

Padi farmers face water shortage

CRITICAL LEVEL:

Those in northern Perlis and Kerian in Perak may have to delay planting crops

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PADI farmers in northern Perlis and Kerian in Perak may be forced to delay the planting of their crops should the dry spell caused by the El Nino phenomenon continue.

Perlis Agriculture Department director Zulkefli Amin Mat Jusoh said the state had insufficient water to irrigate padi fields, as water level at the Timah Tasoh dam was at the critical level.

"Based on the information provided by the state Drainage and Irrigation Department, as of April 5, the water level at the dam was at 26.42m,



The water level at the **Timah Tasoh dam** in Perlis is at a **critical level**. Pic by Eizairi Shamsudin

which is 0.8 per cent below the critical level.

"Should the heat-wave continue, we have no choice but to delay the planting season in northern Perlis, which depends on the dam for

water supply."

Perak Public Amenities, Infrastructure, Energy and Water Com-

mittee chairman Datuk Zainol Fadzi Paharudin said padi planting in Selinsing and Semangol in Kerian, involving 4,697ha, may be delayed if the water level at the Bukit Merah dam continued to fall.

Bernama quoted him as saying that the water level at the dam was at 6.6m, below the normal level of 8.68m.

"According to the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID), the

water level at the dam is decreasing by between 5cm and 7cm every day," Zainol said after visiting the dam yesterday.

He said the areas should have received water on Sunday, but the release of water had been resheduled to April 20.

Kerian has 22,000ha of padi fields and is the rice bowl of Perak.

Zainol said DID had taken steps to alleviate the water shortage by

pumping water into irrigation canals.

He said a request had been made to the Meteorological Department for cloud-seeding operations to be carried out over the area, but there were no suitable clouds.

Zulkefli said the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA) had promised to pump water to the affected padi fields in northern Perlis.

"The project (to pump water) will involve about 600ha of padi fields and is expected to start next month."

Meanwhile, padi farmers in southern Perlis have not been affected by the dry spell and have begun planting on March 30, as scheduled.

MADA corporate communication head Mohd Hafizi Zakaria said there were 4,623 padi farmers with 9,802ha of padi fields in southern Perlis, which were managed by MADA.

"MADA has released water to padi fields in southern Perlis since March 30, as scheduled.

"Hence, the farmers can start planting."

Page 1 pic: Fishermen's boats stranded at the **Timah Tasoh dam** in Perlis because of its **low water level**.

