

# Faulty irrigation not to blame for floods

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**JOHOR BARU:** The floods in Johor on Dec 19 and Jan 11 were not due to faulty irrigation, inadequate drainage or the release of dam water, said Menteri Besar Johor Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman.

"No drainage or irrigation system can contain 700mm of rain in three days — Dec 17 to 19," he said, after chairing the weekly state executive council meeting at Bukit Timbalan here yesterday.

Ghani said four months of average annual rainfall had fallen on Segamat and other districts in Johor on Dec 19.

"And excess rainwater upstream in central Johor flowed down to inundate low-lying areas," he said.

Ghani said the release of water from the Sembrong and Bekok dams had been questioned.

"The dams were not built to contain water for residential catchment areas. They were designed to mitigate flooding. That is why you did not hear of floods in Segamat, Muar or Batu Pahat for the past 30 years," he said.

Ghani said based on a Drainage and Irrigation Department report, such heavy rains only occurred once every 100 years.

Due to the overwhelming

flow of water from central Johor, the dams quickly overflowed.

Ghani said water was released systematically to avoid the possibility of the dams bursting.

He said even though the heavy rain had stopped, the water level had not receded in Batu Pahat and the number of flood victims had gone up to more than 52,000.

Authorities had set up five pumps in addition to the seven already in operation.

Given the low ratio of 15 deaths to 200,000 victims in the first wave of flooding and no deaths in the second, Ghani said he was satisfied with relief and rescue efforts.



Abd Karim Idar, 54, (right) with two of his friends, Ahmad Bastuki, 65, and Nazri Jailani, 26, (centre) picking up oil palm bunches at a plantation in Kampung Parit Shukor, Ayer Hitam, Johor, that was still inundated yesterday.