

Dwindling water reserves in 7 dams

CRITICAL: Their capacities range from 20 days to 3 months of supply, says minister

**ESTHER LANDAU
AND FARHANA SYED NOKMAN**
KUCHING
news@nst.com.my

SEVEN dams in the country are at a critical stage with their water capacity below 50 per cent as of yesterday.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said some of the dams had enough water supply only for a month.

The seven dams are Timah Tasoh Dam in Perlis (27.6 per cent), Bukit Merah Dam in Perak (20.2 per cent), Beris Dam (25.9 per cent), Muda Dam (30.45 per cent) and Padang Saga Dam in Kedah (33.9 per cent), Labong Dam in Johor (12.43 per cent) and Bukit Kwong Dam in Kelantan (6.9 per cent).

Bukit Merah Dam has enough water for 20 days, Timah Tasoh and Padang Saga dams for a month, while Labong and Beris dams have up to three months of water supply.

"We urge the public to not waste water and use it sparingly. The de-

creasing water level at the dams is not only affecting households, but also the agricultural sector," he said, adding that the ministry would look into a special water distribution system soon.

The initiative is to ensure that water supply in dams is not only enough for domestic consumption but also for other sectors, such as agriculture and industrial.

In a related development, Wan Junaidi said many land development projects, such as construction of highways, residential, commercial buildings and utilities, had caused Sungai Puteh and Sungei Besi's forest reserves to shrink.

He said Sungai Puteh had been badly affected by the Sungai Besi-Ulu Klang Expressway project (Suke) and Mass Rapid Transit Line.

It was reported that Wan Junaidi had called for development in permanent forest reserves to be halted immediately to support the nation's biodiversity conservation efforts.

He urged all parties to reconsider plans to develop the permanent forest reserves.

"The move is necessary to ensure the country's forest cover remains no less than 50 per cent, especially in the peninsula.

"For any permanent forest that has been degazetted or cleared for development, these areas must be replaced immediately in line with Section 12 of the National Forest Act 1964," he said.

There are four permanent forest reserves in the city — Bukit Lagong with 2.10ha of forest cover, Bukit Nanas

(9.37ha), Sungai Puteh (14.51ha) and Sungai Besi (42.29ha).

"However, the Sungai Puteh forest reserve, gazetted in 1933, has dwindled to 14.51ha from 25.49ha, while the Sungai Besi forest reserve, gazetted in 1932, has shrunk to 42.29ha from 47ha."

