

PBAPP seeks another cloud seeding move to fill Penang dams



(File pic) The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) is seeking for a second series of six additional cloud seeding operations next month to replenish two dams. -NSTP/MIKAIL ONG

By **Audrey Dermawan** - May 28, 2020 @ 6:36pm

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) is seeking for a second series of six additional cloud seeding operations next month to replenish two dams that were still below the 50 per cent capacity mark.

The two dams are the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam.

Cloud seeding operations conducted between April 25 and yesterday have helped to increase the effective capacities of both dams, but these were still not enough to boost the water levels.

The maximum effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam is 2.16 billion litres, while the maximum effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam is 18.24 billion litres. The effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam is 8.4 times more than the effective capacity of the Air Itam Dam.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said while there had been improvements following the earlier cloud seeding operations, the effective capacities of both dams were still below normal levels.

"In March, the Penang government approved a first series of 10 cloud seeding operations over Penang and Kedah. To date, six cloud seeding operations have been carried out with four more to go.

"PBAPP is requesting for a second series of six additional cloud seeding operations in June to maximise potential rainfall yield and refill the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam as much as possible," he said today.

Jaseni said PBAPP's key rationale for a second series of cloud seeding operations was based on several factors.

He said as of yesterday, the effective capacities of both the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam were still below the 50 per cent mark, and the effective capacities had been low since the beginning of this year.

He added that due to climate change, abnormally low volumes of rainfall were recorded in the water catchment areas of Penang island between June last year and mid-April this year.

"Without continuing rainfall, the effective capacities of the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam will further deplete. PBAPP has been implementing tight controls to minimise dam drawdowns since the beginning of this year.

"However, raw water must be drawn down daily from the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam to sustain continuous water supply services in Penang.

"June offers a promising window of opportunity for maximising rainfall over Penang's water catchment areas. Thunderstorms and rainy days have been forecast for next month, predicting the presence of rain clouds. However, the volume of rainfall is not predictable. Cloud seeding will maximise rainfall yield," he noted.

The April-May cloud seeding operations, Jaseni said, had been effective, and Penang needed more rainfall to refill its key dams.

"The Air Itam Dam must store sufficient raw water to meet all the water supply needs of water consumers in Air Itam and Paya Terubong until the end of the year. Similarly, the effective capacity of the Teluk Bahang Dam must be increased to ensure water supply security in the areas of Teluk Bahang, Batu Ferringhi and Tanjung Bungah until the end of this year.

"Looking ahead, Penang and PBAPP must also prepare for the next dry season that will commence from Jan 1, next year. As such, we must take advantage of every good opportunity to refill our dams, with as much rain water as possible, from now until the end of the year," he said.

Penang and its people, he added, required sufficient water supply to continue the fight against Covid-19.

Jaseni said, as such, water supply sustainability was a critical factor in helping 1.78 million people to stay clean and safe, so as to keep the pandemic at bay.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow visited the Air Itam Dam yesterday to review the impact of cloud seeding operations.