Want to know how rainwater is cleaned?

New Aquatic Science Centre allows you to see experts at work

BY FENG ZENGKUN

The public will be able to watch scientists at work at the new Aquatic Science Centre launched yesterday.

The open-concept laboratory at Ulu Pandan — the first such in Asia — will be open to visitors from 8.30am to 6pm on weekdays.

Researchers at the centre said they will act as guides if possible but that sections may be closed off for ongoing work.

Set up to look at ways to clean rainwater, the centre features a large, adjustable water tank used to model different canals and drains in Singapore.

Scientists will also be testing different low-cost materials that can be used to filter the water, such as crab shells.

The $6.4 million centre is the work of the Singapore Delft-Water Alliance (SDWA), which comprises the National University of Singapore, national water agency PUB and Dutch water institute Deltares.

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Vivian Balakrishnan said at the opening ceremony yesterday that the open concept is meant to encourage public interest in how rainwater is treated in Singapore.

Schools and organisations can contact the centre to arrange group visits.

About 20 scientists from different fields such as biology, engineering and chemistry will work at the centre.

SDWA director Vladan Babovic, 50, said experts from different disciplines are needed to make sure the research can be used in canals and drains here.

He said adding plants to canals to treat rainwater, for example, could increase the risk of flooding because the plants may slow the water flow.

“We need different kinds of experts to work together to make sure we understand the pros and cons of what we do,” he said.

Research findings from the centre may be used in the drainage system to treat rainwater under PUB’s Active, Beautiful, Clean Waters programme.

At a separate event earlier in the day, Dutch Ambassador Johannes Jasons announced a new Singapore-Netherlands Water Challenge to find solutions to water-related problems.

The competition will feature a specific challenge each year, for example, ways to find a business proposal for a more efficient way to filter water.

Open to students from around the world, the winning submission will net its author a grant to carry out the project.

The winner will also get an internship at one of the partnering organisations. There are currently 11 organisations including water company HydroNav.

The first challenge will be announced in September.

PUB separately announced a new programme to train engineers and architects in green building features.

It said property developers seeking to include green features in their buildings may need to submit their plans to be approved by graduates from the programme in the future.