

# Sg Pahang dredging a boon

## FLOOD MITIGATION:

Firm to finance project by selling sand cleared from riverbed

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**A** PROJECT to deepen Sungai Pahang is expected to mitigate floods in the long term and replenish the river's fish population.

The project, which started in September last year and spans 551km, is divided into three phases. Currently, four dredging machines

are operating in Kuala Krau in Temerloh and Jerantut.

The good news is that the state government has spent nothing as the contractor, Gegaran Alam Sdn Bhd, will bear the estimated cost of RM600 million to complete phase one in 15 years.

Its managing director, Steven Ng, said the company would generate income from selling sand it dredged from the river to cover its costs.

He said the project, the first in the country, used technology and expertise from China for the dredging operations.

He said the Sungai Pahang riverbed would be dredged to be more than 3m deep, and this would potentially yield 26 million cubic metres of sand in the first phase.

He said the second phase would begin in the next few years to en-

sure dredging work could be carried out simultaneously before the third phase, involving maintenance work, started.

"For example, if there was only one dredger in Kuala Krau, then it needs to move 3.2km in a year to achieve its target. But, if we have three machines, then each will need to dredge about 1km," he told the *New Straits Times* at his office here.

Ng said the company planned to have a dredging machine operating every 18km to 20km, to ensure work could be carried out on schedule.

He said under the first phase, the company would dredge a part of Sungai Pahang in Temerloh up to Sungai Ulu Jelai and Sungai Lipis, followed by Sungai Kuantan to Sungai Kenau in Sungai Lembing here, covering 272km.

The second phase involves Temerloh to Pekan, covering certain stretches of Sungai Pahang, Sungai Semantan, Sungai Bentong and Sungai Telemong, covering 279km, and upon completion, river maintenance work will begin.

Ng said to ensure Sungai Pahang would not be badly polluted by the sediment stirred up by the dredging work, especially near floating fish cages, the company had a ready answer.

"We will put up silt curtains (barriers designed to hold pollutants in a pond or river) to prevent fish cages from being disturbed or the contamination of the area.

"Once deepened, there will be more fish species as the temperature in the river will be lower and this will boost spawning."

On the dredging process, Ng said the bucket dredgers would pick up

sediment on the riverbed before loading it into a waiting barge.

"At certain areas, we will also use river stones to prevent erosion. The riverbanks are badly eroded due to floods, and this will help strengthen the banks."

Ng said with time, the sandy banks would be covered with plants and vegetation to prevent further erosion.

He said before the project took off, a consultant had been hired to complete an Environmental Impact Assessment, which covered details on the species of fish in the river, mitigation efforts, landscape and water quality.

He said the progress of the dredging work was monitored by government agencies, led by the Drainage and Irrigation Department, to ensure that the requirements were strictly adhered to.