



Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology

FLASH FLOOD OBSERVER

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Bachelor of Computer Science with Honours

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CHRISTOPHER SII HOW CHIONG

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the

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Projek ini merupakan salah satu keperluan untuk
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23 JANUARY 2023

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ABSTRACT

Flash floods are a serious natural disaster that can occur quickly and cause significant damage to the environment and living beings. This project aims to develop a pre-flood warning system in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, an area that is frequently affected by flash floods. The system, called Flash Flood Observer, will utilise hardware devices to track water levels and issue alerts in a timely manner. The device is designed to be easily configurable by administrator using mobile application and will be placed in multiple flood-prone areas in Kota Samarahan. The project will be carried out in collaboration with another final year project, "Flash Flood Monitoring and Warning System" by Ms. Ho Wan Yu to include an application that will allow users to receive emergency alerts and stay informed about the flood disaster status. The purpose of this project is to minimise the impact of flash floods and provide a permanent solution to the issue.

ABTRAK

Banjir kilat adalah bencana alam yang serius yang boleh berlaku dengan cepat dan menyebabkan kerosakan yang signifikan kepada alam sekitar dan makhluk hidup. Projek ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan sistem amaran banjir kilat di Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, sebuah kawasan yang kerap terjejas oleh banjir kilat. Sistem ini, yang dikenali sebagai Flash Flood Observer, akan menggunakan peranti keras untuk menjejaki aras air dan mengeluarkan amaran dalam masa yang sesuai. Peranti ini akan direka untuk boleh dikonfigurasi dengan mudah oleh pentadbir menggunakan aplikasi mudah alih dan akan diletakkan di pelbagai kawasan yang berisiko banjir di Kota Samarahan. Projek ini akan dilakukan dalam kerjasama dengan projek tahun akhir lain, "Sistem Pemantauan dan Amaran Banjir Kilat" oleh Cik Ho Wan Yu untuk menyertakan aplikasi yang akan membolehkan pengguna menerima amaran kecemasan dan tetap dikemaskini mengenai status bencana banjir. Tujuan projek ini adalah untuk mengurangkan kesan banjir kilat dan menyediakan penyelesaian kekal kepada masalah tersebut.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

A flash flood happens when low-lying areas like washes, rivers, dry lakes, and depressions get flooded quickly. It can be caused by heavy rain from a severe thunderstorm, hurricane, or tropical storm, or by meltwater from ice or snow flowing over ice sheets or snowfields. Flash floods can also happen after the collapse of a natural ice or debris dam or a man-made structure like a dam, as happened before the Johnstown Flood of 1889. Flash floods are different from regular floods because the time between rain and the start of flooding is less than six hours (National Weather Service, 2019).

In Malaysia, flooding occurs practically every year during the monsoon season and is regarded as a common natural calamity. Since the local tropical wet season in Malaysia lasts from November to February every year, heavy and frequent rainfall is a constant threat, and flood is an inevitable consequence of these cyclical monsoons (Sarawak Government, 2022). There was a loss of life and property worth millions of Ringgit, and millions more were lost in agricultural and livestock losses as a result of the floods (Chan, 2015). According to the Department of Irrigation and Drainage Sarawak (2022), the total number of 1295 historical flood events recorded in Sarawak from the year 1946 until today while the number is growing every year. In the Star news, Datuk Nor Hisham Mohd Ghazali, the director-general of the Irrigation and Drainage Department (DID), mentioned that floods had been getting more frequent in recent years, especially in cities where rapid urbanisation was taking place (Murad, 2021). Due to the inevitability of increased rainfall, Hisham decided that the situation could get much worse if no permanent solution was put in place to alleviate the issue. It is therefore crucial to develop a pre-flood warning system.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of concern for the substance of an early warning system in Kota Samarahan, despite the widespread availability of the necessary technology. A traditional warning system that shows residents of rising water levels is feasible, however it has significant flaws that should be addressed. Traditional warning systems are deficient in their ability to track water levels and issue timely alerts. Consequently, the purpose of this project is to develop a pre-flood warning system in order to inform users of the water level and flood disaster status, as well as to develop an application for the proposed Flash Flood Observer system.

