

Cause of floods identified

TOO MUCH WATER : Heavy rain in three catchment areas upstream of Sungai Pari blamed for recent flash floods in Ipoh

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HEAVY rain in three catchment areas upstream of Sungai Pari has been identified as the main cause of the flash floods which inundated parts of low-lying areas in the city on Monday.

Initial findings by the Perak Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) point to excessive rainfall in the Meru, Chemor and Sungai Tapah catchment areas as the reason for the sudden huge increase in the volume of water which flowed into Sungai Pari.

The department's director, Datuk Abdul Razak Dahalan, said the extraordinary rainfall which lasted for about five hours upstream as well as downstream was a rare occurrence which caused the river to reach its highest point.

"Obviously, this was a rare occurrence. There was simply too much water flowing into the river at that point in time causing the water level in the river to peak to an extraordinary height," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

Monday's flash floods — the worst in three decades — affected hundreds of houses in Gugusan Manjoi, Lim Garden and other residential

areas situated along the river.

More than 120 families living in Gugusan Manjoi — a cluster of several villages — were evacuated to relief centres. They returned home on Tuesday.

Razak, however, pointed out that it would be a mistaken notion to solely blame excessive rainfall for causing the floods.

"To an extent, the flood also happened because of the low-decked bridges and low water outlet pipes built over Sungai Pari in several spots.

"These structures constricted the flow of the already excessively-volumed river causing it to breach its banks and spread into the low-lying areas in the city."

He said the problem was compounded by the large amount of garbage carried by the river which got trapped at the low-decked bridges and water outlet pipes further constricting the river current.

According to Razak, several floodgates along the river were also not functioning properly as their gates had been stolen by thieves, adding that the gates had been replaced several times by the DID.

"With its flow constricted, the river eventually eroded its own banks including causing a concrete bridge (at a slip road connecting Manjoi and Jalan Kuala Kangsar) to collapse."

On the options available to the DID to avert such massive flood in future, he said the department planned to build at least three retention ponds at several strategic and critical sites along the river especially near residential areas.

Razak said this was a cheaper alternative compared to excavation of the riverbed and construction of dikes, adding that a reasonably good flood mitigation system along the river would probably cost at least RM50 million.