

# State needs more rain to tide over El Nino

Recent wet weather not enough to lift Penang out of danger

**GEORGE TOWN:** The state is still not out of danger despite the rainy weather lately, said Penang Water Supply Corporation Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa (*pic*).

"The Beris and Muda dams in Kedah are at a critical level while the two dams in Air Itam and Teluk Bahang on the island still need to build up their capacities.

"We need to make sure that the dams are full by the end of the year to get ready for the next year's dry season," he told a press conference at his office in Komtar yesterday.

Jaseni said the Beris Dam was at 26.4% capacity while the Muda Dam was at 32%, and the Air Itam and Teluk Bahang dams were at 51.8% and 53.4% respectively as of yesterday.

"We do not know how long the Muda and Beris dams will last. The Muda Dam is used for irrigation purposes while the Beris Dam provides water supply to the people.

"Kedah, Penang and north Perak are dependent on the Sungai Muda and the river is dependent on the dams when there's no rain.

"We need to extract 1 billion litres of water per day from Sungai Muda to supply Penang consumers," he said.

Jaseni added that raw water could not be released into Sungai Muda as Penang did not have a dam that could release water into the river unlike the Beris and Muda dams.

This was in response to the



recent demands by farmers that PBAPP adjust or raise the Sungai Muda Water Scheme Barrage to stop water from overflowing into the sea.

"The barrage which was commissioned in 1973, is not a dam. Its main purpose is to prevent the intrusion of sea water from the Straits of Malacca into water abstraction areas along Sungai Muda.

"The barrage could not be modified or raised without proper engineering studies and if the structure was compromised, sea water would flow upstream and worse if it collapses, the river level would drop," he said.

It was previously reported that a peaceful demonstration was held on Saturday at the barrage in Rantau Panjang, Kepala Batas, Penang, where over 100 farmers held banners urging PBAPP to upgrade the barrage.

The farmers claimed that the barrage needed to be altered to reduce the overflow which they said would ensure water supply to their padi fields.