

Reclamation work may be a cause

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JOHOR BARU: The massive land reclamation work by Singapore at Pulau Tekong may have contributed to the recent floods.

The land reclamation is said to have narrowed the river mouth of Sungai Johor, causing the massive destruction in Kota Tinggi.

Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the narrowing of the river mouth had slowed the discharge of excess rain water into the Johor Straits.

He was speaking after receiving a RM5 million donation from the Al-Bukhary Foundation for the Johor flood victims.

Singapore started land reclamation in 2002 along the eastern and western parts of the Johor Straits, near the Malaysian mainland.

The republic's reclamation work, involving 5,214ha of sea area, is expected to be completed in 2010. It would lengthen the headland in Tuas by 7km and double the size of Pulau Tekong, which lies opposite the mouth of Sungai Johor.

Malaysia launched international arbitration proceedings against Singapore in October



2003, saying the land reclamation had damaged its interests by, among other things, narrowing the shipping lanes around the Johor Straits.

It also applied to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for an interim order to stop the reclamation works.

The Hamburg-based tribunal heard the case in September 2003. It then ruled

that the reclamation could continue, but ordered both sides to set up an independent group of experts to study the impact. It was agreed that the recommendations of the experts would be used as the basis of a "mutually acceptable and beneficial solution".

Ghani said Kota Tinggi was in urgent need of new flood mitigation measures.

"One option is to widen the banks of Sungai Johor."

There was a need for new and radical measures as Kota Tinggi would otherwise suffer from repeated flooding.

To worsen the problem, excess rain water from upstream and the surrounding catchment areas also flowed into Sungai Johor, causing its banks to burst.