

PM: Flood warnings, ignored

'Agencies assumed only east coast would be affected'

KUALA LUMPUR: Six significant warnings of continuous heavy rains were issued by the Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia) but were ignored by those directly involved in disaster management, says Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

The Prime Minister said this happened due to an assumption that only east coast states would be affected by floods brought by heavy rains due to the monsoon.

"I should stress here that the floods in Selangor were unexpected and the weaknesses (of the relevant agencies) identified at the state and district levels forced me to intervene," he said at the Special Meeting of the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

On Dec 18 last year, Ismail Sabri said Selangor recorded a total rainfall of 380mm, which was equivalent to a month of rainfall.

The situation was worsened by the high tide.

Due to this, the flood management in Selangor became disorganised, with rescue teams struggling to carry out operations due to the complexity of the flood situation.

"The flood management in Selangor did not show significant improvement on the second and third day," he said.



Unusual rain:

Ismail Sabri said at the Dewan Rakyat in Kuala Lumpur that Selangor recorded a total rainfall of 380mm, which was equivalent to a month of rainfall.

— Bernama

Ismail Sabri explained that due to the delay in the rescue operation and the delivery of aid coordinated by the state and district fire departments in Selangor, he decided to call for several meetings to get an explanation of the flood situation and address issues that needed immediate action.

"It shouldn't be me calling and chairing the meeting... there should have been committees already set up (for the purpose) in these states," he said.

Ismail Sabri said he chaired three meetings including a Special Meet-

ing on Dec 19 last year at the Klang District and Land Office which was also attended by Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari.

He also chaired the Special Meeting on National Disaster Coordination with Cabinet members and ministry secretaries-general at Parliament on Dec 20, and another meeting with all mentris besar and chief ministers on Dec 21.

The Prime Minister said it was through these meetings that the coordination of rescue operations and delivery of aid to victims, as

well as deployment of additional assets to the affected areas, were done.

It was also to ensure that the victims were rescued and evacuated to temporary relief centres as quickly as possible.

He said that based on information received from the Welfare Department, 136,030 victims from 38,113 families were evacuated to 1,112 relief centres during the floods.

The police reported 55 deaths during the unusual floods, comprising 40 men, 12 women, two boys and one girl, while two other victims were still missing, he added.

He pointed out that other states were also hit by floods at the end of last year, and some east coast states like Pahang suffered on a much larger scale.

However, the disaster management preparation machinery was already in place and the issue was handled better there.