

Thai rainmaking technology has good track record

PETALING JAYA: The royal rainmaking technology that will be brought in from Thailand to help relieve Selangor's water woes has a successful track record in its home country for more than 40 years.

The technology, pioneered and patented by Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej, was first applied in 1969 over the largely drought-hit northeast Thailand, a major agricultural area.

A study by the Mahanakorn University of Technology surveyed rainfall during rainmaking activities at targeted locations in northeast Thailand between August 2006 and April 2009, and compared with data from random areas within 240km of

the target area.

In 18 rainfall events, the benefit area had total rainfall of 2.67mm as compared to 1.81mm in other areas, and rainfall was also more intense at 0.30mm per hour (mm/h) as compared to 0.21mm/h in other areas.

The technique, which is covered by patents in 30 European countries, was used to successfully combat one of the country's major droughts in 2005.

Selangor Mentri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim said on Tuesday that the Selangor Water Management Authority (Luas) had been directed to contact the Thai Government for the state to use the technology next week, in a move to induce rain at the

Sungai Selangor dam to ease the current water shortage.

In Thailand, royal rainmaking is also used to boost water volume in dams and reservoirs, and aid reforestation programmes.

The process involves triggering cloud formation, cloud growth, moving clouds to a designated area, and initiating rainfall.

Its speciality lies in the process of seeding warm and cold clouds simultaneously via a special method dubbed the "Super Sandwich". Through this method, silver iodide is shot into cold clouds while at the same time one of six chemical formulae is released into warmer clouds.

The technology has been successful in creating and prolonging rainfall in specified areas and attracted foreign interest in learning the process.

Indonesia and the Philippines have sent their officers to Thailand to discuss training methods on weather modification using the technology.

In 2010, King Bhumibol permitted the use of the technology to induce rain in Queensland when more than 35% of the Australian state was badly affected by drought the year before.

This made Queensland the first major region outside Thailand where the technology was put to full effect.