

2 dams reach critical levels

DRY SPELL: Drop could affect more than 600,000 users in Johor

HALIM SAID

JOHOR BARU

news@nst.com.my

THE water levels at two dams in Johor have dropped below critical levels, and it may get worse if the current dry spell persists until August.

One of the dams in Sungai Layang, Masai, which supplies water to the Pasir Gudang industrial areas and most parts of Johor Baru, has dipped below critical level, depleting at a rate of 0.03m and 0.07m each day.

State water utility company SAJ Holding Sdn Bhd's corporate communication department head, Jamaluddin Jamil, said the Sungai Layang Dam, which comprise Upper Layang Dam and Lower Layang Dam, had seen a drop of 0.03m and 0.07m a day, respectively, over the past three months.

He said the depleting water levels at both dams were considered serious as the water supply could only last between 20 to 30 days if there was no rainfall within the coming weeks.

"The critical level at the Upper Layang Dam is fixed at 23.5m, while the Lower Layang Dam's critical level is at 3.6m.

"The water levels at these two dams are dropping drastically and it could affect more than 600,000 consumers in the Pasir Gudang industrial areas and parts of Johor Baru who get treated water from the Sultan Iskandar Water Treatment Plant," Jamaluddin told the *New Straits Times*.

On the other hand, the Sungai Lebam Dam, which supplies raw water to the Sungai Lebam Water Treat-



The effect of the **current dry spell** near Sungai Lebam Dam, **Bandar Penawar**. The water levels at Sungai Lebam Dam has seen a **gradual drop of 0.01m per day over the past three months**. Pic by Zulkarnain Ahmad Tajuddin

ment Plant, channelled to 65,000 users in Pengerang, Bandar Penawar and Felda Air Tawar in Kota Tinggi, has seen a gradual drop of 0.01m per day over the past three months.

Sungai Lebam Dam's critical level is fixed at 12.27m.

"At the current levels, Sungai Lebam Dam may last for two to three months before it completely dries up."

Asked about countermeasures, Jamaluddin said his hope was for rainfall in the following weeks, or a cloud seeding exercise by the state government to induce rain.

He said based on the Meteorological Department's forecast, there should be rainfall in parts of Johor next week.

He hoped rain would pour into the dams in the Sungai Lebam and Sungai Layang water catchment areas.

"There should not be any cause for panic as everything is under control.

"We have backup treated water supply from SAJ water tanker trucks in case there is an extreme shortage of supply in affected areas."

However, Jamaluddin reminded consumers to use water prudently, especially during the upcoming festive period as water usage usually escalated by 300 per cent during those periods.

Meanwhile, state Health and Environment Committee chairman Datuk Ayub Rahmat said any cloud seeding exercise might be impossible at the moment as the required cloud for such an exercise — the towering cumulus — was not present in Johor skies.

"At the moment, there isn't any plan yet for cloud seeding as the required clouds are not present.

"Without the needed cloud, the exercise is useless," he said.

Ayub said Malaysia had been in the southwest monsoon since mid-May and it was expected to last until September.

He said there were few occurrences of rain in that period.

"That is why the weather is hot and dry. In some instances, open burning could lead to haze.

"I urge Johoreans to stay indoors and stay hydrated and avoid open-burning activities."

Ayub said aside from the dry spell, agricultural activity and encroachment might be factors that contributed to the depleting waters level at Sungai Lebam Dam.

"I will alert the relevant agencies, including the Land and Mineral Office, to curb activities that cause the water level at the dams to drop."