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Tunnel way to beat floods (HL)

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - The Government is studying the best ways to overcome the problem of flash floods in Kuala Lumpur, including building underground tunnels to quickly channel water from flood-prone areas to the rivers, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the move had started with the construction of smart tunnels near the Sungai Besi airport.

"We know the problem. We must spend a lot of money to dig the river again to deepen it and there is a lot more that we have to do to overcome this problem," he told reporters after chairing the meeting of Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers, which was also attended by several Cabinet members, here.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked about the Government's long-term plans to overcome the problem of flash floods in the Federal capital.

Flash floods hit Kuala Lumpur and its surrounding areas during a three-hour downpour which started at 4pm yesterday, crippling traffic flow and public transport system. The flood waters receded about 9pm.

Besides damage to property, the floods also claimed two lives - a 60-year-old man who was trapped in his house in Taman Desa, Jalan Klang Lama, and a 50-year-old man who fell into a hole filled with water, also in Jalan Klang Lama.

Meanwhile, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tengku Datuk Adnan Mansor said a working paper on ways to prevent flash floods would be submitted to the Cabinet in two weeks at the latest.

The paper was being jointly drafted by Kuala Lumpur City Hall and the Drainage and Irrigation Department, said Tengku Adnan who reported to the Cabinet on yesterday's floods at its meeting today.

He said the DID was involved in preparing the paper as most of the flash floods in the city and its surrounding areas were caused by the inability of the rivers to drain a huge volume of water in a short time, he said when contacted.

Among the methods proposed in the working paper was the use of smart tunnels to channel water from upstream into retention ponds before slowly releasing it into the rivers, he said, adding that this method had been used at the Desa Waterpark in Taman Desa.

"We will also think of ways to overcome the siltation of rivers and to channel rain water to the rivers to prevent floods," he said.

He said yesterday's deluge caused several flood-assessment points to record water levels exceeding the danger point.

He added that the floods in Jalan Tun Razak were caused by the Sungai Gombak overflowing its banks.

The floods in Kampung Baru and Kampung Datuk Keramat were caused by the water level in Sungai Klang being higher than low-lying areas and as a result the water could not flow into the river, he said.