

Malaysia

Penang wants Putrajaya to halt agricultural activities to save water

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Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) Chief Executive Officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said agriculture activities use about 75 per cent of the water supply, with consumers using the rest. — Reuters pic

GEORGE TOWN, April 15 — The Penang government today urged Putrajaya to temporarily halt agricultural activities to ensure there is enough water supply for consumers during the current prolonged dry spell.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) Chief Executive Officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said the El Niño phenomenon has led to a reduced water supply particularly in the northern states.

“We don’t have enough water for consumers or agriculture purposes so the federal government in charge of agriculture should temporarily stop paddy-planting activities so we can have enough water for consumers,” he told reporters at a press conference today.

In Penang, Jaseni said the paddy-planting season was already delayed.

He pointed out that it was pointless to plant paddy now when the water supply is low during a dry spell that is expected to last until June.

Without enough water supply, the paddy will wilt and die, he

added.

Jaseni said agriculture activities use about 75 per cent of the water supply, with the remainder going to consumers.

He then urged other water operators nationwide to reduce the drawdown of water from dams.

“The Water, Energy and Green Technology Ministry should issue an order to these operators to reduce the drawdown of water from dams to ensure the water supply can outlast the dry season,” he said.

He said the operators can draw just enough water for consumers.

Penang started implementing dry weather controls in its distribution systems by minimising the drawdown of Penang’s dam reserves since January.

For now, the state’s water reserves can last till June, he said.

Penang’s biggest water treatment plant draws raw water from Sungai Muda and as of yesterday, the river’s water level was at 2.44m.

“We are still able to abstract sufficient raw water, but if the river’s water levels were to drop below 1.5m, there is no way we can make up for the shortfall,” he said.

More than 80 per cent of Penang’s raw water is taken from this river daily.

He also called on Putrajaya to start cloud seeding immediately to ensure the Beris dam and Kuala Muda have sufficient water levels.

Jaseni said these are important water basins for the northern region as Penang, Kedah, Perlis and even parts of Perak depend on them.