

RM800 MILLION FOR KELANTAN RIVERS

Project in Sg Golok,
Sg Kelantan to be
completed in 5 years

AHMAD FAIRUZ OTHMAN
AND KALBANA PERIMBANAYAGAM
RANTAU PANJANG
news@nst.com.my

THE residents of Rantau Panjang, especially those living near the Sungai Golok riverbank, are overjoyed at the government's announcement of an RM800 million flood mitigation project yesterday.

Grocery shop-owner Halim Yaakub said it was a much-awaited news for the people here because they had been suffering from annual floods.

"It is very good news if they are going to deepen the riverbed and improve the flood mitigation system here. We are so tired of going through the same situation year in year out, every monsoon season."

The 49-year-old said his family had, on many occasions, thought of relocating but stayed on for sentimental reasons.

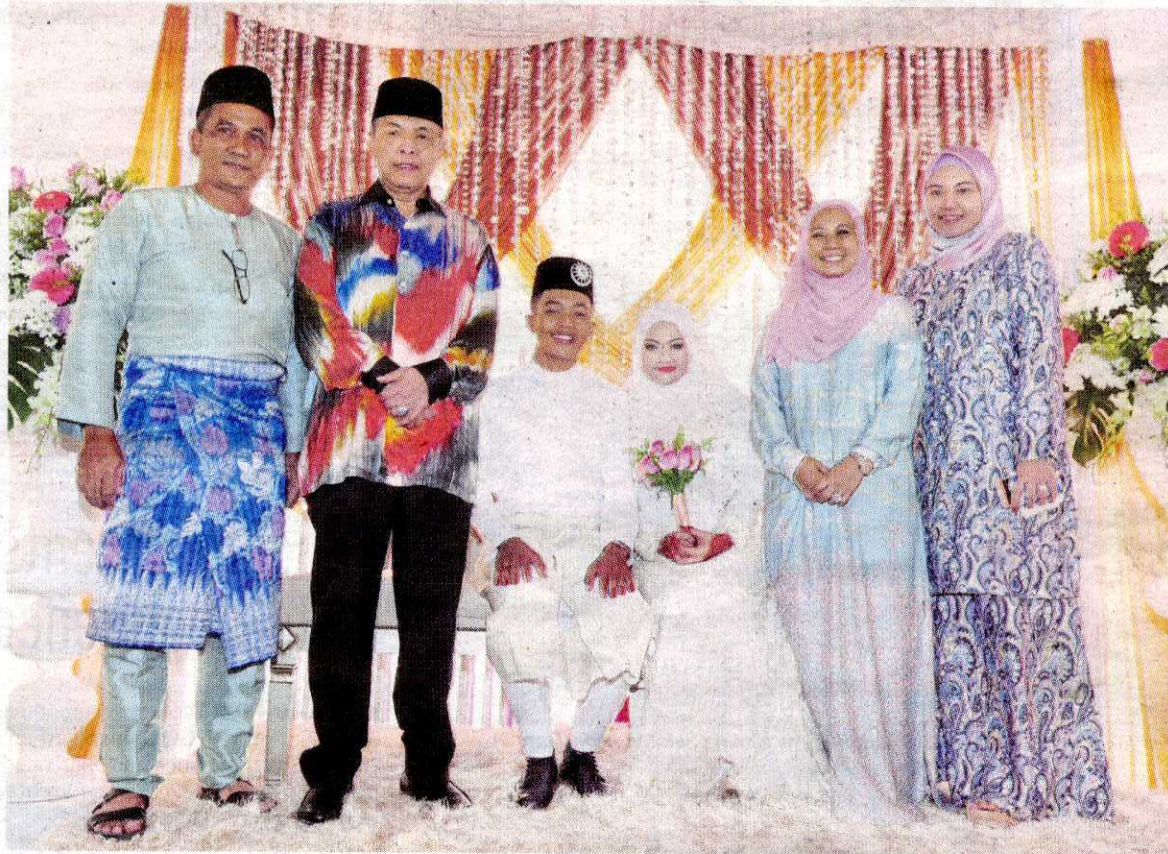
"I inherited this house from my late grandfather and it holds so much memories for me and my siblings. That's why we never left."

Mahanun Mat, 42, from Kampung Kubang Chenok here, expressed her gratitude to the government for addressing the people's plight.

"The announcement is like a New Year's gift. We are grateful for the good news," said the mother of five.

Mahanun hoped that project would be completed within the next three years.

Teacher Mohd Fakhruddin Talib, 49, from SK Rantau Panjang, said it



Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi at the wedding ceremony of the daughter of Datuk Abdul Halim Suleiman (left), special officer at the Home Ministry, in Bandar Seri Alam, Pasir Gudang, Johor, yesterday. PIC BY HAIRUL ANUAR RAHIM

was the best news he had heard for some time.

"Monsoon flooding has become a common scenario for many years. I can't remember when was the last time Sungai Golok didn't overflow."

He said the administration under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak helped to bring more development to Kelantan and its people.

In **Senai** earlier, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi had announced a federal allocation of RM800 million for the

flood mitigation project in the Sungai Golok basin and Sungai Kelantan.

The project is expected to be completed in the next five years.

He said RM300 million would go to the Sungai Golok basin flood mitigation project, while the remaining RM500 million was to deepen and build an embankment in Sungai Kelantan.

He said the first phase of the Sungai Golok mitigation project was expected to start in June, while the second phase would be outlined by

its project coordinator, the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID).

"Discussions will be held by the federal and state governments to determine the details of the project, which will be implemented by the DID.

"The department's long-term plan is to ensure that heavy rains will not affect low-lying areas in Kelantan.

"The allocation must be used effectively and it is hoped the Sungai Golok basin project will be expedited to reduce risks during the monsoon

season," said Zahid after visiting retired army commando Abu Bakar Md Ahmad, 66, who was recovering from stroke at his house in Taman Bukit Senang here yesterday.

"I will monitor the project's development together with the departments involved. I hope it will be carried out well."

He said state Federal Action Council chairman Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim would discuss with the state government about the Sungai Golok project.

Zahid, who is the National Disaster Management Committee chairman, said cooperation from the state government was needed to resolve any land acquisition matters or legal issues on land.

He stressed that the cooperation between the federal and state governments was important to implement the project.

Zahid cautioned that the flood mitigation project would not succeed if the state continued to allow uncontrolled logging activities.

In a related issue, Zahid said the government had instructed the National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) to conduct a socio-economic evaluation of damage from the floods, which had affected Kelantan, Terengganu and Sabah since late last month.

"This initial evaluation by Nadma will help to identify the socio-economic impacts of the flood and allow federal agencies, such as the Finance Ministry, Economic Planning Unit and state Education Departments, to help those affected.

"This is an immediate response to ensure the victims will get the help they need."

Zahid said based on meteorological forecast, the monsoon season would last until March.