

# Solving a perpetual problem

FLASH flooding is a recurrent problem in Malaysia. It happens regularly and will continue to do so as long as no far-reaching and radical solution is taken to solve the problem at source.

Residents in high-rise buildings in densely populated cities like Kuala Lumpur contribute a high volume of wastewater. Without a properly maintained drainage system, this plus the accumulated surface run-off from heavy downpours will trigger flash floods.

Areas where there is heavy and unsustainable urban development that involves cutting down trees and covering grassy fields and soil with asphalt to build roads and pavements without ensuring that the drains have enough capacity to handle a high amount of water are also prone to flash floods.

It is time to deploy radical solutions to alleviate the problem. Besides investing heavily to maintain the existing drainage systems and to build a higher capacity and more modern one, a mindset change among the entire population in Malaysia is also desperately needed.

The enforcement agencies have to be very strict in ensuring that all regulations are observed by building, road or infrastructure developers and contractors. Silt traps in certain project sites are often very poorly maintained and, as a result, sediment and debris from the construction activities clog the drains nearby, leading to flash floods after a heavy downpour.

Building contractors must adhere to the guidelines in the Erosion and Sediment Control Plan when it comes to the disposal of construction waste.



Enforcement officials have to conduct regular checks at construction sites and should not hesitate to issue warnings and stop-work-orders to errant contractors and to prosecute them.

Civic consciousness is seriously lacking among the Malaysian public. Roadside stall operators or those at hawker centres are dumping garbage indiscriminately into drains. Some Malaysians have no qualms about throwing rubbish into the drains either. These actions contribute to clogged drains that obstruct smooth flow of water.

Awareness campaigns are needed to educate the public that rubbish and other wastes that are not properly disposed can contribute to floods and other harmful environmental effects.

A major re-look at the city's drainage system is needed besides implementing further improve-

ments. This requires financial allocations for flood prevention and mitigating measures.

The relevant agencies must also intensify maintenance to clear clogged drains and rehabilitate rivers such as the Gombak and Klang Rivers to allow smooth passage of water during heavy downpours.

I urge the Government to make a special allocation for flood mitigation measures in the coming Budget 2017. Unless drastic action is taken to deal with the causes of such floods, more damage can be expected.

The Government's move to create Taman Tugu should be lauded because when this city rainforest project is completed, it could help to reduce the occurrence of flash floods.

**TAN SRI LEE LAM THYE**  
Kuala Lumpur