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Media Release

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DRY SEASON & PADI IRRIGATION: PLEASE USE WATER WISELY

- **January 2026 rainfall: 17.5mm at Air Itam and 5.5mm at Teluk Bahang.**
- **Sungai Muda river level below 2.0m safe level due to big irrigation drawdowns in support of padi planting in Kedah and Penang.**
- **PBAPP is defending island dams. Expanded Mengkuang Dam reserves being drawn down to support the Sungai Dua Water Treatment Plant.**

PENANG, Thursday, 5.2.2026: PBAPP seeks the kind cooperation and support of the Penang community to use water wisely in February 2026 due to the following reasons:

- a. **Very low rainfall:** 17.5mm of rainfall was recorded in the Air Itam Dam water catchment area (WCA) from 1 January 2026 – 4 February 2026. Meanwhile, PBAPP only recorded 5.5mm of rainfall in the Teluk Bahang Dam WCA.
- b. **Sub-2.0m Sungai Muda river levels:** The river level at PBAPP's Lahar Tiang Intake in Seberang Perai Utara (SPU) dipped below the 2.0m mark for 19 consecutive days in January 2026. From 1 – 4 February 2026, the river level continued to record below the 2.0m mark.

There were days in January wherein 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 (WTP). Please note that the Sungai Dua WTP produced about 85% of Penang's total treated water volume of 1,208 million litres per day (MLD) in 2025.

- c. **Big irrigation drawdowns (Sungai Muda):** Since 19 January 2026, Muda River Basin Management (PLSM) have been drawing down large volumes of water from Sungai Muda for the water supply and irrigation of padi fields along Sungai Muda. In Kedah, the level of the Beris Dam has reportedly dropped by 12.65%, from 99.0% on 1.1.2026 to 86.35% on 4.2.2026. Muda Dam has dropped by 42.94% from 84.64% on 1.1.2026 to 41.7% on 4.2.2026.

Meanwhile, the Penang Water Regulatory Body (BKSA) has also requested for PBAPP to ensure that there is "enough water left" downstream of the Lahar Tiang Intake. This is to support Penang's irrigation abstractions downstream of Lahar Tiang. PBAPP has been complying with this BKSA request since 27.1.2026 and will continue to comply until February 2026 as requested.

PBAPP responses to a “hot & dry” start to 2026

In response to the current “hot & dry scenario”, PBAPP implemented the following water supply engineering action plans to ensure continuous water supply sufficiency in Penang, especially on Penang Island:

1. **Strategic raw water drawdowns from the Expanded Mengkuang Dam (EMD):** Due to low river levels (as related to irrigation activities upstream) and compliance with BKSA’s request, PBAPP has had to marginally cut down its daily Sungai Muda raw water abstractions in January 2026. Concurrently, PBAPP implemented calculated EMD drawdowns.

The EMD drawdowns ensured that there was no raw water resource shortfall that would have compromised daily treated water production volumes at the Sungai Dua WTP. Nevertheless, the effective capacity of the EMD has dropped by only 1.9%, from 92.8% on 1.1.2026 to 90.9% on 31.1.2026.

2. **Double Dam Defence on Penang Island (D³PI):** Under its new D³PI programme, PBAPP pumped in an average of 407 MLD of water from the Sungai Dua WTP into Penang Island in January 2026.

This D³PI is an extension of the Air Itam Dam Action Plan (AIDAP). Beyond “protecting” the Air Itam Dam service area, the D³PI also reaches into part of the service area of the Teluk Bahang Dam. The buffer supply zones of the D³PI include the following neighbourhoods on the island:

- Farlim (Sungai Dua water, Guillemard water, Air Itam water)
- Gurney Drive (Sungai Dua water, Guillemard water)
- Jalan Burma and Jalan Kelawai (Sungai Dua water, Guillemard water)
- Jalan Mesjid Negeri (Sungai Dua water, Guillemard water, Air Itam water)
- Mount Erskine (some areas) (Guillemard water)
- Paya Terubong (Sungai Dua water, Guillemard water, Air Itam water)
- Pulau Tikus (Sungai Dua water, Guillemard water)
- George Town (Sungai Dua, Guillemard and Air Itam water)

With the D³PI, residents in these neighbourhoods are no longer fully dependent on raw water from the Air Itam Dam or the Teluk Bahang Dam. Now, their water supply may be said to be “safer” because they are also receiving treated water from the Sungai Dua WTP in Seberang Perai.

3. **Minimal drawdowns from the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam:** Since 1.1.2026, PBAPP has minimised drawdowns from the 2 island dams to sustain strong effective capacities for as long as possible.



Due to climate change, rainfall patterns in the WCAs of these 2 dams are no longer predictable based on past trends. Hence, so long as the D³PI is practical, PBAPP will minimise drawdowns.

The results in January 2026 reflect the effectiveness of PBAPP's D³PI and minimal island dam drawdown action plans:

Key dams in Penang	Effective capacity		Difference	Rainfall Jan 2026
	1.1.2026	4.2.2026		
1. Air Itam Dam	93.9%	89.9%	4.0%	17.5mm
2. Teluk Bahang Dam	99.0%	95.7%	3.3%	5.5mm
3. Expanded Mengkuang Dam	92.8%	89.9%	12.9%	21.0mm

Penang public cooperation and support

At present, there is no immediate threat of a water crisis in Penang due to hot and dry weather compounded by massive irrigation activities involving Sungai Muda. As things stand on 4.2.2026, our dam levels are relatively good. There is enough raw water for us to draw down from the EMD at times when we cannot abstract water optimally from Sungai Muda.

Nevertheless, PBAPP seeks the kind cooperation and support of Penang water consumers to use water wisely.

PBAPP does not know how long this hot and dry season will last. We can no longer safely predict that there will be significant rainfall in Penang in April 2026. The level of the Muda Dam in Kedah that releases water into Sungai Muda is less than ideal at this point in time.

Please visit www.pba.com.my for water saving tips. Use these tips to save water at home and at work. You will also save money off your water bills.

Please remember that Penang is a water-stressed state with limited raw water resources. Whenever it is hot and dry, our water supply is vulnerable. It is always better for us to "play it safe".

Thank You.

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The river level at PBAPP's Lahar Tiang Intake in Seberang Perai Utara (SPU) dipped below the 2.0m mark for 19 consecutive days in January 2026. © PBAPP 2026



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