

DPM: NSC disaster relief efforts didn't collapse
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The National Security Council (NSC)'s flood management efforts did not collapse after some of its officials were stranded in the deluge, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said.

This despite NSC secretary Mohamad Thajudden Abdul Wahad admitting to The Star that relief efforts suffered "complete collapse" as district level operations were inundated themselves.

While Muhyiddin did not deny that NSC officers were also caught in the disaster, he said the NSC team succeeded in rescuing 200,000 flood victims nationwide.

There were also only 21 recorded deaths despite this being the worst floods to hit the country, he said.

"It is not true to say there was a total collapse," he said while visiting power provider Tenaga Nasional Bhd in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur today.

Muhyiddin was put in charge by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, who was on his year-end holiday in Hawaii when the floods became more severe in the lead up to Christmas.

Najib cut short his holiday and returned amid flak on Dec 26.

Victims in worst-hit areas, including at Hospital Kuala Krai, were marooned with little or no food, drinking water and electricity for days before they were rescued.

Muhyiddin, who heads the national disaster management committee said disaster relief was tougher this time because the water levels rose rapidly.

"There were remote areas where we did not expect water to rise so fast. Even if we had helicopters, it would have been no use as it was beyond our control.

"With this experience, we hope we would not face worse in the future. We will prepare better and in greater detail," he said.

Yesterday, NSC secretary Mohamed Thajudden said the central command could not contact district level operations due to electricity and mobile phone coverage outage.

He said the frontliners, including village headmen and district officers, were unreachable because their mobile phones ran out battery and there was no access to affected areas between Dec 23 to 27.

Fifteen helicopters were deployed in Kelantan alone but there was no way for the choppers

to land.

The aid had to be air dropped and distributed by NGOs, other government agencies and those among the victims who took charge.

"We could not use heavy vehicles, the currents were too strong to use boats and the winds were too turbulent to go by air," Mohamed Thajudden said.

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