

Penang seeks RM1 bil to solve flood woes
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The opposition-led Penang state government has asked the Barisan Nasional federal government for nearly RM1 billion in funding to carry out flood mitigation projects under the 10th Malaysia Plan (10MP).

Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, who wrote an official application to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, said current projects were inadequate and insufficient to thwart the increasing occurrence of flash floods in many areas during rainy spells and storms.

lim guan eng and penang "We need the funds to carry out the earmarked projects to completely resolve the state flood problem," he told reporters yesterday, adding that he plans to meet Abdullah soon to secure the funds.

Lim's application is seen as timely given last Saturday's flash floods that hit most areas in Penang. Rainfall that day measured at between 180ml and 200 ml within 24 hours, due to the combination of high tide effect and torrential downpours.

Some 1,000 families were affected, with the worst-hit areas along parts of Jalan Datuk Keramat and Jalan Perak, Jalan P Ramlee, Bayan Lepas, Teluk Kumbar and Teluk Bahang on the island and Kampung Tok Suboh, Kampung Suluk, Sungai Batu and Kampung Paya on the mainland.

The heavy rain also caused a series of mudslides, landslides and tree collapses in the Relau, Balik Pulau and Tanjung Bungah hilly areas, both of which have already been earmarked as landslide-prone zones.

Seven main projects earmarked

According to Lim, some RM670 million will be channeled to complete seven major flood mitigation projects, while RM300 million will be used to build water pump stations and five retention ponds in other critical areas.

The single biggest project will cost RM300 million, covering Sungai Juru and the densely populated urban areas of Bukit Mertajam, Permatang Rawa, Sungai Ara and Sungai Rambai.

Other projects include the second phases of Sungai Junjong and Sungai Pinang jobs, both costing RM125 million each; the RM50 million Bayan Baru Cyber City project; the RM30 million Bukit Panchar- Byram- Transkrian-Jawi project; and the Bukit Tambun-Tanjung Ketupat and Valdor projects costing RM20 million each.

The flood mitigation projects will also include work to expand and straighten rivers, the building of retention ponds and upgrading of primary and secondary drainage systems.

Lim also said the state government would have to issue directives to the relevant authorities for the relocation of residents staying nearby to the projects and riverbanks.

Under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP), the federal government allocated RM327million to

complete four major flood mitigation projects by 2011 in Bertam (RM110 million), Sungai Prai (RM158.2 million), and the first phases of Sungai Junjong (RM10 million) and Sungai Pinang (RM7 million).

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