

Narrow culvert, heavy rainfall blamed for flash floods

TELUK BAHANG (Penang): The blame game has started among lawmakers in the state as to the cause of Monday's flash floods which brought several parts of the island to a standstill.

While Teluk Bahang assemblyman Datuk Shah Headan Ayoob Hussain Shah blamed a narrow culvert for causing the floods in his area, Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said it happened due to unusually heavy rain within a short span of five hours.

Speaking after visiting flood victims here yesterday, Lim also went on to blame an ongoing federal road project as the cause of the floods in Teluk Kumbar.



Datuk Shah Headan Ayoob Hussain Shah

This is despite the fact that numerous quarters have blamed the floods there on massive development in the area.

Lim also said the floods at the Penang International Airport was beyond the state government's control as it was under the federal authority.

"The 250mm rainfall is usually for one month, but we recorded it within five hours.

"This is beyond our expectation and something that seldom hap-

pens," he said.

Lim said a RM10 million flood mitigation project was under way in Teluk Kumbar and was expected to be completed by the end of this year.

"As for the request from Shah Headan Ayoob to upgrade the drainage system here, we have financial constraints.

"We are facing financial constraints to fund the project and I hope the people can be patient with us," he added.

Speaking at a separate press conference earlier, Shah Headan Ayoob said the culvert could not hold the large volume of water flowing from three nearby tributaries due to the overnight showers.

"That, coupled with the high tide, resulted in the water being unable to flow into the sea, causing it to overflow into the houses," he said, adding that he had forwarded a request to the state government, through the state Public Works Department, to upgrade the culvert at a cost of RM15 million.

"It has been two years now and nothing is being done. The state government should give serious consideration to this application to en-



Halimaton Sadiyah Jaafar (left) and her family cleaning up the mud in their house in Teluk Bahang, Penang, yesterday. Pic by Ramdzan Masiam

sure the people will not suffer," he said.

Checks by the *New Straits Times* showed the swift flowing culvert was filled with murky water. Large logs, tree branches and leaves were found in abundance inside the culvert.

Shah Headan Ayoob said instead of letting it go to waste, the state water authority should find a more effective way to channel the huge volume of rainfall into the nearby

Teluk Bahang Dam.

"Why are we wasting precious water? What is the Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBA) doing about it?

"Why not find a way to channel the water into the dam? It is raining heavily and the water capacity at the dam is just a little over 43 per cent.

"How can they explain this?" he asked, urging PBA to look into the matter.

Shah Headan Ayoob said the DAP-led state government had been in power for the last eight years and has not shown its effectiveness in dealing with the flood issues.

"I remember that solving the flood problem was part of their manifesto.

"Why are the people still facing floods?" he said.

It was reported that several parts of the island were brought to a standstill on Monday after overnight showers caused several low-lying areas to be inundated in knee-deep water.

Teluk Bahang was the worst hit area with more than 1,000 people affected. Other affected areas were Relau and Batu Maung.

Even the Penang International Airport in Bayan Lepas was not spared with the public area at the arrival level, the turbo prop lounge and service roads flooded.

Fourteen inbound and outbound flights were delayed by the heavy rain.

Meanwhile, checks by the NST showed that life has returned to normal for villagers here.

Some of them were busy cleaning up the mud in their houses.

As for those staying at flood relief centres, they have since returned home.