

Lim: Water crisis in Penang if no rain for two more months

GEORGE TOWN: The state's dams are getting drier by the hour due to El Nino.

About 5pm yesterday, the dam levels' LED display in Teluk Bahang showed that it was 62% full, while the Air Itam Dam was 64%.

But by 6.30pm, however, Penang Water Authority's website (www.pba.com.my) showed that Air Itam Dam had slipped to 59.9% and Teluk Bahang was down to 61.5%.

Mengkuang Dam is nearly full, but it is being upgraded by the Federal Government, so its water level was not available.

"If the rains do not come soon, Penang is heading for a water crisis in two months," said Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng.

Adding that Perlis and Kedah could face the crisis within a month, Lim called on the Federal Government to do large scale cloud seeding

in the northern region.

"It is now being done on an *ad hoc* basis. That is not enough," he added.

When the inter-monsoon season began early this month, he said the rainfall was the lowest in history.

"That was the *Qing Ming* (Chinese All Souls Day) season and it usually rains, except for this year."

According to infokemarau.water.gov.my, Perlis' Timah Tasoh Dam

level is at 26.71m, 1.4m above critical level. Lim said in a press conference yesterday that Beris Dam in Sik, Kedah, was also low.

A check on the website, however, showed that this dam had been taken offline, so its information was not available on the Internet.

Kedah's larger dams in Pedu and Muda, however, remained high at 72% and 93% respectively.

Since Beris Dam regulates the

flow of water in the Muda River Basin, he expressed fears that the river would be affected if Beris Dam dips to critical levels.

Penang draws about 90% of its daily water needs from this river.

"We are talking about a crisis which could affect more than four million people," added Lim.

However, he stopped short of saying if there would be any water rationing in Penang.