

Managing information flow to mitigate flood disasters

www/AA82/TS/8.10.2024/P:15 (6-70) Your opinion (view)

WHILE floods can be a natural phenomenon and beyond human control, human actions can significantly influence their impact. By analysing human causes, we can mitigate and reduce the upheaval floods cause while offering hope for effective flood prevention.

Land development aims to provide, improve, and enhance human life, ensuring safety, security, convenience, facilities, and sustainability. Rules and regulations are established to achieve these goals.

However, the writer observes specific weaknesses in Malaysian law regarding floods and their disasters, as follows.

Constitutional issues arise when matters of the states are exclusively under the states' authority, and the federal authority does not have the power to interfere.

For example, even though the federal authority has issued guidelines, advice, and instructions on flood prevention, the state, local planning, and local authorities may not adhere to

them when approving land development plans and issuing the Certificates of Completion and Compliance.

Comprehensive big data and data analytics are crucial for effective flood prevention. However, the technical agencies, relevant departments, and federal and state authorities are not currently required by law to provide data on flood-prone areas and areas that are geographically unsuitable for development in each district.

This lack of comprehensive data hinders our ability to prevent flood disasters effectively and underscores the urgent need for improved information management.

Unfortunately, the Meteorology Department is not one of the technical agencies that provides views in the One Stop Centre processing system in land development approval. It should be required to provide opinions, advice, and feedback for planning permission, approved plans, and land development approval.

Its expertise in weather fore-

casting and climate patterns is crucial for identifying potential flood risks and ensuring that development plans are resilient, planning permission is adequate, and land development is flood-free. Without such technical feedback, state authorities may approve unsuitable land development.

Development plans, such as structure and local plans, are essential for evaluating planning permission applications. However, these plans may not have been adequately prepared due to inadequate consulting, insufficient data collection from the site and relevant parties, and a lack of comprehensive and updated big data and data analytics.

The local planning authority is not required to refer to or be bound by development plans before approving planning permission and development orders, as indicated in the statutory provisions under the Town and Country Planning Act 1986, Federal Territory (Planning) Act 1982, Town and Country Ordinance, and the Sarawak



Tough walk: Residents of Kampung Sungai Kechil in Nibong Tebal, Penang, wading through floodwaters on Sept 17. — Bernama

Land Code. The status of development plans as a reference, whether mandatory or not, remains unclear.

Therefore, paying attention to and taking action on the issues mentioned above is crucial to protect the public from flood disasters. This can be achieved by implementing a new system of administration and management to govern land development in flood-prone areas, enacting new

laws and policies, and adopting effective and meaningful approaches to address flood disasters and ensure sustainable and flood-free land development.

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