

Sabah seeks federal aid

State needs RM45mil for urgent flood mitigation works

By RUBEN SARIO
sario@thestar.com.my

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah seeks fund from Putrajaya for urgent flood mitigation works in three districts, said Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman.

He said some RM45mil was needed for the construction of new drainage works in Penampang, Inanam and Putatan to channel water away from flood prone areas more efficiently.

Musa said the floods, which inundated Penampang and parts of Inanam as well as Mengatal, was caused by unusual rainfall in the state over eight days.

"The Meteorological Services Department said the amount of rain that fell over the west from Oct 3 to Oct 10 was equivalent to the average amount in a month," he said after being briefed by senior state infrastructure officials at the Penampang District Office here.

Musa said the existing drainage system had difficulty in coping with the sudden surge in excess water.

Earlier in his briefing to Musa, Penampang district officer William



Threat from river: Musa (third from left) taking a look at the swollen Moyog River in Penampang district.

Sampil said as many as 40,000 people from 70 villages were affected by Tuesday's floods with water reaching nearly 2m in some places.

State Drainage and Irrigation Department director Jeffery Ng said they had completed a flood mitigation plan for Penampang district, adding that it was estimated to cost about RM200mil.

He said most urgent was the

construction of a drain that would channel excess rain water from Kampung Kibabaig, one of the worst hit flood areas, to a nearby monsoon drain.

Ng added similar by-pass drains were also needed at Kampung Rampayan at Inanam and at Kampung Sindil in Putatan.

Public Works Department director Datuk John Anthony said about RM14mil was required to

repair the damage along the Penampang-Tambunan trunk road.

Another RM10mil was needed to repair a collapsed section of the road near Kampung Sunsuron near Tambunan, and RM4mil to repair a section of the road that had cracked near Penampang.

John said the repair work was estimated to take about four months to complete.

Switch to vege and cash crops, ketum farmers urged

ALOR SETAR: Cultivators of the *ketum* plant should switch to growing vegetables and cash crops, according to the Kedah National Anti-Drugs Agency.

Its director, Mohammad Nazer Mustafa, said Budget 2015 presented by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on Friday provided a new hope for these farmers as *ketum* cultivation was considered illegal.

It is learnt that Kedah has 15 farmers engaged in *ketum* cultivation.

Najib, when tabling Budget 2015, said the Government proposed to strengthen the food supply chain by assisting farmers, breeders and fishermen to increase their income.

The Government proposed to allocate RM6bil to the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry to, among other things, accelerate the planting and replanting of fruit trees such as durian, mangosteen, langsung and rambutan.

There is also a proposal to provide RM100mil matching grants to the Farmers' Organisation Authority to enable members to obtain loans for improving farm productivity and marketing channels. — Bernama