

21/06/1997

Activated: National committee for land disasters

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The National Disaster Assistance and Management Committee was today activated to handle all land disasters, floods, building collapse and spillage of industrial and hazardous waste materials.

The committee, under the National Security Council in the Prime Minister's Department, owed its origins to the Highland Towers apartment block collapse in Hulu Klang on Dec 11, 1993 which killed 48 people.

Learning from the massive and complex rescue work arising out of the apartment collapse, a special cabinet committee under the chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim ordered the review of the operations and activities of the NSC's Natural Disaster Committee on May 18, 1994.

The idea then was to have a coordinating body which would cut red tape and afford a swift and efficient response to save lives and minimise injuries.

Announcing the activation of the NDAMC today, Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said the NDC and its associated sub-committees at the State and district levels were now disbanded.

Mohamed, who is also NDAMC chairman, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed approved the new structure of the disaster relief coordination body on May 11.

"This structure was submitted for the Prime Minister's attention by the NSC after analysing the crisis management adopted during several tragedies nationwide in the past four years.

"The latest tragedy was the tropical storm Greg in Sandakan and Keningau, Sabah, in December last year, resulting in the loss of more than 250 lives," he said.

The NDAMC, like its predecessor NDC, would be set up at the national, State and district levels.

The State NDAMC will be chaired by the State secretary while the district officer will handle the district-level committee.

The 21-member committee will include representatives from the Finance, National Unity and Social Development, and Health Ministries, police, Armed Forces, Fire Services and Rescue Department and the NSC.

Mohamed stressed the NDAMC would not oversee air and sea related disasters.

"The Department of Civil Aviation, Marine Department and Transport Ministry would continue to be responsible for the search and rescue operations," he said.

Earlier, Mohamed briefed State Government secretaries, senior officials from the respective Ministries and the uniformed corps, on the policies and strategies of the NDAMC.

(END)