

Minister snubs Penang protesters at Putrajaya
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A group of residents from Taman Kota Permai, Penang, who have been suffering flash floods for the past three years, are unhappy that their long trek to Putrajaya to submit a memorandum to minister Peter Chin Fah Kui was met with a rebuff from the Green Technology, Energy and Water Ministry.

The floods are caused by the Sewerage Services Department's RM73 million sewerage development project under the ministry in their locality.

"We are not happy with the treatment we received. I had already made an appointment with the parties involved, but they refused to see us," complained Taman Kota Permai special task force chairperson Bernard Cheen Goon Hooi.

The group of 28 angry residents, accompanied by Padang Lalang assemblyperson Michael Tan Cheong Hang and the Penang chief minister's political secretary Ng Wei Aik, descended upon the minister's office at 10.30 am today to protest the inadequate compensation provided for repairing the damage the sewerage project has caused to their property.

They gathered in front of the minister's office for 10 minutes, displaying banners.

Cheen complained that Chin (right), who happened to be leaving his office while they were there, did not even stop to speak to them.

He said the group in the end managed to hand over the memorandum to Deputy Minister Noriah Kasnon's private secretary, Abidin Supardi.

Inadequate assessment

The memorandum requested , among others, that the ministry adopt a more proactive approach to address the issue, and wanted Ikram - a division which provides comprehensive geotechnical engineering testing services - to come up with preventive measures to put an end to the flash floods.

The residents also wanted the ministry to perform a thorough soil structure and water table level assessment.

In addition, they requested for a visual inspection for each and every house affected, before the Property Valuation Department evaluates the houses for damage.

Cheen also added that they will withdraw a letter of indemnity signed by the residents between February and March 2009 until new Ikram officers can be appointed to reassess the case, as they feel the previous ones failed to produce a thorough report.

He said they wanted a more comprehensive compensation plan based on the damage suffered from the start of the sewerage project until the present.

"Many are not satisfied with the compensation which was provided previously, since the land sedimentation factor which is affecting most houses currently was not considered," he said.

He added that in some parts of the residential area, they are experiencing land sedimentation of up to 50.8cm.

'Department favouring developers?'

"We feel cheated as the Sewerage Services Department under the ministry is seemingly acting in favour of the developers rather than the residents," he said.

He said they had experienced 35 flooding incidents in the housing area since October 2007.

An article by Star on June 5 reported that the residents of Taman Kota Permai are worried for their safety after cracks started appearing in their houses.

The report attributed the cracks to rock blasting activities and piling works at the nearby sewerage project. The flash floods and cracks have affected a total of 101 houses.

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