1.2 Problem Statement

Flooding is a well-known natural disaster that causes significant damage to the environment and living beings (Chan, 2015). This project addresses the problem of floods and identifies an alternative way to deal with flash floods promptly. The recent flood occurred in Kota Samarahan in February 2021, resulting in casualties and damage. The event has been triggered by heavy rain that has been affecting Kuching and Lundu as well. A total of 755 people from 211 families affected by the floods in three districts have been evacuated to relief centers (Malaymail, 2021).

In these circumstances, receiving emergency alerts of drainage water level status in various conditions is critical. However, most of the deployed flood warning instruments are rather traditional that limit the warning propagation until it is too late. The Flash Flood Observer system detects flood events so that the local community can be alerted in advance and take appropriate measures to minimise the impact.

1.3 Scope

The Flash Flood Observer system focuses on:

Hardware device development

1. Develop a hardware device, an embedded program that allows the onsite configuring, testing, and posting of the water level information to be relayed to a centralised repository for further processing, which will be carried out in collaboration with Ms. Ho Wan Yu's final year project, "Flash Flood Monitoring and Warning System".
2. Deploy hardware devices with custom configurations in multiple flood-prone areas in Kota Samarahan based on drainage heights.
3. A solar panel powers the hardware devices so it can run on batteries during a flood or at night.

Mobile Application development

1. A mobile application to read data from the hardware devices to monitor flood condition.
2. A mobile application to configure hardware device set-up and customise the threshold values for the sensors based on user specific needs and preferences without hard coding.
3. Alert the user when values exceed a dangerous threshold.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives that will be achieved through this project are:

- To assemble water level observer with off-the-shelf microcontroller and depth sensor.
- To design and develop an embedded program local device configuration and water level measurement.
- To relay, and store water level readings in an online system.

1.5 Methodology

A methodology is a set of procedures for addressing problems within a particular domain, that include a wide range of rules or principles. The Rapid Application Development (RAD) approach was chosen as the software design methodology for the Flash Flood Observer system. This rapid pace is driven by RAD's ability to minimise planning stage efforts, maximise prototype development, and speed up project release times. The RAD phases involve the subsequent:

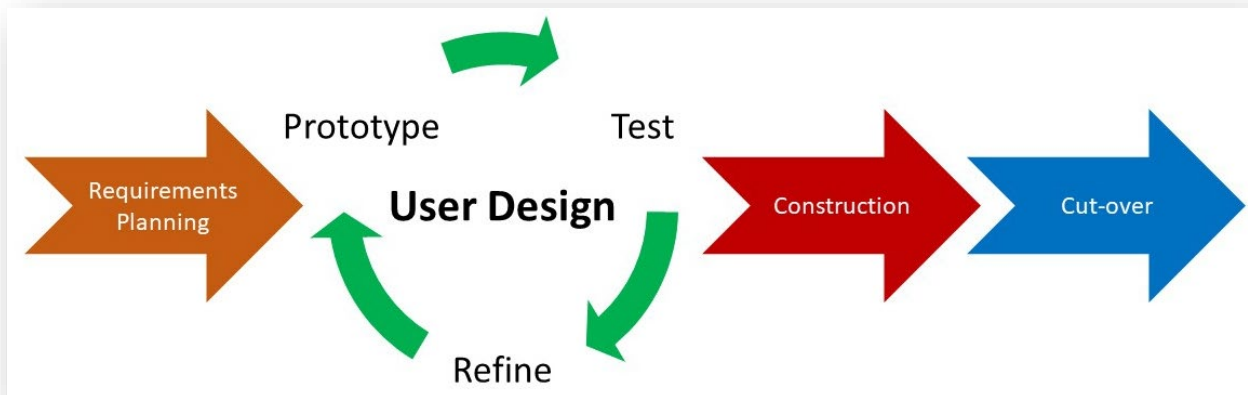


Figure 1.1 Rapid application development mode

1.5.1 Phase 1: Requirement planning

Rapid Application Development begins by defining a loose set of requirements and emphasising on a general awareness of current problems that occur in society's surrounding environment, resulting in the creation of the Flash Flood Observer system. Second, the proposed system can incorporate a speedy design based on an analysis of the surrounding problem. The user also communicates their vision for the Flash Flood Observer system and the necessary

requirements. Requirements are prone to change frequently, but RAD can adapt to these modifications.

