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NEWSFOCUS

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'Blame the floods on rapid growth, poor town planning'



Department of Irrigation and Drainage director-general Datuk Paduka Kelzrul Abdullah has instructed that the SMART water tunnel to be opened a week earlier.

KUALA LUMPUR: Imagine all the water in 3,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools dumped into the middle of the city.

That was exactly what happened in Sunday's flash floods when 7.5 million cubic metres of excess water invaded parts of the city.

The flash floods, which raised the ire of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, were the result of years of rapid development and poor town planning, said Department of Irrigation and Drainage (IID) director-general Datuk Paduka Kelzrul Abdullah.

He announced in a statement that to mitigate future floods in the city, the 9.7km water tunnel of the Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (SMART) will be opened a week ahead of schedule. It was originally scheduled to begin operating at the end of this month.

Kelzrul said the department was speeding up the safety checks of the almost-completed water tunnel.

"The highest flood water levels in the city has increased by threefold over the past 20 years as shown in data collected at the Jalan Tun Perak bridge."

Kelzrul said that every time a development occurred without planning for proper irrigation, existing rivers would have to cope with two to three times more excess water.

For example, 40 per cent of Subang Jaya is already developed, raising the water level during floods to 1.9 times the maximum capacity of the rivers and catchment areas because the runoff could not be absorbed by the Damansara or Penchala rivers.

Kelzrul said apart from the multi-billion-ringggit flood-mitigation projects, the department had also been enforcing the Urban Stormwater Management Manual.

The manual, which was introduced in 2001, requires developers to plan for proper drainage before developing a plot of land, including building correct-sized drains or water retention ponds.

"The impact of the flood-mitigation projects will not be seen immediately but after all the projects are completed by mid-2009, there should be a decrease in the frequency of flash floods."

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