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Cloud seeding fails to generate rainfall over Penang, consumers appealed to conserve water

Concerns rise as effective water capacity of Ayer Itam Dam recorded at a low 37 percent.



PENANG'S water supply agency has faced a setback in its attempt to increase reservoir levels as the threat of drought looms over the state.

Cloud seeding operations recently undertaken by the Royal Malaysian Air Force over Penang skies have failed to yield any rainfall over the two major dams in the state.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer K. Pathmanathan said that despite deployment of the heavy RMAF aircraft, PBAPP could not record any rainfall happening during or after the cloud seeding operations.

"As such, these cloud seeding operations did not and will not increase the effective capacities of the two dams," he said.

"The likely factors for this outcome are unfavourable atmospheric and cloud conditions," he said in a statement.

The effective water capacity of the Ayer Itam Dam was recorded at only 37% yesterday.

The other major dam on the island, the Teluk Bahang Dam, had 79.1% while the Mengkuang Dam on the mainland recorded 89.3%.

In view of such a development, Pathmanathan has made an impassioned plea for consumers to undertake conservation measures when using tap water.

"Cloud seeding may usually induce more rainfall if there are rain clouds at a specific altitude," he said.

"If there are no clouds, not enough clouds, or if the air temperature is too high for water drops to form in the clouds and fall, it may not induce any rainfall."

PBAPP hopes that the National Disaster Management Agency will commission the RMAF to conduct additional cloud seeding operations in Penang next month, hoping for better luck soon.

The effective capacity at the Teluk Bahang Dam is still manageable but PBAPP is concern over the Ayer Itam Dam which supplies water to the most densely populated area in the state.

The area supplied has the majority of the working-class people on the island.

"The effective capacity of the Ayer Itam Dam is low," Pathmanathan stressed.

To provide relief to the dam, he said that the PBAPP is pumping 33 million litres of treated water per day (MLD) from the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant in Seberang Perai into the service area of the Ayer Itam Water Treatment Plant.

The success in "defending" the dam until the next rainy season is dependent on three key factors.

The first is the availability of sufficient treated water from the Sungai Dua plant and raw water from Sungai Muda in Seberang Perai

The second is sufficient raw water inflow into five raw water intakes for the Ayer Itam dam and treatment plant on the Island.

The third factor is for there to be prudent consumption of water by the 30,000 consumers in the supply service area, he said.