

April 16, 2024

PBAPP says 30.3 per cent effective capacity of Air Itam dam not a cause for panic



GEORGE TOWN: There is no denying that the effective capacity of the Air Itam dam is low at 30.3 per cent, the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) said.

PBAPP chief executive officer K. Pathmanathan, however, said the 30.3 per cent effective capacity "is not a cause for panic."

He said as far as the Air Itam dam is concerned, PBAPP had been operating on "alert status" since the beginning of this year.

At the beginning of this year, the effective capacity of the dam was 68.9 per cent and not 100 per cent.

He said, since January, PBAPP was aware that drawdowns from this dam must be managed carefully until the rainy seasons begin.

"On Feb 5, with the onset of the full El Nino phenomenon in Penang, PBAPP implemented the Air Itam Water Dam Action Plan 2024 (AIDAP 2024) as a contingency measure when the dam's effective capacity dropped to 32.8 per cent.

"In the middle of this month, there is no denying that the effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam is low at 30.3 per cent. "However, PBAPP is still actively defending its remaining reserves through the AIDAP 2024," he said today.

According to Pathmanathan, the results of the AIDAP 2024 over the past 70 days should reassure water consumers in Air Itam that a 30.3 per cent dam effective capacity is not a cause for panic. He said PBAPP was unsure how long this hot and dry spell would last.

"However, (we can assure that) water supply services are still normal in the Air Itam service area. "And according to international weather reports, there will be a transition from a hot and dry El Nino phenomenon to a wet and rainy La Nina phenomenon soon.

"METMalaysia is forecasting higher rainfall in Penang in the April to July timeframe, with the arrival of an inter-monsoon season. "To make sure that we have enough water in Penang, water consumers (especially Air Itam consumers) should reduce water consumption by 10 per cent in April, May and June," he added.

On Sunday, Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said the water level at the Air Itam dam was approaching its third critical level at 30.8 per cent. He said the water supply from the Air Itam dam was projected to last for only 30 more days.

The first critical level is when the dam water reaches 50 per cent, the second level at 40 per cent and the third at 30 per cent.

Meanwhile, Pathmanathan clarified that 30.3 per cent effective capacity does not mean "30 days' supply." He said there was an important qualification: "with no rainfall."

"When there is rainfall in the Air Itam water catchment area, the 'number of days' will change. "Also, it is based on dry weather drawdowns of 22 million litres per day (MLD). Today, PBAPP is implementing the AIDAP 2024 with 11 MLD drawdowns.

"PBAPP has the option of further tightening AIDAP water supply controls to defend the remaining reserves of the dam for a longer period of time. "However, the implementation of such controls may cause some inconveniences to some consumers in the Air Itam service area," he said.