Expert panel to review drainage system

BY FENG ZENKUN

ELEVEN experts, including five from overseas, have been tapped to review Singapore’s drainage system and flood-prevention measures and come up with new ideas.

They will examine the landscape of flood-prone areas islandwide, current and future building plans, as well as local weather patterns.

The review, expected to be completed in six months, will be submitted to Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Vivian Balakrishnan.

The panel will be headed by Professor Chan Eng Soon, 56, dean of engineering at the National University of Singapore.

The experts were selected based on recommendations from industry professionals and academics.

The overseas experts are: Mr Kan Yim-fai, chief engineer at Hong Kong’s drainage services department; civil engineering professor Toshio Koike from Tokyo University; Dr Les Lampe, vice-president of Black and Veatch, a US-based global water company; Netherlands-based urban flooding specialist Dr Adri Verwey; and Mr Laurens van der Tak, vice-president of CH2M HILL, an industry leader in water reuse.

The Straits Times understands that the Japan and Hong Kong experts were picked because these places have highly urbanised settings similar to Singapore’s.

The 11 will meet Dr Balakrishnan next Friday to work out the details of their review. The ministry said more experts may be added to the panel, which will also look at the recommendations of an inter-governmental agency drainage review committee set up after last year’s Orchard Road flood.

The recommendations include improving drainage design standards and requiring new buildings to have higher platforms.

These will be published today on national water agency PUB’s website and the public can give feedback via e-mail at pub_feedback@pub.gov.sg.

Prof Chan said the increased number of experts this time round reflects the larger scope of the work. He noted that the new panel has a wider mix of people with practical experience as well as academic theory.

Mr Steven Goh, executive director of the Orchard Road Business Association, noted that “the businessmen on the ground” are not represented in the new panel.

“We hope that the expert panel will consider reaching out to us and hearing some of our views,” he said.