

PBA: Begin cloud seeding now or face water crisis by June

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El Nino phenomenon has delayed typical April rainfall leaving Penang and Kedah vulnerable to a water crisis by June if no serious cloud seeding takes place now, PBA chief says.



GEORGE TOWN: Cloud seeding must be carried out immediately in the country's northern states to prevent a possible water crisis, the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBA) warned meteorological authorities today.

PBA chief executive officer Jaseni Maidinsa said that with current water levels, Penang and Kedah would only have sufficient water supply up to the third week of May.

He said the situation would not have been so dire had the usual heavy rains of April taken place. "However, the amount of rainfall in April 2016 to date is significantly lower than the historical average," Jaseni said in a statement today.

As for Penang, Jaseni said its dams had enough water to last until June but even so the PBA was initiating dry weather controls to cut down use on Penang's dam reserves.

Jaseni said the Sungai Muda Water Treatment Plant at the Kedah-Penang border was a cause for concern however, as water levels had dipped below ideal levels.

He said the current levels were hovering around 2.4 metres and if it dipped below 1.5 metres, PBA would not be able to draw water from the said plant.

“There is no way for you to make up for an 80% shortfall in raw water abstraction if it goes below critical levels.

“We hope that the Federal Government will act now to prevent a water shortage (crisis) in the northern region,” Jaseni said.

The following table shows the difference in rainfall recorded at Penang’s main dams through the years:

	Average for April 2005-2013	April 2014	April 2015	1-14 April 2016
Air Itam Dam	244mm	274mm	200mm	59mm
Teluk Bahang Dam	423mm	239mm	955mm	91mm
Mengkuang Dam	298mm	260mm	372mm	23mm

Meanwhile, the following are effective capacities of Penang’s main dams on 14th April 2016:

- Air Itam Dam : 59.9% (59 days)
- Teluk Bahang Dam : 61.5% (187 days)