

GOVT RAMPS UP FLOOD RESPONSE MEASURES

8,481 temporary shelters activated to accommodate 1.62 million evacuees, PM tells Parliament

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THE government has expedited preparations of assets and facilities for disaster response to aid the anticipated 1.62 million people nationwide who are expected to be affected by the northeast monsoon.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said as an immediate step, 8,481 temporary relief centres (PPS) had been activated as a precautionary measure.

“Preparations are being made even though the areas have not yet been affected.

“Preparations are underway to accommodate 1.62 million victims in more than 5,000 schools, 2,400 halls and 389 community centres,” he said at the Prime Minister’s Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Anwar was responding to a question from Datuk Shamshulkahar Mohd Deli (BN-Jempol) on the government’s preparedness in implementing a comprehensive flood disaster management plan to ensure the safety of flood victims and min-

imise property loss.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said permanent relief centres (PPKB) would be established soon, with pilot projects already underway in nine states.

He said the construction of the PPKB would involve a ceiling cost of RM5 million each.

“As we face floods yearly, it is unreasonable to solely rely on PPS, which is why the government is establishing PPKB.

“When it is not flooding, these centres may be used as community activity centres,” he added.

Anwar said the government would review the plan to bring in flood experts from the Netherlands, following the change in government there.

He said he would call on the new Dutch prime minister to re-

confirm the earlier commitment of despatching the country’s experts to aid Malaysia in its flood mitigation initiatives.

“The Netherlands has the experience (dealing with floods) due to (most of its) land being at or below sea level, and has one of the best flood mitigation strategies in the world.

“(The then) Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte, during his recent visit, had agreed to provide a technical team to come here and share their expertise.

“However, there was a change in government there and the winning party is far-right extreme, very anti-Islam and anti-minority. So, I don’t know if the plan will continue.”

Anwar said although the current situation was less encour-

aging, he assured that he would reach out to the new Dutch prime minister to ascertain the commitment in advancing collaborative efforts between both nations.

Earlier, Datuk Mohd Shahar Abdullah (BN-Paya Besar) had asked Anwar if the government had any plans to bring in experts from other countries such as the Netherlands to help mitigate the effects of climate change, including floods.

Last week, veteran politician Geert Wilders’ far-right Freedom party (PVV) won the most number of seats in elections in the Netherlands. Known as an anti-Islam populist, Wilders, however, must still persuade other parties to join him in a coalition as he has only 37 seats in the 150-seat Dutch Parliament.