

PM admits to slow response

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Ismail Sabri vows to do more following lack of crisis coordination

By **SARBAN SINGH**
sarbans@thestar.com.my

JELEBU: The Prime Minister has admitted there had been some delays and other weaknesses in rescue efforts in Selangor following last Saturday's floods, but was quick to add that it was the responsibility of all to ensure this does not recur.

Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said no one party should be held accountable for the lack of coordination or other rescue efforts, and attributed the problem in Selangor due to a combination of factors.

He also pledged to improve this, adding that the focus for now was to help the victims and clean-up work.

"I want to be transparent and do not want to defend anyone because all of us should be responsible.

"Also, I can tell that these delays were not deliberate. There was a combination of factors why this happened in Selangor," he said when met after visiting flood victims here yesterday.

Elaborating, Ismail Sabri said rescue teams had a tough time getting into Selangor's Taman Sri Muda, which was the worst hit area in the state.

"They also had a tough time responding to victims stranded on rooftops as they could not see the addresses as the road signs had been submerged," he said.

Ismail Sabri said the roads were also blocked by stranded vehicles.

"Also, although the Meteorological Services Department had said that we can expect heavy rains in Selangor, no one expected so much rain at one go.

"The amount of rainfall on that one day was similar to what the state would usually get in one month," he said, adding that even residents, especially in Taman Sri Muda, had been caught off-guard by this.

He said agencies, especially the army, were also caught in a situation as they had to send their assets to several states affected by the floods.

Ismail Sabri said states such as in the east coast of the peninsula, on the contrary, were better prepared



On the ground: Ismail Sabri surveying the damage caused by a landslide in Bukit Tangga, which is the main access to Jalan Seremban-Simpang Pertang connecting Jalan Pantai and Jeram Toi in Seremban. — Bernama

as they faced floods every year.

"I had a meeting with all Mentris Besar and Chief Ministers whose states were affected this morning, and the problem seems to affect only Selangor.

"So, we must remember this is not only the responsibility of the Federal Government, but also of the state government, and our frontliners at the district levels," he said.

Ismail Sabri said the situation was bad in Selangor as floodwaters began rising rapidly in several areas at the same time.

"So yes, there was a lot of confusion in Selangor on Day One of the floods.

"In fact, I got messages on my cellphone from many people, and I forwarded these to the relevant people for prompt action," he said.

Ismail Sabri said he had also called a meeting with 13 ministers on Monday on ways to assist flood

victims, particularly in Selangor.

"We are going to mobilise more assets including 41 boats, use pumps to drain out stagnant water, and to send food to the victims in Selangor.

"Some may be living in apartments and flats and not directly affected, but they have run out of food," he said, adding that electricity to some households had also been cut.

He said that if need be, the authorities would also use fishermen's boats for this.

Some parties, especially netizens, had claimed there was a lack of coordination by government agencies initially, forcing victims in some areas to be stranded on their rooftops for a day.

They claimed there were also not enough boats to move victims to safer areas.

Separately, Ismail Sabri said the

flood situation in the affected states, other than Selangor, was under control.

Many relief centres have been closed and victims were allowed to return to their homes.

"But I have told the states, especially in the north, not to be too comfortable as we are worried about a second wave," he said.

He said all government agencies should carry out repair works quickly.

Citing an example, he said the army had been told to quickly build seven bailey bridges in Jelebu as the existing ones had been damaged.

He also urged NGOs helping victims in the clean-up work to notify the relevant authorities for better coordination.

He said it was pointless to have several NGOs focusing on a particular area while victims in other areas were not helped.