1.5.2 Phase 2: User design

Here is where the actual development of the Flash Flood Observer system occurs. Developers will go through prototype cycles, which are repeating phases that can help developers refine, test, and demonstrate the prototype of the system. This phase is repeated iteratively until the project objectives are met and the prototype demonstration meets the requirements.

1.5.3 Phase 3: Construction

With a prototype ready, the system will be present to the end-users. As a subsequent step, developer can immediately receive feedback on the interface and functionality. During this phase, system specifications may be evaluated. Upon receiving feedback, developers return to the prototype phase to continue reconstructing or modifying the prototype. If all feedback is positive and the user is pleased with the prototype, developers can proceed to the last phase.

1.5.4 Phase 4: Cut over

The final stage of RAD involves deploying the Flash Flood Observer system into a live production environment.

1.6 Significance of Project

As a result of the damage that floods can cause to people and their environments, Flash Flood Observer system development can help communities and residents prepare and warn them of coming flood danger. The systems can help prevent excessive flooding-related damage and loss, and possibly save lives. Some of the benefits of using a Flash Flood Observer system are:

- high reliability because data is sent in real time;
- early detection of flood risks;
- customised solutions that are easy to connect to other systems and development at any level, such as connectivity, user application, and device.

1.7 Project Schedule

A project schedule serves as a guideline and reminder for the Flash Flood Observer system development. Microsoft Project is used to create the Gantt chart that displays the project schedule. This helps to ensure that the project is completed on time. Figure 1.2 below shows the tasks and important dates to complete FYP 1 and FYP 2.

