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## Penang water operator reduces drawdowns as dams reach quarter of their capacity



GEORGE TOWN, Aug 20 — Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) is minimising drawdowns from Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam as their effective capacities continue to drop.

The effective capacities of the Air Itam Dam is down to 27.6 per cent and 25.2 per cent for the Teluk Bahang Dam as at August 19.

“This phenomenon is not only affecting dams in Penang. It is also affecting key dams in the neighbouring states of Kedah and Perak,” PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk K. Pathmanathan said in a statement today.

Last week, on August 12, the effective capacity of Air Itam Dam was 29.7 per cent while Teluk Bahang Dam was at 26.4 per cent.

Pathmanathan said the water levels at both dams located on the island are low due to abnormally dry weather since the last quarter of 2023.

As at August 19, the effective capacities of Muda Dam in Kedah has dropped to 7.8 per cent while Beris Dam in Kedah is at 53.9 per cent and Bukit Merah Dam in Perak is at 33 per cent.

Due to the dropping water levels, he said PBAPP has implemented several measures to defend the remaining reserves of the dam including the Air Itam Dam Action Plan 2024 by pumping up to 33 million litres per day (MLD) of treated water to the Air Itam service area and minimising drawdowns from both Air Itam and Teluk Bahang Dams.

PBAPP will also be tapping rainwater from two additional water catchment areas (WCA), namely Batu Ferringhi and Sungai Pinang, to refill the Teluk Bahang Dam whenever there is heavy rainfall.

Pumps and valves in strategic areas will also be controlled to ensure water supply sufficiency during peak hours and minimise supply during off-peak hours.

“PBAPP is working with the Penang state government to request the National Disaster Management Agency to conduct cloud seeding operations over the WCAs of the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang Dams,” he said.

He said Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam were designed and built to be refilled by rainfall in their respective WCA and could not be refilled by any other means.

Pathmanathan said the low water levels in the dams would affect about 74,798 water consumers in Air Itam, Farlim, Teluk Bahang, Batu Ferringhi, Tanjung Bungah and nearby areas.

Once again, he appealed to water consumers to reduce water consumption such as washing their vehicles less frequently, using watering cans to water their gardens and not leaving the tap running.

“There is no immediate threat to water supply services for about 66.7 per cent of Penang’s water consumers,” he said.

This is because 66.7 per cent of Penang's water consumers or about 465,000 people are served by the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant (WTP) that extracts water from Sungai Muda.

“As at August 19, the Sungai Muda river level at Penang’s Lahar Tiang Intake is 3.06m, which is more than 1.0m above the 2.0m safe level,” he said.

The Sungai Dua WTP produces about 1,026 MLD of treated water and it serves a majority of areas in Seberang Perai, highly populated areas in the Southwest district of the island and some areas in the northeast district of the island, including the Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone.