

System of canals a better choice

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BUILDING more dams in Johor as suggested by the Drainage and Irrigation Department and perhaps in other states will not solve the flooding problem ("More dams may be the answer to flood woes" — NST, Jan 18).

Instead, a system of canals is a better choice.

Rapid development of housing and industrial estates as well as other projects have taken away much of our forests, exposed low-lying areas to erosion and obstructed the free flow of rainwater into rivers.

Kubang Pasu and Kota Star, which make up the vast rice-cultivating plain of Kedah, hardly experienced flooding because of their good network of canals and irrigation system.

The sudden flooding in December 2005 in these areas was not due to rainfall but through the release of excessive water from the Pedu Dam.

However, the water was drained off into the sea within two to three days due to the canals meant for irrigation.

Singapore is near Johor and



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it was not affected by the floods. Singapore has many canals and a good drainage system.

Penang like Singapore is an island but, unlike the republic, flooding is common.

Again, one must look at the drainage. Dams may be good for generating hydroelectric power and for irrigation but a good system of canals will prevent flooding.

Why keep so much of excessive water in dams? Let it flow away as fast as possible as it poses a dangerous situation later on.

See how the Dutch manage their water woes and learn from them. Study and know the landscape and follow the most favourable solution.

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Forests critical

A FULL-SCALE inquiry into the Johor floods has been ordered by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. He said infrastructure such as drainage needed to be looked into as flood water levels went up too quickly and took a long time to recede.

Most forests in Pahang, Negri Sembilan and Johor have been severely logged and cleared for plantations.

Our forests act as a sponge in absorbing huge quantities of rainwater and releasing it slowly when there is no rain. Now, this natural sponge has been replaced by plantations.

The torrential rainfall just ran off the ground of these plantations. This rainfall cannot be drained by streams and rivers without causing massive floods.

The floodwaters took a long time to recede because stagnant flood water will take a long time to flow from swampy areas saturated with water.

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