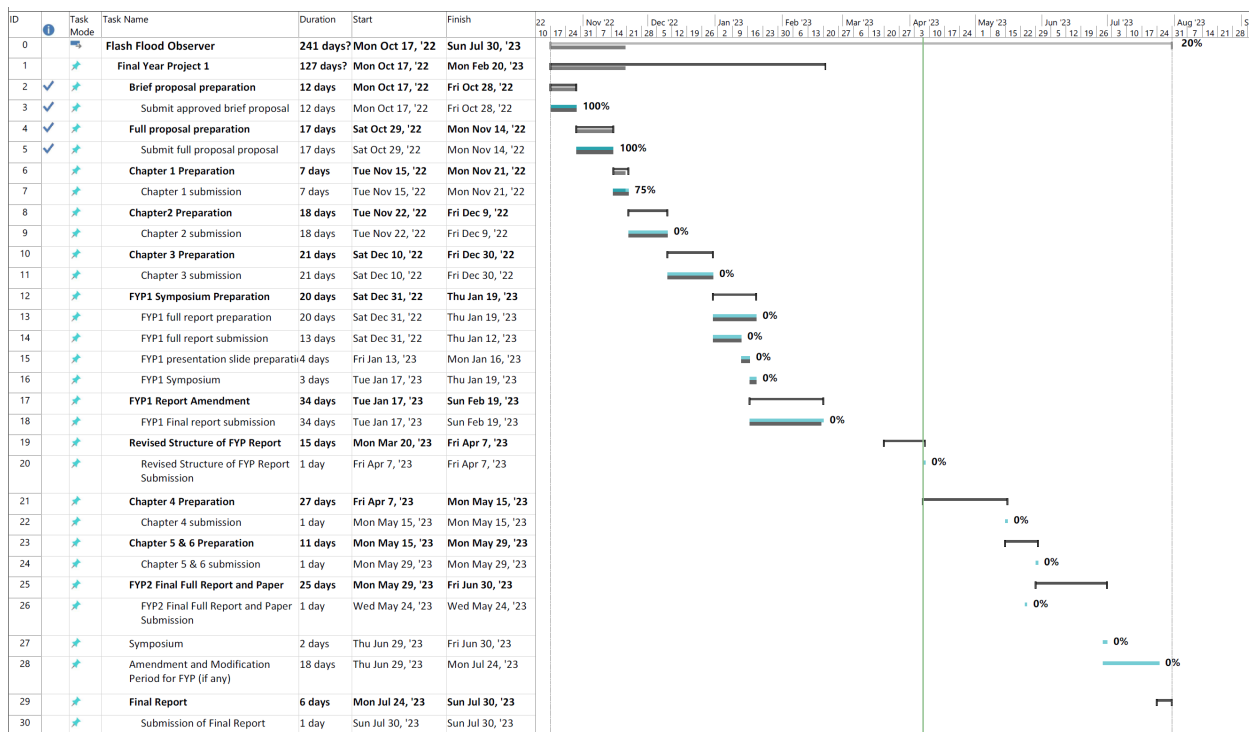


Figure 1.2 Proposed project Gantt chart

1.8 Expected Outcome

This project outcome is aimed at the development of a flash flood observer system using a depth sensor with a microcontroller and communicating with a mobile application that displays sensor data. The user can easily access information about the water level by using the mobile application. When the drainage water surface rises, the water level rises closer to the system and simultaneously causes a flood warning alert to be sent to the user. The distance between the rising water surfaces and the system is measured using a depth sensor. This system is designed to be deployed in multiple flood-prone areas and send all sensor data to the command center. This warning gives users an early evacuation from flood-prone areas, which will help reduce the many losses due to flooding. Early notification of flood monitoring can be seen through the push notification of the mobile application.

1.9 Project Outline

Flash Flood Observer System will be described in this project report, which will be broken down into five sections.

1.9.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 describes the project overview in detail, including an introduction to the overall project, problem statement, project aim, scope, objectives, methodology, project significance, project schedule, and expected outcome.

1.9.2 Chapter 2: Background & Literature Review

In Chapter 2, similar existing systems to this project will be reviewed, and each system will be thoroughly analysed to determine its strengths and weaknesses. A comparison of the systems will be discussed based on the functions and features. This chapter will include a review of the technology tools used to develop the proposed system, as well as citations and references from sources such as websites, journals, and articles. All appropriate sources are included in this chapter to demonstrate acceptable technology tools for developing the proposed system.

1.9.3 Chapter 3: Requirement Analysis and Design

In this chapter, the chosen methodology is thoroughly explained. Rapid Application Development (RAD) is the selected methodology for the proposed system. It will serve as a model to build the proposed system. From the beginning of the project to its conclusion, each phase will be described in detail.

1.9.4 Chapter 4: Implementation and Testing

In Chapter 4, the proposed system's implementation and testing procedures will be carried out. The hardware device development and mobile application will be described in a technical way. In addition, this chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the testing techniques and procedures utilised for the proposed system.

1.9.5 Chapter 5: Conclusion and Future Work

The fifth chapter will conclude the entire project and set the stage for future works. In this chapter, lessons learned from the development of the proposed system are also listed with examples. In a nutshell, this chapter will examine the future work for this proposed system and will consider new ideas to enhance the system.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive discussion and detailed description of similar systems that have similar functions and features to the proposed system. A comprehensive analysis will be carried out to inspect the strengths, weaknesses, and features of each reviewed system. The literature review focuses on iHYDRO (Online Hydrological Telemetry System), A Water Level Detection: IoT Platform based on Wireless Sensor Network, SMS Gateway in the Flood Notification System using Raspberry Pi, and Flood Monitoring System using WSN and IoT based on Cloud. These systems are all designed to monitor the water level. To ensure that the proposed system takes advantage of the strengths and avoids the weaknesses of the current system, it will be compared to the existing system based on the analysis.

2.2 Review on similar existing systems

In this section, there will be a detailed study of the three reviewed systems, which will be used as the implementation purpose in flash flood observer system. Four of the existing flood detection solutions are iHYDRO (Online Hydrological Telemetry System), A Water Level Detection: IoT Platform based on Wireless Sensor Network, SMS Gateway in the Flood Notification System using Raspberry Pi, and Flood Monitoring System using WSN and IoT based on Cloud. This review will be analysed based on the functions and features that have been used to track water levels and provide access to instantaneous data.

