

More dams may be answer to flood woes

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PUTRAJAYA: More dams are likely to be built in Johor to ensure that there will be no repeat of the devastating floods.

Drainage and Irrigation Department director-general Datuk Keizrul Abdullah said the possibility of having additional dams was one of the options being considered by the department.

"We will have more dams for flood mitigation purposes to prevent a recurrence (of the disaster)," Keizrul told the *New Straits Times*.

At present, there are six dams in Johor, three of which are managed by DID. The three are located in Sembrong, Bekok and Machap.

The other three dams are managed by Syarikat Air Johor.

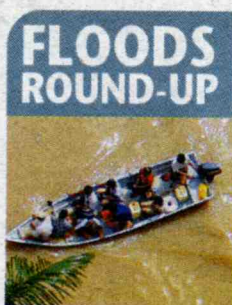
"These six dams do not seem to be enough. I am looking at potential areas where we can build additional dams. I also have to look at the river system itself and its capacity — to determine whether the rivers need to be widened or deepened so that they can hold more water."

Keizrul added that other options being looked into included building more flood-protection facilities, such as flood bunds, walls or bypass, particularly in low-lying areas.

New flood-mitigation plans are also being planned for several main rivers in Johor. "We will have to look at each individual river as each of them has different characteristics. Only then can we come up with the best plans, or a combination of options, for the rivers."

Keizrul said the estimated cost for the projects would be submitted to the government.

He added that there would be an assessment of the depth the floodwaters. "From there, we will be able to analyse and calculate how much water we have to deal with in the future. This has to be done fast."



To achieve this, DID officers would look for water marks in affected areas, including the interiors. "Floods may have occurred in places where nobody lived, but we need to know the exact water levels."

An assessment of damage caused by the floods would also be carried out.

"This will be assessed based on damaged infrastructure. Other agencies, like the Public Works Department, will also do similar assessments on roads and bridges."

Keizrul dismissed rumours that floods in Johor worsened when the authorities released water from the dams into the rivers.

"What people actually saw was the additional water which spilled out automatically from the dams."

"Each dam has a special structure to channel additional water out once it has reached the maximum capacity. There is no truth to the rumours," Keizrul said.

Meanwhile, Energy, Water and Communications Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said there must be a good reason why the authorities released the water.

"What do you think? They simply released water to cause floods? It had surpassed the danger level. There was no other way. This is not a blame game. The rain was an act of God."

"If the dams were filled up to the brim and the water not released, the dams would break and disaster would take place," he said.