

People wearing haze masks in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Port Klang and Shah Alam recorded the worst Air Pollutant Index readings yesterday. Pic by Muhammad Asyraf Sawal



'Release less water into Sungai Muda'

GEORGE TOWN: The Kedah government should release less water into Sungai Muda daily to conserve resources, said Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa.

In response to Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah's statement that if Penang wanted water, it should formally ask Kedah, Jaseni said Penang was not asking for more water, but was advising its neighbouring state to save water in Sungai Muda.

"We do not want more water as the state (Penang) has enough because the level at Sungai Muda is above 2m," he said here yesterday after the World Water Day 2016 celebration at Air Itam Dam here.

Ahmad had reportedly asked the state government to make an official application if it needed Kedah to help them with their water problem.

He had also expressed confidence in Penang's ability to settle its water problems as it had the Mengkuang Dam, which had a five-year water supply capacity.

Jaseni had reportedly asked the Federal Government to take immediate action to tackle water shortage in the northern region and had expressed his concern over Sungai Muda's water level following the Kedah government's revelation that water in the Beris and Muda dams would last only 30 days and 50 days.

"The Air Itam dam's capacity is at 57 per cent and can last for 56 days. We can do that without much rain because we release less (water)... We fine tune and release just enough for people in Penang," he said, adding



Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa

that if the situation remained the same, Penang's water level would be the same at the end of the El Nino phenomenon.

Jaseni said there was no water crisis in Penang and the northern region yet, but hoped the Federal Government could implement preventive measures to address the threat of a potential Super El Nino water crisis that could affect more than four million people in northern states.

"We hope the Federal Government will postpone the irrigation activities in all northern states to ensure that our dwindling reserves can outlast Super El Nino.

"This is because irrigation uses up to three quarters of water (from reserves) compared with a quarter to supply water to people.

"We also urge the Federal Government to continue cloud seeding to replenish water catchments."

'Snakebite probe will be thorough, impartial'

KUALA LUMPUR: The Education Ministry is looking into the allegation by parents of a 7-year-old girl who died after allegedly being bitten by a snake at SK Dato Hashim 1 in Pengkalan Chepa, Kelantan, that their daughter was left unattended for a few hours despite the child and her classmates saying she was bitten by something and was in pain.

Minister Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid said the ministry would not be biased and would not protect anyone if wrongdoing was found.

Asked if the ministry would entertain a request by the family for the investigation to be conducted by an officer who was not from the state, he said the ministry had no problem with the request.

"We are conducting a thorough investigation and have no problem fulfilling the family's request for an investigating officer from outside Kelantan," he said, adding that the child's father should make an official request.

Education director-general Datuk Seri Dr Khair Mohamad Yusof said no stone would be left unturned until the investigation was complete.

He urged people to stop sharing dubious information on social media and cooperate with the police in investigations.

"We will ensure that the investigation will be impartial."

The child's father, Ruslan Gazali, 34, had told the *New Straits Times* on Friday that he had a list of people he wanted to see in a meeting called by the school and the Kelantan education department.

"I want the Education director-general Datuk Seri Dr Khair Mohamad Yusof to be there, along with the (Kelantan) education director, the school's headmaster, my daughter's Arabic and Islamic studies teachers, the three female teachers and one male teacher that sent my daughter to the clinic, the doctor at the clinic and myself, my wife and three other family members."

Ruslan said he was not confident that the Kelantan Education Department would be fair in the investigation and asked for an officer from outside the state to join the probe into his daughter's case.

"I will write to the school, the (Kelantan) education department, the Education director-general's office and even to the (education) minister himself (if I have too) to make a plea for a fair, unbiased and complete investigation by an officer from outside (Kelantan)," he said, adding that the letters would be sent today.

Checks by NST yesterday revealed that several police cars and Education Ministry cars were at the school. An Education Ministry car, which was escorted by two police cars, was seen heading towards the school compound.

On Tuesday, SK Dato Hashim 1's Year 1 pupil, Nuriey Nadhirah Ruslan, died at Raja Perempuan Zainab 2 Hospital.

It was reported that she was bitten by a snake in the school com-

pound during recess and had fainted in class before being sent to Pengkalan Chepa Health Clinic.

When doctors failed to revive Nuriey after performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation, she was sent to the hospital. She was pronounced dead later.

Her family filed a police report demanding an investigation into the incident, claiming that the school had failed to give them a reasonable explanation.

In **Kuantan**, the state Education Department has reminded principals and headmasters to take measures in the wake of the snakebite incident in Kelantan.

Its director, Datuk Rosdi Ismail, said 947 primary and secondary schools in the state had been advised to organise gotong-royong to ensure their premises were safe for teachers and students.

He said grass on school fields should be kept short, while overgrown bushes should be trimmed.

"I have instructed principals and headmasters through WhatsApp to keep school compounds tidy."

State Fire and Rescue Department operations assistant director Wan Mohd Nazlis Wan Ismail said since January, the hot spell had led to an increase in the number of snakes caught by firemen.

He said as of last week, 92 snakes were caught in the state this year, with 16 cases in January, 25 in both February and last month and 26 this month as of April 17.



Datuk Seri Dr Khair Mohamad Yusof

Ministry waiting for right type of cloud

KOTA BARU: The Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry is waiting for the green light from the Meteorological Department to conduct cloud seeding.

Deputy Minister Datuk Dr Abu Bakar Mohamad Diah said the ministry and departments under it were ready to conduct cloud seeding but could do so only when a specific type of cloud was present.

He said the most suitable was the towering cumulus cloud, which as-

sured a 90 per cent success rate in producing rain.

"However, the problem is we can't find these towering cumulus clouds easily because of the extreme heat.

"Most clouds are not suitable in size and composition for cloud seeding," he said after opening the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Carnival 2016 at Kolej Poly-Tech Mara here yesterday.

Abu Bakar said the ministry did

not have financial issues in carrying out cloud seeding.

"The department has been told to monitor the weather nationwide before carrying out cloud seeding to ensure that it works and avoid wastage.

"Each cloud seeding exercise costs between RM30,000 and RM80,000, depending on the aircraft and the area covered.

"Ninety per cent of cloud seeding has been successful," he said.

RM60,000 daily to pump water into plants

KUANTAN: The state government spends RM60,000 a day to ensure a reliable supply of water at three treatment plants in Lipis, Temerloh and Pekan, following the drought brought by the El Nino phenomenon.

State Secretary Datuk Seri Muhammad Safian Ismail said, in the past two weeks, the state government had spent money to pump water from

other areas to ensure the treatment plants had sufficient supply.

"Pengurusan Air Pahang Bhd (PAIP) had to spend RM20,000 daily for each treatment plant to pump water from nearby rivers as the raw water intake is running dry."

Two months ago, he said, the state government applied for a RM27 million allocation from the Science,

Technology and Innovation Ministry to carry out cloud seeding to increase the water level at the Sungai Pahang basin but had yet to receive a reply.

Safian said although water levels at dams were still normal, cloud seeding was still crucial.

He said there were no plans for water rationing as the situation was under control. **Bernama**