

PM increases aid for flood-hit padi farmers
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today announced an increase in the quantum of government compassionate aid, from RM573 to RM876 per hectare, for flood-hit padi farmers in Kedah and Perlis to replant their crop.

He said the government had allocated RM60 million to be distributed to the more than 30,000 farmers whose crop cultivated on 49,529 hectares was destroyed by the floods which struck last month.

Some RM50 million of the allocation was replanting aid, including for ploughing, padi seedlings and fertiliser, while RM10 million was for repairing flood-damaged infrastructure, he added.

NONENajib made the announcement when speaking at the presentation of 1Malaysia mattresses to flood victims of Kedah and Perlis at an event organised by the Umno Putra club at the Sultan Abdul Halim Stadium in Alor Setar.

The prime minister handed over a mock cheque for RM46.5 million to Muda Agricultural Development Authority (Mada) chairperson Mahdzir Khalid and another, for RM13.5 million, to Perlis Menteri Besar Mohamad Isa Sabu.

Najib handed over mattresses to representatives of the flood victims at the event, attended by about 5,000 people.

Also present were Najib's wife, Rosmah Mansor, Housing and Local Government Minister Chor Chee Heung, Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Mohd Johari Baharom, Kedah Umno liaison committee deputy chairperson Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah and Umno Putra club chairperson Abdul Azeez Rahim.

The floods which struck Kedah and Perlis last month affected more than 32,000 people and destroyed 49,529 hectares of padi newly cultivated by more than 30,000 farmers.

Speaking to reporters after the event, Mohd Johari said the government raised the quantum of the compassionate fund to RM876 per hectare after taking into account the appeals from the farmers who had cited higher prices for padi and agricultural inputs and increased operational costs.

"The cash will be distributed from next week because we do not want to upset the schedule of the new planting season. If the farmers do not plant immediately, we stand to lose up to RM250 million," he said.

Mohd Johari said the floods had destroyed 26,072 hectares of padi in the Mada area in Kedah and 8,416 hectares in Perlis as well as 15,041 hectares outside the Mada area in both states.

Abdul Azeez said the Umno Putra club would also distribute 10,000 more mattresses and stoves to flood victims in Kedah and Perlis. It had made available a similar number of the

aid for the first phase.

"We increased the aid after the prime minister requested that assistance be extended to more flood victims," he said, adding that the mattresses and stoves would be given away by Umno division chairpersons.

- Bernama

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