

Resigned to facing flash floods

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Yee Seng villagers get ready to move to higher ground

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For the past 50 years, a rustic village known as Sector Yee Seng/Thambapillay Timur located just after 4½ Mile of Jalan Kelang Lama has been known for two things – its delicious bakuteh and its nasty flash floods.

At least twice a year, the village will be hit with a massive flood as a result of Sg Kerayong bursting its banks and overflowing.

"There have been instances when flash floods have hit Yee Seng at least three times a week," declared 77-year-old Tan Kim Pah.

"Last April was quite bad, too, when flood waters caused us to lose thousands of ringgit worth of possessions," said Candy Chin.

The 20-year-old teacher's loss, however, is nothing compared to Lee Foon, who lost her 84-year-old mother in the floods in 2003.

"My mother Leong Yu was stubborn. She refused to leave the house when the siren (early warning flood alarm system) went off," said Leong, 56.

"She was alone at home when the water rose up and later on, when we returned to the house, we found her lifeless body on the

floor. She apparently drowned after hitting her head," she said.

With City Hall gearing up for a possible flood that may hit the city, the residents of Yee Seng are merely waiting for it to come.

"What's to prepare? When it (flood) comes you just run *lo*," said 64-year-old Yip Chee Lock.

"After 50 years, the flood is the only constant thing about this place; all one can do is move to higher ground and return later to clean up," added Yip.

It seems as if the villagers have given up hope and accepted the fact that it is something that is going to happen and there is just nothing one can do about it.

Seputeh MP Teresa Kok, who has visited the village time and time again after each flood, said that nothing much could be done about the situation.

"The early warning system which was installed by Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) triggers a siren-like warning when the river water rises to a certain level but that's about all. They merely warn residents," she said.

DID and City Hall had carried out widening and deepening projects on the Klang and Kerayong rivers in a move to resolve the flash floods problem in Jalan



On the alert: Villagers looking at the cause of flash floods in their village – Sungai Kerayong which is mere metres away from their homes.

»We take with us the important documents and valuables and return later hoping that the damage is not as bad as the last one. What else is there to do?«

TAN KIM PAH

Kelang Lama.

The project, which had cost RM30mil, involved the widening and deepening of a 4.2km stretch of the river starting from the Federal Highway to the Petaling Bridge of Jalan Kelang Lama.

"Widening and deepening of the river merely protects the surrounding slopes to ensure that there's no back flow of water but it is not a permanent solution," said Tan.

"We can only hope that once the Government's Storm-Water Management and Road Tunnel (Smart) project is ready, these villagers can finally relax," said Kok.

However, most residents have learnt to cope with the situation by building shelters on their rooftop and high shelves in their homes and only buying plastic furniture.

Most of the 200-odd houses in the village have a raised platform in their doorway, a ladder built leading to the rooftop while every electrical gadget in their house sits on the highest shelves.

"We take with us the important documents and valuables and return later hoping that the damage is not as bad as the last one. What else is there to do?" said Tan.



Keeping water out: Additions like this wooden barrier (left) is common in all the households in the neighbourhood.



Stairway to safety: A staircase leading up to the roof (below) is also a common addition to the houses in the village.