

PM says situation under control

NST-18/3/2019
pg. 3

JOHOR BARU: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said those handling the incident involving the illegal chemical dumping in Sungai Kim Kim in Pasir Gudang have done a good job.

He added that there was no need to declare an emergency as the situation was under control.

However, he reminded all quarters to exercise caution as the crisis was not over.

“No... it has not reached that stage (where an emergency has to be declared). There is no need for any evacuation, but we must be careful.

“(And) those mobilised to contain the situation must also be prepared to handle the problem,” he said after visiting victims of the crisis at Sultan Ismail Hospital here yesterday.

Present were his deputy, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail, and Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Osman Sapian.

He said although this was the first time such an incident had happened, the authorities, including the police, firemen and the medical personnel, had handled it competently.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir and Dr Wan Azizah attended a briefing on the incident at the district Disaster Management Committee operation room at the Pasir Gudang Municipal Council headquarters.

“In previous cases, the chemicals involved were in solid or liquid form. This is the first time that we are dealing with

toxic gas.”

He said the government was willing to review laws to prevent such an incident from happening again.

When asked if the worst was over, Dr Mahathir said: “We can’t say that the worst is over but on the other hand, we will not say that the situation will get more serious.

“What is important is that we know how to handle the problem,” he said, adding that the government was identifying those involved and culpable in the toxic pollution in Pasir Gudang.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said there were 1,568 victims up to yesterday.

Of the number, 1,171 victims received outpatient treatment, while 397 were warded, including 13 admitted into Intensive Care Units.

Six psychosocial response teams have been mobilised to provide emotional support and counselling to patients, as well as check on food in the district to ensure they are safe for consumption.

“Only seven patients remain in the ICU. Seventy patients have been discharged.

“We are carrying out risk evaluation on water catchment areas as a preemptive measure. R95 masks have been distributed as the (toxic waste) is an oil-based solvent.”

He said no death had been reported. **By Rizalman Hammim and Syed Umar Arif**