

Two months of rain in just two hours

By **FLORENCE A. SAMY**

florenceasamy@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: In just two hours on Tuesday, Kuala Lumpur saw more rain than it normally would in two months.

Not just that. The rain, which started in the afternoon, was so intense that it caused Sungai Gombak to quickly swell and overflow.

This resulted in the flood havoc in several parts of Kuala Lumpur. Vehicles in underground car parks were submerged and thousands of motorists were caught for hours in a traffic gridlock that continued past 9.30pm.

Describing the rainfall as exceptional, Department of Irrigation and Drainage director-general Datuk Ahmad Husaini Sulaiman said 75mm of rainfall was recorded within two hours.

"Normally, we receive about 30mm in a

month. The rain (Tuesday) was so heavy and the intensity so great that Sungai Gombak could not cope with the buildup of water.

"Coupled with the capacity of Sungai Damansara and the drainage system in the city, the amount of water was just too much over a short period of time.

"Tuesday's situation was serious and caused a lot of distress to many people, and we want the public to understand why it happened," he said yesterday.

The Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (SMART), generally seen as the answer to the city flood woes, was not "utilised" as it was designed to divert excess water from Sungai Klang.

Ahmad Husaini said SMART was not closed to traffic as the concentration of the rain was not over Sungai Klang.

However, he said, once the Batu and Jinjang

flood retention ponds were completed by the middle of this year, such situations could be averted.

The ponds have an increased capacity of 4.5 million cubic metres and 2.5 million cubic metres respectively, enough to hold excess water from Sungai Gombak and Sungai Keroh.

A Meteorological Services Department officer said Tuesday's rain was due to weak and variable winds which caused an unstable atmosphere.

"We are now towards the end of the north-east monsoon which brings about sudden changes of atmosphere. The inter-monsoon season is expected to start in April," he said.

Thunderstorms can be expected in the afternoon over the next few days in the Klang Valley and the west coast but the rainfall was not expected to be unusual.