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292 villages prone to flash floods, mudslides

A PRELIMINARY study on settlements located along rivers and coastal areas in the State has shown that 292 villages are in danger of being swept away in the event of mudslides or flash floods.

The villages, some of which are also located on hilltops and slopes, have a combined population of 22,316 from 5,130 families.

A total of 78 of them are Orang Asli settlements while 11 are coastal villages.

The study follows a Federal Government directive to relocate people occupying these areas following the mudslide tragedy at the Orang Asli settlement in Pos Dipang, Tapah and Storm Greg incident in Keningau, Sabah.

State Rural Development and Village Growth Centres Committee chairman Datuk Omar Othman told the House that the riverine villages were mostly located along Sungai Pahang.

Lipis tops the list with 111 villages, including 64 Orang Asli settlements, followed by Rompin (37), Pekan (36) Temerloh (26), Raub (20) Bentong (18), Kuantan (14), Bera (10), Maran and Jerantut (seven each) and Cameron Highlands (six).

Omar, who also heads the State committee formed to study the riverine and coastal settlements, said other information was being compiled.

Committee members include representatives from Orang Asli Affairs Department, Department of Environment and Drainage and Irrigation Department.

"Once all the information has been obtained, we will prepare a comprehensive report to be forwarded to the State executive council," he said when replying to points raised by State Assemblymen who debated the motion of thanks to the Sultan of Pahang's speech.

He said the executive council would then decide on the relocation plan.

To another point, Omar said he would write to the Education Ministry to request for a relaxation of its guideline concerning the formation of uniformed bodies in schools.

"Presently, schools are only allowed to form one such organisation. This is why schools which have formed police cadet units could not form army cadet units and vice-versa."

"After all, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said that encouraging juveniles to sign up as members of uniformed bodies could check social ills," he said.

Omar also said Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar had responded favourably to the State Government's request that the Territorial Army cadet corps be introduced in schools.

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