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## Dry season, heavy irrigation: Penangites have been urged to use water wisely



GEORGE TOWN: Consumers in Penang have been urged to use water wisely this month following a hot and dry start to the year, compounded by low rainfall and heavy irrigation activities along Sungai Muda.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk K Pathmanathan said rainfall recorded at the Air Itam Dam water catchment area from Jan 1 to Feb 4 was only 17.5mm, while the Teluk Bahang Dam water catchment area recorded just 5.5mm over the same period.

He said the Sungai Muda water level at the Lahar Tiang Intake in Seberang Perai Utara fell below the critical 2.0m mark for 19 consecutive days in January and remained below that level from Feb 1 to 4.

“There were days in January when PBAPP could not abstract optimal volumes of raw water from the river to fully support treated water production operations at the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant.

“Sungai Dua produced about 85% of Penang’s total treated water volume of 1,208 million litres per day in 2025,” he said in a statement on Thursday (Feb 5).

Pathmanathan said large-scale irrigation drawdowns from Sungai Muda since Jan 19 by the Muda River Basin Management for padi cultivation had further affected river levels.

In Kedah, he said the water level at Beris Dam reportedly fell by 12.65%, while Muda Dam declined sharply by 42.94% between Jan 1 and Feb 4.

Pathmanathan noted that the Penang Water Regulatory Body had requested PBAPP to maintain sufficient downstream flow from the Lahar Tiang Intake to support irrigation activities in Penang, a request PBAPP complied with from Jan 27.

To ensure a continuous water supply, he said PBAPP implemented several engineering measures, including strategic drawdowns from the Expanded Mengkuang Dam, which ensured there was no shortfall of raw water that could have affected daily treated water production at the Sungai Dua plant.

PBAPP also highlighted its Double Dam Defence on Penang Island programme, under which an average of 407 million litres per day of treated water from Sungai Dua was pumped to the island in January.

In addition, Pathmanathan said drawdowns from the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams had been minimised since Jan 1 to preserve their effective capacities amid increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns linked to climate change.

He said that as of Feb 4, the effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam stood at 89.9%, Teluk Bahang Dam at 95.7% and the Expanded Mengkuang Dam at 89.9%. – Bernama