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Flood early warning system mooted



(Top) Development Minister Pehin Dato Hj Suyoi (R) examining the map of the Tutong floodplain area while Director of Environmental Consultants (IEC) Sdn Bhd, Warwick Newall (L) briefs him. (Above) Ministry of Development officials inspecting the site of the drainage area. Pictures: BT/Yusri Adanan

TUTONG

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AN EARLY warning system for floods, which could see equipment installed in households in flood-prone areas in Tutong district, is among the "non-structural measures" proposed under the flood management scheme for Sungai Tutong floodplain.

Other measures included the control of land use, land zoning according to level of flood risk and relocations of houses in remote locations.

During a presentation on the scheme by project consultant, Integrated Environmental Consultants (IEC) Sdn Bhd, IEC Director Warwick Newall explained to Ministry of Development officials that the "flood early warning system" would assist emergency response services in mitigating the impact of floods.

They have also identified specific emergency shelter points or buildings as well as evacuation routes for the various locations or villages, namely Seramban, Lubok Pulau, Tanjong Maya, Penapar/ Kuala Abang

that were prone to flooding.

Some of the evacuation routes were based upon the roads that are currently being raised by the Ministry of Development, so that they would provide flood-free access for residents, as well as serve as a "safe parking" area for residents who stay or leave their cars behind.

Newall also discussed the desired option of relocating houses in frequently flooded areas. The idea has been mooted before during the discussions on the Tutong District plan, which is aimed at guiding the district's development in the next two decades.

The idea has met some hurdles as it was argued that residents were reluctant to leave, due to "sentimental" reasons, as one government officer described it yesterday.

However, Newall said relocation proposals have recently gained "increased recognition".

"Relocations from flood prone land (is) recommended where repeat cost of flood damages and protection outweighs cost of new infrastructure/ utilities," he said.

"What we would like to do is to relocate them within their own villages," he added.

The director said that the site selection was based on elevated or undeveloped land, preferably state land and not TOL (Temporary Occupation License), and it had to be within half a kilometre of existing road.

The relocation of houses are tentative future works of the Sungai Tutong Floodplain Improvements project.

Newall said that from the Sungai Tutong floodplain management study, which was completed in 2006, the consultants found that flood levels in the district varied from 2.5 metres to 13 metres, increasing in depth from Tutong township to Kg Belaban.

He explained that "multiple small (rainfall) events" in different areas in the district or on successive days can cause flooding similar to one in five year events, or rarer.

Newall further said that the rarity of the flooding event represented the severity of its impact, with a rarer event causing greater impact. — Ubaidillah Masli

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