

Not heeding weather alerts proved disastrous: PM

> Wrongly assuming northeast monsoon affects only east coast states led to Selangor being caught offguard'

KUALA LUMPUR: The assumption that only east coast states would get affected by the northeast monsoon deluge led to warnings of continuous heavy rain being ignored by certain parties involved in disaster management.

This resulted in Selangor being caught offguard when unusual flooding affected the state on Dec 18.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob said the Meteorological Department had in fact issued six bad-weather warnings about continuous heavy rain, including in Selangor prior to the disaster, which some parties failed to heed.

"I should stress here that the floods in Selangor were unexpected and the weaknesses (of relevant agencies) identified at the state and district levels caused me to

intervene," he said when tabling papers on the flood disaster at a Special Meeting of the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He said 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, as the disaster management machinery in Pahang was in place and in full state of preparedness, the disaster was handled well.

Ismail Sabri said the unusual floods in Selangor on Dec 18 occurred as the amount of rainfall recorded that day equalled the average amount of rainfall for a month, and the situation was worsened by high tides.

"Due to the unexpected floods, a chaotic situation occurred on the first day of flood management in the state, resulting in rescue

teams facing difficulties in carrying out operations due to the complexity of urban flooding.

"The flood management in Selangor did not show significant improvement on the second and third days, causing dissatisfaction among victims."

He said due to the delay in rescue operations and delivery of aid coordinated by the state and district fire departments, he decided to call for several meetings to get an explanation on the flood situation and issues that needed immediate action.

"It shouldn't be me calling and chairing meetings. There should have been committees already set up (for the purpose) in the states."

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

He added that police also reported 55 deaths, comprising 40 men, 12 women, two boys and one girl, while two other victims are still missing. - Bernama