2.2.1 i-HYDRO, Online Hydrological Telemetry System

i-HYDRO is an Online Hydrological Telemetry System developed to provide platform for real-time flood and drought monitoring. According to the Department of Irrigation and Drainage Sarawak (2022b), the department has been upgrading its hydrological stations to telemetry stations since 1985. The first stations were set up in the Batang Sadong River Basin at the Krusen, Gedong, Serian, and Meringgu stations. With telemetry stations, data and information can be obtained instantly online through satellite, General Packet Radio Service (GPRS), or other means of communication, even for stations in hard-to-reach, remote areas. The capability to provide online information about rainfall and water level in real time makes it possible to monitor in detail of floods at critical flood prone areas and drought situation in the river basin. This would enable for

the early and effective coordination of crucial disaster relief operations and management in the affected areas.

Under Centralized Information Telemetry Networks (CITN), i-HYDRO is also a public domain for the Hydrological Telemetry System (HTS). Rainfall and water level data are shown in real time, so flooding in Sarawak can be tracked and assessed as early as possible to limit damage to property and loss of life. The website <http://www.ihydro.did.sarawak.gov.my> can be used to access i-HYDRO. The user would be able to find out if it is raining lightly, moderately, heavily, or very heavily in their area. They would also know how the river is doing right now, like if the water level has reached an alert, warning, or danger level as shown in the Figure 2.1 (Department of Irrigation and Drainage Sarawak, 2022b).

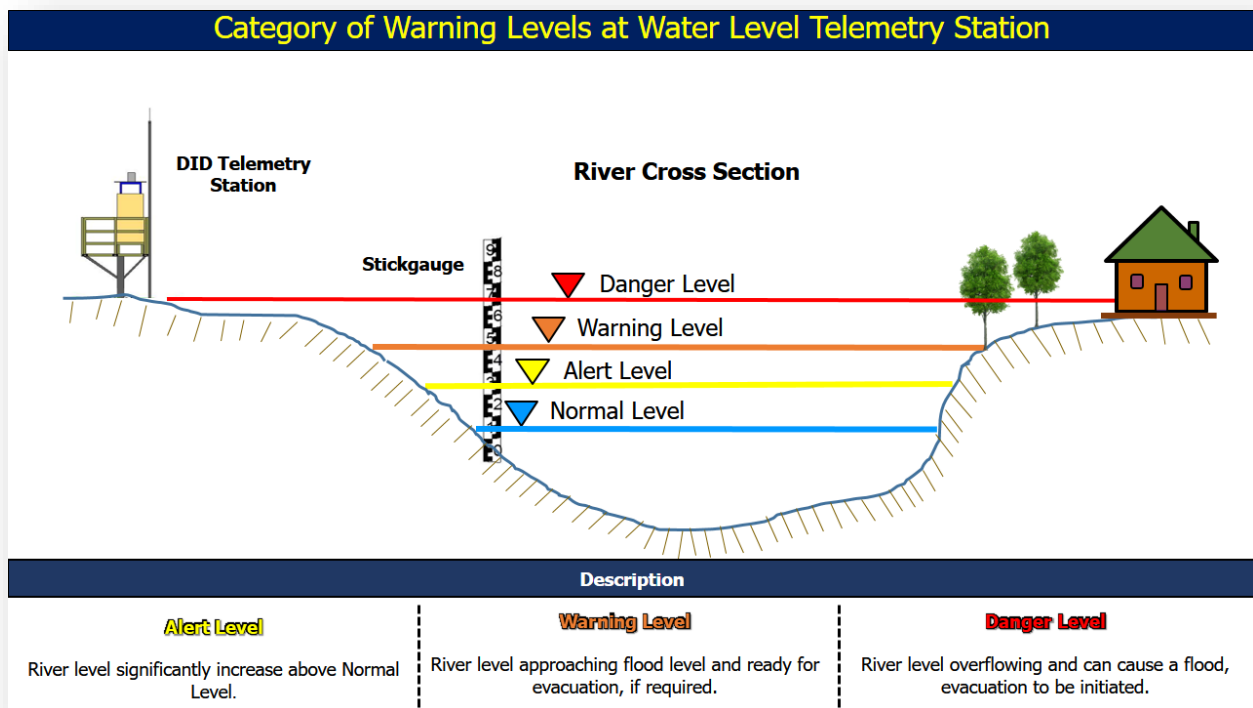


Figure 2.1 Category of warning levels at water level telemetry station (Adapted from Department of Irrigation and Drainage Sarawak, 2022b)