'Aggressive land clearing made flooding in Kelantan worse'

KUALA LUMPUR: The 2014 Auditor General's Report for Kelantan confirms that flooding in the state was worsened by aggressive land clearing and sand mining.

The third series of the report, released yesterday, said excessive changes in the use of land along river corridors was one of the main factors contributing to flooding in the state.

"Among the main contributors of floods are extreme and heavy rain, sudden changes in the use of land along river corridors and hill slopes in terms of agricultural developments and logging producing silt and waste that deteriorated the flood phenomenon in 2014/2015."

The report also highlighted that the floods which hit the state last year were responsible for taking the lives of 14 people with more than 300,000 flood victims in Kelantan alone.

The report said the overflow of floodwater from Sungai Kelantan was the main cause of the December 2014 flood, making the disaster the worst in 50 years.

The auditor general highlighted that there was no coordination between agencies before a particular project commenced, and coordination was only seen among the agencies when issues arose.

"A meeting on the effects of dredging was held on Sept 28, 2010 which decided that no sand mining activity be allowed within the Sungai Kelantan areas. However, based on the letter from Special Project Division on April 26 2013, sand mining activities were still ongoing by third parties during their site visit on March 18, 2013."

The report also underlined aggressive sand extraction from Sungai Kelantan near Kampung Cina would cause erosion to river banks and the structure of flood embankments that were already built.

"Based on reports by the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) for the year 2014/2015, a total of 319,156 flood victims were recorded along with 14 deaths.

"The estimated damage from the flood is RM155.96 million, comprising RM 60.8 million of local property, RM49.8 million of DID's infrastructure, RM43.72 million of DID's public facilities and RM1.59 million of agriculture."