

Penang water authority issues 2nd alert; tells Penangites to use water wisely



Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) today issued a second alert to Penangites, urging them to use water wisely, as the water level at the Air Itam Dam continues to drop. (NSTP Archive)

By Audrey Dermawan
March 7, 2019 @ 6:59pm

GEORGE TOWN: Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) today issued a second alert to Penangites, urging them to use water wisely, as the water level at the Air Itam Dam continues to drop.

As of yesterday, PBAPP said the effective capacity of the dam stood at only 60.4 per cent, a drop of 31.8 per cent since the start of the year. The effective capacity on Jan 1 was 92.2 per cent.

To compound matters, it said the water level of Sungai Muda, Penang's primary raw water resource, also dropped to 1.55m yesterday compared to 2.35m at the beginning of the year, breaching the second alert warning.

The critical level is below 1.5m. PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the hot and dry weather had caused a significant drop in the effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam as well as the water level of Sungai Muda.

"As it stands, the Air Itam Dam's raw water storage is projected to only last another 59 days, without any rainfall. "As such, consumers should use less water daily. We must ensure that Penang has enough water until the next arrival of rain to refill our dams and raise the level of Sungai Muda," he told newsmen today.

The Air Itam Dam supplies water to the township of Air Itam and Paya Terubong, as well as the surrounding areas along Jalan Air Itam up to Jalan Masjid Negeri. There are more than 175,000 people in these areas. Jaseni said the situation would be deemed "critical" when the effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam dropped to 30 per cent.

Jaseni said the drop in Sungai Muda's water level had affected water supply to consumers in Seberang Prai. "It also affects water supply to a significant number of water consumers in the southwest district and Balik Pulau.

"If this persists, we may be staring at effects similar to what we went through during the 2016 Super El Nino. "This is why we have put in place contingency plans to ensure no water rationing," he added.

He said they included initiating emergency drawdown of raw water from the Mengkuang Dam, which is a strategic dam. He said they had also requested Kedah to release more water into Sungai Muda.

"If all that fails, then we may have to appeal for cloud seeding operations and even seek a delay from the Penang government in the paddy planting season, just like in 2016, to release more raw water for water supply purposes," he added.

Penang's other dam, the Teluk Bahang Dam, recorded an effective capacity of 75.3 per cent, a slight drop from 78.8 per cent in the beginning of the year.