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\$11m study to formulate land drainage, flood control plans

By Kris Chan

GOVERNMENT is to commission an \$11 million consultancy study to formulate a territory-wide land drainage and flood control strategy.

The study, which will begin at the end of this year, is expected to be completed within 12 months.

Announcing the plan at a press conference yesterday the Director of Civil Engineering Services, Dr Nip Kam-fan, said the study would help the Government establish its priorities in carrying out flood control projects.

"The study will have far-reaching consequences on the implementation and priority of land drainage, flood control and other related projects such as highway and land development," he said.

"It will enable the provision of land drainage as an infrastructure service of Government, and flood risk protection as a rational way of protecting that community against calamities, to be considered collectively," he added.

One of the main tasks the consultant had was to conduct a territory-wide study of land drainage catchments to enable categorisation into high, medium and low priority areas in respect of flood risk protection and social-economic consequences of flooding.

Dr Nip said the study was needed to guard against severe flooding in the future, such as that caused by Typhoon Warren last week.

The Civil Engineering Services Department received 119 calls in respect of flooding during the two-day passage of the typhoon.

Of these 72 were in Yuen Long, 26 in the North District and the remainder in Tuen Mun, Tai Po, Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung.

Dr Nip said about 40 per cent of the flooding cases was due to chokage and that clearance work had been carried out.

Another 20 per cent was the result of inadequate drainage or the low-lying nature of the land for which short term measures were not totally effective, he added.

He rejected an earlier claim by New Territories villagers that Government development projects were responsible for the serious flooding.

"I am aware of the allegations made about the various Government projects that are in various stages of progress," he said.

"The principal causes of flooding arising from the Warren incidence ... can be

classified as high rainfall on the flood plain areas, high water level of the Shenzhen River and reduction of flood storage and stream capacity by uncontrolled development or inordinate phasing of work," he added.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture and Fisheries Department said it had received 759 applications for emergency relief grants from farmers who claimed they suffered losses in last week's floods.

Of these, 537 were from crop farmers, 80 from livestock farmers and 142 from pond fish farmers.

A department spokesman said the first batch of 116 farmers were expected to be paid their relief grants totalling \$152,000 within this week.