

Kuala Lumpur's SMART Tunnel not looking so smart anymore

THE SMART Tunnel is the pride and joy of the authorities who have always touted it as the ultimate solution to the flood problems in Kuala Lumpur. When the project was rushed to be opened in January 2007, we were all told that the floods that hit the city a few months earlier would be the last as the tunnel was the longest and biggest storm drain project in South-East Asia.

True enough, for several years our capital city seemed to have been spared from any deluge despite some heavy downpour. Motorists were irritated when the tunnel had to be closed to accommodate the draining of rainwater to the reten-



tion ponds but, generally, city folk were impressed with the workings of the RM1.9bil Storm Water Management and Road Tunnel project — until last Tuesday.

That was the day Jalan Tun Razak, Jalan Semarak and Kampung Baru were flooded just like how it was in 2006, when the worst flood ever hit the city centre. It was as if we were like Bangkok a few weeks ago. What happened to the SMART Tunnel?

A spokesman for SMART had said

that had it not been for the SMART Tunnel, KL would have experienced much worse flooding last week.

It also seems that the river that burst its bank was Sungai Bunus. It flows through the Kampung Baru-Jalan Tun Razak-Jalan Semarak area and this waterway was not covered under the SMART Tunnel scope.

So, there is now a need to come up with a flood mitigation project to resolve this "new problem".

At Monday's Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) budget meeting, KL Mayor Tan Sri Ahmad Fuad Ismail announced an allocation of RM85mil for flood mitigation works, including RM20mil for the Federal Territory

Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) to divert water from Sg Bunus to Lake Titiwangsa. This, he said, was to help mitigate the recent flooding along Jalan Tun Razak.

Why was this not thought of earlier when billions were being spent on the SMART Tunnel and the other flood mitigation projects implemented over the years? Why is it after a few hours of downpour in 2011 that Sg Bunus has suddenly become a problem?

In fact in 2007 seven projects costing millions were carried out in various flood hot spots in the city.

Some of these "long-term" measures include building floodwater

retention ponds, upgrading drainage and diverting water from one river to another. All of these projects were completed and yes, many of them are effective.

Sg Bunus seems like a new problem, one caused by rapid unplanned development.

There have been new projects built along and even over Sg Bunus. Could it be that these developments are the cause of the floods? Instead of just spending millions of ringgit only on flood mitigation projects, the authorities should also carry out studies of how rivers or even storm drains in Kuala Lumpur are impacted by nearby development.