

Build stilt houses in the East Coast, says Dr M
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PETALING JAYA: Former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad has suggested that houses in the East Coast be built on stilts to reduce the damage caused by floods.

In a blog article posted yesterday, he said there would be savings on repairs if builders reverted to the traditional Malay architecture with some modifications.

“The stilts supporting the houses must be sturdy and buried deep in the ground. Concrete should be used,” he said.

“Steps can be built leading up to the first floor as in the old Malay houses. A ramp can be built so that the cars can be driven up to the first floor during floods. There should of course be an entrance to the house from the raised porch for the car.”

He said the government too would save money on flood relief.

“Government spends quite a substantial amount of money for flood relief,” he said. “By insisting that houses be built on stilts, this money would be saved.

“Part of the savings can be used to subsidise the cost of the stilts, at least initially. The house-owners or occupants too would save money.

“Architects can design these stilts so as to look attractive. In fact, a competition for new styles of houses on stilts should be held if this idea is accepted.”

Mahathir said he was born into a family that lived in a house on stilts and used a similar architecture to build his own house when he became an adult.

“When I built my own house in Titi Gajah, I decided to raise the ground by about two feet. A concrete wall two feet high was built around my land.

“The ground floor of the house was at a slightly higher level, about three feet.

“I decided to build a basement about 1½ feet lower. The window of the basement was about four feet above the floor. Outside the basement, I heaped up earth to a level just below the windows. The kitchen was also at the level of the basement.

“Flood waters did not get into my kitchen or basement.

“But during big floods, water did get into the kitchen and basement but not high enough to damage the hot plates or refrigerator,” he said.

Malaysia’s longest serving prime minister said the country must find ways to reduce the

suffering caused by annual floods.

“If we don’t do something, every year thousands will have to be evacuated and a few will lose their lives. And lots of money would be wasted on food, evacuation and repairing flood damage.”

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