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Rivers-Resettle

THREE STATES RESPOND TO CALL TO RESETTLE RIVER BANK RESIDENTS

PULAU PINANG, Jan 5 (Bernama) -- Three states -- Pulau Pinang, Johor and Melaka -- have responded to the prime minister's call to resettle people living on river banks to safer areas.

Pulau Pinang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said that so far the banks of Sungai Pinang on the island and Sungai Muda in Seberang Perai Utara had been identified for the purpose.

He said over 100 Jalan P.Ramlee residents living by the banks of Sungai Pinang had been transferred to nearby longhouses for flood mitigation works in the area which was frequently hit by flash floods.

They would be resettled in flats built by the Pulau Pinang Islamic Affairs Department when the project was completed, he told reporters after the opening of the Tanjung Bunga Water Activities Centre by Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir,

Residents in areas identified as dangerous would be resettled immediately to enable the Drainage and Irrigation Department to carry out flood mitigation works, he said when commenting on Datuk Dr Mahathir Mohamad's suggestion that new regulations be drafted to prohibit settlements along river banks.

Most of the areas along Sungai Muda had been identified as not so dangerous although they experienced annual floods, he said.

In JOHOR BAHRU, Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the upper reaches of Sungai Muar in Segamat had been identified as flood-prone and efforts would be made to resettle the residents.

Another reason for resttling residents was the depleting fish resources in the rivers, he said.

He said the affected residents should be given a choice to venture into other fields, like development, for their own good.

He said the state government was also resettling the orang asli in several settlements in Segamat and Kluang which were prone to floods and landslides.

Several settlements along Sungai Pontian were also involved in the resettlement exercise in view of the depleting fish resources in these areas, he added.

In MELAKA, Chief Minister Datuk seri Mohamed Zin Abdul Ghani said the state government would conduct a comprehensive study of settlements along river banks to prevent tragedies in the event of flash floods.

He said the state executive council would discuss the matter at its weekly meetings and new areas would be opened for the affected residents if resettlement was necessary.

The local authorities would be directed to submit reports on people living by the river banks in every district to enable the state government to determine the number of families and the areas involved, he said. --

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