

Permanent relief centres to be built to deal with floods

KUALA LUMPUR: Permanent disaster relief centres will be established nationwide immediately as current temporary flood shelters are not practical anymore, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said a pilot project will begin in nine states with the ceiling cost of each centre set at RM5mil, adding that would provide flood victims with better protection than temporary relief centres.

"We are faced with floods every year, it's unreasonable to only have temporary centres, that's why the government decided to set up permanent centres.

"So, these can perhaps also be a community activity centre (outside the flood season), but they are reserved (to deal with floods),"

he said during Minister's Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat here yesterday.

He was replying to a supplementary question from Datuk Shamshulkahar Mohd Deli (BN-Jempol) as to whether the government has plans and actions to improve basic flood relief facilities nationwide.

In reply to Shamshulkahar's original question about the government's preparedness for flood disasters and the northeast monsoon season, Anwar said an early allocation of RM241mil had been channelled for use in 164 districts.

He said pre-flood preparations had been stepped up through community-based disaster risk management and the Irrigation and Drainage Department (ID)

had identified 5,648 flood hot-spots.

On a separate question, Anwar said he will revisit the plan to bring in flood experts from the Netherlands following the change of government in the European country recently.

He said he would call the incoming Dutch Prime Minister once the new government is formed to clarify the country's previous commitment to send in experts to help Malaysia in flood mitigation.

On Nov 1, Anwar revealed that the government would get expertise from the Netherlands to improve its flood mitigation system in an effort to overcome the impact of annual floods.

"However, there was a change in (the Dutch) government, and

the winning party is extremely far-right, anti-Islam and anti-minorities," he said in response to Datuk Mohd Shahar Abdullah (BN-Paya Besar).

Mohd Shahar had asked if Malaysia had any plans to bring in experts from other countries such as the Netherlands to help mitigate the effects of climate change, especially floods.

Anwar added that he was unsure if the new Dutch prime minister would proceed with the commitment made by then Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

"I'm not sure if the plan will proceed because Rutte resigned earlier and the latest development (of the election) which is not really encouraging.

"However, on behalf of the government, as the Prime Minister, I

will contact the new prime minister if he's still committed to going on with the collaboration," he said.

The Netherlands held its general election on Nov 22, which resulted in a win for Geert Wilders' far-right party Freedom Party (PVV), which won the most seats out of 150 contested.

Last Saturday, the veteran Dutch politician vowed to be the new prime minister of the Netherlands following the announcement of the final results, Reuters reported.