

RM810m to fund flood mitigation projects

PUTRAJAYA: Close to a billion ringgit is being pumped into flood mitigation projects (FMP) this year.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas said RM810 million would fund 20 projects to help some 350,000 people across the nation.

This included those staying in Muar, Chukai in Terengganu, Kota Baru, six areas in Kuching and Sibuluan, Kuantan, and Putatan and Lahad Datu in Sabah.

FMP involved widening and deepening of rivers, installation of

pumps, construction of detention ponds, flood control gates, flood by-passes and the upgrading of the drainage system.

In June, the government will launch an early flood warning system which is capable of alerting the public 48 hours in advance of a possible disaster.

The system, built following recent floods in Kedah, Kelantan and Johor, will be placed at four major rivers — Sungai Johor, Sungai Pahang, Sungai Kelantan and Sungai Muda in Kedah.

The Drainage and Irrigation Department, under his ministry, is also improving on an alert system so that warnings and information can be disseminated via text messages, radio, television and the Internet.

Currently, the department's "Infobanjir" is monitored constantly, especially during the monsoon season, while a Short Messaging Service system is in its trial stage at Sungai Damansara.

This year's budget is part of the RM3.6 billion allocated under the 10th Malaysia Plan.

Last year, RM344 million was spent on 34 FMPs which benefited 342,061 people.

The Ninth Malaysia Plan saw RM5.35 billion channelled to 163 projects, benefiting some 2.34 million people.

"These projects are about the rakyat's lives and we don't want them to be burdened by natural calamities, such as floods, especially with climate change threatening to increase rainfall.

"We are essentially putting the people first, no matter the cost."