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PRESS STATEMENT

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DAMS SHOULD BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AS GREEN RECREATIONAL AREAS

- Opening dams to the public promotes community water awareness, supports healthy activities, enhances dam security and reflects transparency in dam management.

PENANG, Thursday, 21.11.2019: Water supply dams should be open to the public to promote water awareness and conservation.

This is the primary reason why Perbadanan Bekalan Air Pulau Pinang Sdn Bhd (PBAPP) welcomes visitors to the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam.

The people can see dam levels on-the-spot. To make things clearer, we have also set up LED boards at the dam sites to display dam effective capacities.

As such, the people can immediately grasp and understand the status of the dams and the availability of raw water. Public understanding and support help PBAPP to promote water conservation amongst the community, especially during dry seasons when dam levels are low.

PBAPP will also allow public access into the expanded Mengkuang Dam, once the Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources (KATS) hands this dam back to the Penang state government before being taken over by PBAPP, and is verified to be safe.

Supporting a “Cleaner, Greener, Safer and Healthier Penang”

In Penang, the State Government promotes a “Cleaner, Greener, Safer and Healthier Penang” initiative. In support of this initiative, PBAPP manages Penang’s dams as green public recreational destinations.

The Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam are open to the public from 7.00am to 7.00pm daily. Admission is free of charge.

Thousands of walkers, runners, hikers, cyclists, taichi & yoga practitioners, photographers and naturalists visit these dams daily.

These visitors use Penang’s dams as green recreational facilities because the dams are located in green water catchment areas that are fully protected by state laws in Penang.

The Water Supply (Catchment Area) Order 2004, under the Penang Water Supply Enactment 2004, identifies 11 key water catchment areas and totally protects 62.9 sq. km of forestlands from destructive commercial exploitation and pollution.

Meanwhile, the Water Supply (Catchment Area) Order 2009 specifies that only the following activities may be undertaken, downstream of the raw water intakes in Penang’s water catchment areas:

- a. Camping, picnics, hiking, hill and jungle trekking, canoeing and non-motorised boating, bird watching, orienteering and forest hunts, and fishing or angling competitions.
- b. Establishment of herbariums, botanical farms, butterfly farms, mini-zoos, aviary parks or bird watching centres, arboretums, camping sites, lake gardens and/or other passive eco-tourism development projects.

Moreover, the scenic views at the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam have made these dams tourist attractions that enhance Penang’s allure as an international tourist destination.

The Air Itam Dam also assists to mitigate floodings in the George Town areas during the wet season by holding back some of the excess rainfall water in the dam storage area.

Enhancing dam security

Security at the dams are placed under the jurisdiction of PBAPP's auxiliary police team ("polis bantuan"). Auxiliary police posts are set up within the dam premises and are manned on a 24/7 basis.

PBAPP auxiliary police personnel also patrol the premises on a two-hourly basis. As a result, dam visitors may enjoy their recreational pursuits in refreshing environments that are carefully managed to be safe and secure.

PBAPP has set user-friendly and environment-friendly regulations in place for safe public access into Penang's dam areas. PBAPP believes in cultivating "public ownership" of the dam areas and water catchment areas.

Regular dam visitors have vested interests in preserving the safety and security of their recreational area. As such, having more people keeping more eyes on the dams actually enhances dam security.

Dam users are encouraged to report any abnormal activities or mishaps to PBAPP auxiliary police personnel. In doing so, they provide valuable insights and information on incidents that occur in the dam premises.

Reflecting transparency in dam management

Opening Penang's dams to the public reflects PBAPP's commitment to transparency and excellence in dam management.

By placing the dams in the public eye, PBAPP is obliged to ensure that these dams are properly managed and maintained. Every aspect of dam operations, from maintaining the grass berms to ensuring public safety to daily monitoring of effective capacities, must stand up to public scrutiny.

As such, the continuing popularity of the Air Itam Dam and Teluk Bahang Dam as green public recreational areas reflect PBAPP's commitment to excellence in public service.



This press statement is based on a PBAPP presentation by Dato' Ir. Jaseni on 21.11.2019, at the "International Conference on Dam Safety Management and Engineering 2019" (ICDSME 2019), organised by Malaysian National Committee On Large Dams (MYCOLD).

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PBAPP manages the Air Itam Dam in Penang as a green public recreational area. © PBAPP 2019



Penang's Air Itam Dam is open to the public from 7.00am to 7.00pm daily. © PBAPP 2019



Air Itam Dam, Penang. © PBAPP 2019