

Speed up cash aid to victims

PM wants red tape cut to ease woes of flood families

BATU PAHAT: Cut the red tape – that was the Prime Minister's call to the authorities when dispensing aid to flood victims.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he hoped the flood victims would be able to start receiving their monetary aid soon.

"Do not have too many forms to fill up. What matters most is that aid be given to the victims as fast as possible," he told reporters when visiting flood victims in Parit Sulong near here yesterday.

Abdullah visited SM Datuk Sulaiman, SK Penghulu Saat, SMK Agama Parit Sulong and the Parit Sulong community hall, which have all been turned into flood relief centres.

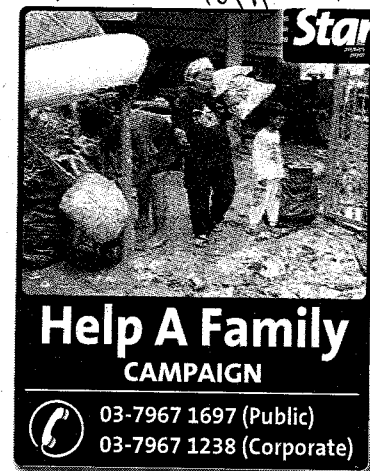
He said the victims were facing a lot of hardship because of the floods and the system should be simplified to help them receive the aid.

He also told the flood victims that the RM500 promised for each family would be given when they returned home.

"If we disbursed the money now amid the chaos, it might go missing," he said.

He said the RM200 relief promised would be disbursed earlier, and that all other aid, including medical help, would continue at relief centres until the victims were able to return home.

He also urged victims to be



patient as the aid involved a large number of people. He added that there was no need for foreign aid.

Abdullah's visit touched several of the flood victims and some of them broke down in tears.

Suradi Sidek, 73, who had spent the last week at SM Agama Parit Sulong, cried when he was greeted by the Prime Minister.

Sobbing uncontrollably when Abdullah held his hand, Suradi said he was reassured that the suffering would soon pass.

"He told me to be patient. I just could not control my emotions," Suradi said, adding that his house in Parit Usop was still in chest-height

floodwaters.

Earlier, in Putrajaya, Abdullah received donations of rice, canned sardines and blankets from TSR Capital managing director Tengku Datuk Mustapha Tengku Mohamed.

A total of 100 tonnes of rice, 55,200 cans of sardines and 4,000 pieces of blanket were received by Abdullah at his office.

Meanwhile, the situation in the flood affected states continued to improve with fine weather.

In Johor, the number of evacuees

had dropped to 75,394 at press time. In Batu Pahat 45,994 are still at relief centres, in Kota Tinggi 13,882, in Kluang 3,978, in Mersing 3,010, in Johor Baru 834, in Segamat 4,593, in Muar 823 and in Pontian 2,280.

In Pahang, there are 1,177 evacuees in four relief centres in Rompin district while in Sabah, floodwaters in most parts of Kota Marudu and Pitas districts have receded and most of the victims have returned home.