

Projects to mitigate flood woes

NEW MEASURES: DID to build river diversion system and retention ponds for Sungai Bunus

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THE Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) has plans to build a river retention and diversion system at Sungai Bunus to mitigate flooding problems in the area.

DID director-general Datuk Ahmad Husaini Sulaiman said it was still too early to explain how it would work, but in the meantime, efforts are underway to ensure there is less strain on the river.

Ahmad Husaini explained that Sungai Bunus, which is a smaller river compared with Sungai Klang and Sungai Gombak which run through Kuala Lumpur, was a small catchment on its own.

Its location between the Stormwater Management and

Road Tunnel (Smart) and Batu Jinjang retention ponds in Kampung Batu meant that any overflow from the river was not covered by the two water diversion systems.

The tunnel functions only to divert floodwaters from the Sungai Klang catchment areas and reduce the water levels at the Jalan Tun Perak bridge.

The RM528 million Batu Jinjang ponds have flood diversion channels that begin from Sungai Gombak to Sungai Batu, and from Sungai Keroh to Sungai Jinjang.

During a downpour, water will flow from the channels into the retention ponds, reducing the impact of flash floods.

On a day with normal rainfall, the river is able to cope with the extra flow of water.

However, Sungai Bunus could not cope with Tuesday's heavy rainfall.

The DID said the upstream of Sungai Bunus in Air Panas, Setapak recorded a rainfall of 230mm in only one hour and 45 minutes.

"The maximum flow rate of Sungai Bunus is 70 cumecs (cubic metre per second). The river's flow rate on Tuesday reached 200 cumecs," Ahmad Husaini said, adding that if that amount of rain fell into Sungai Klang or Sungai Gombak, then the Smart and Batu Jinjang systems would have prevented flooding.

Tuesday's heavy rainfall at 4.30pm caused flash floods along Jalan Tun Razak near the National Library and other major roads in the city.

KL Mayor Tan Sri Ahmad Fuad Ismail said the floods in Jalan Tun Razak was caused by Sungai Bunus overflowing its banks.

"As a long-term measure, a river diversion project will be imple-

mented to divert the flow of water at Sungai Bunus to Tasik Titiwangsa. This will be brought up to the cabinet."

Ahmad Fuad also said two retention ponds in Air Panas and Setapak Jaya, worth RM20 million, would be built for the purpose of slowing the flow of water into Sungai Bunus.

He also added that City Hall would be clearing all rubbish traps in the city daily.

Meanwhile, meteorological and climate expert Datuk Dr Azizan Abu Samah suggested that areas prone to flooding be equipped with better drainage systems or more open spaces for water to seep into the ground.

He said the development of roads in the country today did not include a system to manage water run-off from heavy rainfall.

"In the old days, we used to have

huge monsoon drains but all of them have been covered to widen Kuala Lumpur's roads.

"Moreover, the small gratings by the roadside are just not effective enough to prevent flooding."

Azizan added that replacing pavements with grass surfaces would allow excess water to easily seep into the ground.

Centre for Environment, Technology and Development Malaysia executive director Anthony Tan stressed the responsibility of every individual to ensure drain maintenance.

"They should report to the authorities on any clogged or damaged drain and the authorities should respond immediately. People take these things for granted and then start pointing fingers at the authorities when flash floods occur." **Additional reporting by S. K. Thanusha Devi**