

Malaysia to look at global experts to solve flood woes

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KUALA LUMPUR: International expertise will be sought for flood solutions in Malaysia.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said a conference on floods will be held in January, adding that academicians as well as local and international experts would be invited to attend.

"We will look at solving flood woes in the whole of Malaysia. I have to stress that there is no one formula that fits all. Penang needs its own formula, so do Kelantan, Terengganu, Sabah and Sarawak," he said.

The experts would also put their

heads together on solving erosion at coastal areas, Dr Wan Junaidi added.

He was speaking to reporters at Chong Hwa Independent High School here after handing over a letter of approval to the school management to use the land underneath Duke Highway as a car park.

Also present was Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong, who represented MCA president and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai.

Commenting on the devastating floods in Penang that claimed seven lives over the weekend, Dr Wan Junaidi said there was a need to look at whether storm water retention

ponds were provided for and maintained in the state.

He said such ponds were crucial in retaining rain water in developments such as housing estates.

"We need to look at Penang to make sure all places have retention ponds, without which there will be surface runoff during heavy rain.

"If retention ponds are not built, flash floods will happen even if we have proper drainage system," he said.

Dr Wee said it was only fair to see if the developments in Penang adhered to federal guidelines on retention ponds.

"We can have comprehensive

planning at federal level but if the specifications are not followed, floods will occur if water is not retained during a heavy storm that coincides with high sea tide.

"All parties should shoulder the responsibilities instead of just the ministry and Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID)," he said.

Dr Wan Junaidi said his ministry would await official instructions and budget from the Finance Ministry and Economic Planning Unit before conducting detailed technical studies for flood mitigation projects in Penang.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak had said that the 13 pro-

jects, identified by the state DID, would cost RM1bil.

Dr Wan Junaidi said the ministry would take on the task although the urban drainage system is under the jurisdiction of local authorities.

"Not all projects require an overhaul. The RM150mil Sungai Pinang flood mitigation project, for instance, will go on as planned. However, we have to bear in mind that deepening the river is not the total solution," he said.

He said a total of 16 flood mitigation projects nationwide with a total cost of RM4.3bil were expected to be launched in the next few months.