

All clear for RM24m canal project



DETOUR ... for constructing a 26-metre long canal across the Karak Highway between Dec 3 and April.



READY ... part of the canal already dug and waiting for the connection from across the highway.

By Sager Ahmad

ALL obstacles in the way of the construction of a RM24 million diversion canal connecting Sungai Gombak and Sungai Batu to alleviate floods in the city have been overcome, paving the way for smooth work scheduled for completion by the end of this year.

The Federal Territory Drainage and Irrigation Department (FTDID) was earlier unable to start work due to the refusal of landowners and squatters to make way for the construction of the

3.4km canal.

A FTDID spokesman said work was in progress now to dig a canal nine metres wide, 4.5 metres deep and runs 26 metres across the Karak Highway at the 3km point, which is still inside the Federal Territory.

He said a 100-metre diversion road was opened on Dec 3 and work to construct a box culvert under the highway has started and is expected to be completed by April.

He added that box culverts will be built under all roads traversed by the ca-

nal.

"A 900-metre canal passing through Kampung Changkat to Sungai Gombak will be dug by the middle of the year with two box culverts passing under two roads affected by the canal project.

"The Sungai Gombak diversion and Sungai Batu flood retention pond system are the brainchild of the Japan International Co-operation Agency (Jica) which carried out a study in 1989 on the feasibility of the projects."

The spokesman said the

study recommended the building of the canal and several retention ponds and that the projects be completed by 1997.

The canal, located between Sungai Gombak and Sungai Batu, is part of the Klang Valley Flood Mitigation Project and by the time the project is completed in 2007, it is expected to cost RM1 billion.

Earlier, FTDID director Tan Jiak Kim said the scheme was designed to reduce flooding and improve existing river and drainage systems without affecting

the environment. About 42 per cent of the project has already been completed.

He said experts predicted that a major disaster like the 1971 floods, which hit the Klang Valley and caused RM35 million in damage, would occur once every 100 years.

"Work on Sungai Batu includes the RM20 million Batu retention pond project which is actually divided into three ponds — a retention pond, recreation pond and regulation pond — all covering 68.3ha of disused mining pools."

Tan said the ponds will act as a buffer to hold excess water during heavy rain.

"Water channelled from Sungai Gombak will be released into the ponds at suitable times to prevent flooding in low-lying areas."

He added that under the dam construction component of the flood mitigation project, a dam was to be built for Sungai Gombak in an area along the Karak Highway.

"However, due to protests from some people, the project was shelved," he said.

Tan said the site for the

proposed dam had been taken over for the construction of the new International Islamic University campus which will be completed early next year.

The construction of the RM19.7 million Batu Dam in 1987 and the raising of the Klang Gate Dam by three metres at RM3.4 million in 1980 was also part of the dam construction component of the flood mitigation project in the Klang Valley.

Earlier, DID deputy director-general Neo Tong Lee, during a seminar organised by the Institution of Engi-

neers Malaysia (IEM) and the DID, said there was a need to address the issue of cost-sharing for urban flood mitigation works.

Neo said it was estimated that a total of about 29,000 square km or nine per cent of the total land area of the country was flood-prone, affecting some 2.7 million or 18 per cent of the population.

He said Malaysia's urban drainage and flooding problems were being aggravated by an escalating need for funds to finance urban flood mitigation projects.

