

Penangites told to conserve water as river, dam levels fall

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Penangites have been asked to reduce their water consumption by washing cars, watering plants or using sprinklers to cool down house compounds. — Picture by Yusof Mat Isa

GEORGE TOWN, March 7 — The Sungai Muda and Penang Air Itam Dam water levels are dropping in the heatwave which is threatening the state's water supply in the coming weeks, the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) warned today.

PBAPP chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the level of Sungai Muda, which supplies water to 80 per cent of the state, had dropped by 34 per cent.

“The river level dropped from 2.35m on January 1 to 1.55m yesterday,” he told a press conference today.

He said Kedah had to release water from its Muda and Beris dams into the river to meet irrigation and consumer water demands.

“The dams will pump out 432 million litres per day (MLD) or five cubic metres per second but they had to release up to 864 MLD now due to the low river level,” he said.

On top of this, Jaseni said the Air Itam Dam water level has continued to drop to 60.64 per cent effective capacity.

“This means we have only 59 days before the dam dries up if it doesn’t rain,” he said.

The drop in water levels is alarming because the average water demand in Penang was 826 MLD in 2017, he added.

The Air Itam Dam caters to about 170,000 people in Air Itam, Paya Terubong and areas around Jalan Masjid Negeri.

He said the water supply situation in Penang has not reached critical level yet but consumers must do their part to conserve water.

“We will implement dry weather control measures if we don’t get rain by the end of the month,” he said.

The measures will include diverting water from other sources to the Air Itam Dam and doubling the production of treated water at water treatment plants.

PBAPP also has a contingency plan to release water from the Mengkuang Dam in Bukit Mertajam.

“We will also request paddy farming to be delayed in the contingency plan,” he said.

He called on Penangites to reduce their water consumption by not wasting water on washing cars, watering plants or using sprinklers to cool down house compounds.