

Steps to prevent another flood

STAR 18/1/07.

ALTHOUGH abnormal weather conditions may have contributed to Johor's unprecedented floods, it is also noteworthy to look at other factors that may have exacerbated the situation.

Johor has, in the last 20 to 30 years, seen rapid growth and development. Hundreds of thousands of hectares of land have been opened up for plantations, Felda schemes and a wide array of agricultural and farming activities.

In addition, there has also been tremendous development in the residential, commercial and industrial sectors.

Previously, the vast forested and low-lying areas could absorb quite heavy rainfall but the situation has changed with the massive clearing of land.

As with other states in the

country, residential and industrial areas seldom have retention ponds, and even in the plantations and farming areas the run-off could be large during a heavy downpour.

Worsening the situation is that Johor has a huge expanse of flat or low-lying land which can be easily inundated, and the problem is further complicated by the very large rivers.

Linking up smaller rivers especially in flat terrain can help control the floods, more so in a large state like Johor where one region may experience heavy rainfall whereas another may have dry weather resulting in rivers drying up.

Johor should also look into building more dams for hydro-electric power as well as potable water to mitigate the possibility

of floods.

As heavy rains are usually preceded by a period of dry weather or even drought, dams can play a useful role by filling up or reducing water levels in the dam as and when necessary.

As Johor looks forward to more development and progress, especially with the launch of the massive Iskandar Project, flood mitigation should become a priority now that global weather and climate patterns are in a state of flux.

Furthermore, relocating residents and businesses in the hopelessly low-lying areas need to be given serious attention despite the sure opposition from some quarters.

**V.THOMAS,
Sungai Buloh.**