT/The Star

GEORGE TOWN: Penang is seeking assistance from the National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) to help carry out cloud seeding operations to avoid a potential water crisis here.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer K. Pathmanathan said Nadma's aid was needed to induce rainfall in the Ayer Itam and Teluk Bahang dams on Penang island. As of yesterday, the effective capacities of both dams were 49% and 50.7% respectively, a significant drop compared to 82.5% and 64% recorded on Jan 1 this year.

"Due to climate change, low rainfall was recorded in the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams.

"The effective capacities of these two dams have been projected to drop further, towards critical levels, if the current dry season prolongs to August.

"Penang must avoid a potential water supply crisis that may cause undue suffering for 1.74 million people and disrupt the socioeconomic activities.

"We need urgent assistance from Nadma to engage a qualified company or agency to conduct cloud seeding," he said in a statement yesterday.

Pathmanathan said the state government had approved a RM400,000 allocation for cloud seeding over the two dams.

After referring the matter to the Meteorological Department, he said there were no companies which could meet the criteria and conditions set by the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia.

"As such, the Penang government has no choice but to get help from Nadma to intervene and facilitate cloud seeding," he said.

On Tuesday, Pathmanathan urged Penangites to use water wisely as water levels at the two key dams dropped to only half their effective capacities.

He said the low rainfall in the dams' water catchment areas and high water demand were the key factors that caused the capacities of the dams to drop drastically.

State environment committee chairman Phee Boon Poh was quoted as saying that there were concerns of temperatures rising further as Thailand faced unprecedented high temperatures recently.