

Awaiting advice on cloud seeding

MetMalaysia to inform Penang of next step as low dam levels spark fear

By N. TRISHA
trishang@thestar.com.my

GEORGE TOWN: It is now up to meteorologists to decide if Penang needs cloud seeding following abnormally low dam levels on the island.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk K. Pathmanathan said the National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) is awaiting advice from the Malaysian Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia) on the matter.

“Nadma, in a letter on Aug 9, informed the State Secretary that it is awaiting advice and analysis from MetMalaysia before conducting cloud seeding operations over Penang.

“Nadma stated that cloud seeding operations were subject to the availability of aircraft from the Royal Malaysian Air Force.

“The effective capacities of the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam on the island have dipped below the 30% mark due to lack of rainfall and high water consumption,” he said in a statement yesterday.

Pathmanathan added that consumers in Air Itam, Teluk Bahang, Batu Ferringhi, Tanjung Bungah and nearby areas should note that the dam levels are abnormally low now.

As of yesterday, water capacity



Abnormally low: The water capacity at the Air Itam dam was only 28.8%. — ZHAFARAN NASIB/The Star

at both the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams were at 28.9% and 26.5% respectively. The water level at the Mengkuang dam on the mainland is currently at 86.2%.

A reading of 29.99% and below indicates a dangerous level while the warning level is between 30% and 59.99%, and normal level is 60% and above.

Pathmanathan said Penangites

should mitigate the situation by using less water until the wet season arrives in September.

“September is expected to bring significant rainfall to Penang but due to climate change, the volume of rainfall is uncertain.

“While the Air Itam Dam data shows that reductions in the dam’s effective capacity have slowed down primarily due to

rainfall in the water catchment areas, it still cannot increase the effective capacity of the dam.

“It is the same with the Teluk Bahang Dam, with its effective capacity being 8.45 times the effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam,” he added.

To meet water demand, he said PBAPP releases an average of 22.16 million litres per day from

the Air Itam Dam for Air Itam, Farlim and nearby areas.

He added that 68.06 million litres of water is released per day from the Teluk Bahang Dam to supply Teluk Bahang, Batu Ferringhi, Tanjung Bungah and surrounding areas.

Earlier this week, Penangites were told to brace themselves for intermittent low water pressure if dam water levels remained low.

Pathmanathan said water levels at the two dams were falling to critical level with the Sungai Dua water treatment plant currently running at full capacity.

He said Penangites may experience intermittent low water pressure as a result of this.

“In view of the capacity being at critical levels, we must reduce the drawdown from both the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams.

“Water will be taken from the Sungai Dua water treatment plant to compensate,” he said.

In July, Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow had said the state, through Badan Kawal Selia Air, had written to Nadma twice for cloud seeding to fill the two affected dams.

Chow said the state has yet to receive a response from Nadma.

In 2022, the state government appointed a company to carry out 12 cloud seeding operations at a cost of RM492,000 (RM41,000 per operation).