

Heavy rains wreak havoc in Penang

Island in lockdown as traffic comes to a crawl

GEORGE TOWN: The Penang state government has approved an emergency funding of RM665,000 for flood mitigation works after heavy rains lashed the island, causing landslides, road collapses, floods and fallen trees in many places, leaving thousands stranded as traffic was reduced to a snail's crawl.

State Local Government, Traffic Management and Flood Mitigation Committee chairman Chow Kon Yeow said the state had approved the amount for the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) to carry out seven immediate short-term flood mitigation projects as a RM350mil allocation they had asked for from the Federal Government was not forthcoming.

The state has been hit by floods four times over the last 10 days, with many landslides and road collapses. Even the upper Penang Hill Rail station was hit by the rains with the deluge causing a landslide there. Luckily, the hill rail service was not disrupted.

Among the areas flooded yesterday were Kampung Dodol, Kampung Makam, Jalan Sungai Dua, Jalan Thean Teik, Jalan Scotland, Lorong Batu Lanchang, Dhoby Ghaut, Jalan Datuk Keramat, Jalan P. Ramlee, Jalan Lumba Kuda, Jalan Mesjid Negeri, Kampung Mutiara and Jalan Perak.

Students of SMK Abdullah Munshi in Jalan P. Ramlee, especially those sitting for their SPM exams, were forced to get off their school buses and were ferried by boats to the schools to sit for their exams.

Landslides were reported in Jalan Ujung Batu in Teluk Bahang and part of Jalan Paya Terubong in Relau. Some 200m from the landslide in Jalan Ujung Batu, a section

of the road cracked and collapsed on its side.

Traffic from Jalan Tun Sardon in Balik Pulau heading to Relau had to be redirected to Paya Terubong because of the landslide, causing a massive traffic jam.

Access to both Jalan Ujung Batu and Jalan Paya Terubong were cut off while there was also a sinking road at the hilly route from the Kek Lok Si Temple to the Air Itam dam.

A video went viral of a landslide on a small hill near the Penang Hill's Upper Station, showing a worker scooping out muddy water while several others were clearing the place of mud.

Penang Hill's acting general manager Datuk Ng Wee Kok confirmed the incident, adding that it happened at about 2am yesterday.

"Our workers started cleaning the station at about 7am and managed to clear the station of ankle-deep water and mud within an hour.

"The landslide caused the rainwater to flow into the Upper Station," he said, adding that there was no disruption to the funicular train services.

Chow, commenting on the state's allocation, said: "It will help mitigate the situation especially in the flood-prone areas. The project will start soon and is expected to take between two and three weeks."

After the recent deluge on Deepavali day, the state had pushed for the RM350mil allocation from the Federal Government for the second phase of the flood mitigation project.

Chow said the landslide in Jalan Ujung Batu in Teluk Bahang was due to natural slope failure.

"Continuous downpour soaked

the soil on the hill and it just slipped. It has nothing to do with any development as there is none on the top of the hill," he said.

Teluk Bahang assemblyman Datuk Shah Headan Ayoob Hussain Shah said 70% of Teluk Bahang was flooded yesterday including Kampung Bukit Kecil and Kampung Taman Manggis which started to submerge around 1am.

"I urge the local authorities to look into the possibility of over development," he said.

An expert in environment from Universiti Sains Malaysia School of Humanities said development and land clearing were the two main reasons Penang was constantly being hit by floods and landslides.

Prof Dr Chan Ngai Weng said there were many reasons for the flash floods of late.

"Development is one of the causes as changing land use from green areas to urban built-up areas has reduced permeable surfaces.

"Cutting hill slopes weakens and exposes soil to erosion which sweeps sediments into rivers, hence reducing river carrying capacities for drainage."

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) president S.M. Mohamed Idris said Balik Pulau, which had large swathes of mangrove swamps years ago, was now bare due to clearing of land.

"Mangrove swamps have the ability to absorb rain water and is an essential factor like in a 'food chain' to retain and absorb rain water," said Mohamed Idris.

Watch the video
thetartv.com

