

'Areas without development also hit'

GEORGE TOWN: The DAP-led state government yesterday reiterated that heavy rains and the drainage system were the causes of flash floods in Penang last Saturday.

State Public Works Committee chairman Lim Hock Seng said the amount of rainfall in Air Itam was at 135mm, which was much higher than the volume considered as intense rainfall at 60mm.

"Indeed, the drainage system is unable to cope with the large volume of water, which resulted in the flash floods," he said in a statement.

The flash floods hit 14 villages here and affected about 600 people following a three-hour downpour.

The floods had crippled many parts of Penang, halted traffic and submerged homes in Jalan P. Ramlee, Bandar Baru Air Itam, Lebuhraya Thean Teik, Jalan Paya Terubong and Taman Lumba Kuda.

Lim claimed that Barisan Nasional (BN) media and pro-BN non-governmental organisations were finding fault and issuing slanderous remarks over the flash floods.

By right, he said, the third phase of the RM350 million flood mitigation project in Sungai Pinang would have solved the flood woes if it had been completed.

"Until the project proceeds, the state government will study and carry out other flood mitigation projects to minimise the impact of flash

floods in the event that heavy rains recur."

Lim said claims that development and hill clearing were the cause of flash floods were not true as several incidents of landslides outside areas under development were also reported on Saturday.

"In fact, in areas being developed, no landslides were reported as developers carried out mitigation measures to protect the hillslopes."

He said Tuesday's flash floods in Kampung Batu Maung and its surrounding areas were due to road construction by the federal authorities.

"The state government will continue to engage with the Federal Government to find an amicable solution."

Penang Water Supply Corporation chief executive officer Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa said it would

seek a geotechnical consultant's opinion on the safety of the road leading to the Air Itam Dam, which has been closed since Saturday following a landslide.

The hillslope, rising about 60m above a section of the collapsed road, about 350m from the main entrance to the Kek Lok Si Temple, saw soil, fallen trees, vegetation and large rocks, including a boulder deposited on to the road.

"Although, part of the road has since been cleared, the slope uphill still looks unstable. There are boulders sticking out on exposed soil just above the road."



Datuk Jaseni Maidinsa



The Air Itam area in Penang was inundated after a three-hour downpour on Saturday. Pic courtesy of NST reader



Boulders obstructing a road in Lorong Bukit Kukus, Air Itam. They were washed down from a nearby hill during Saturday's downpour. Pic by Shahnaz Fazlie Shahrizal