

Malaysia To Reshape Disaster Management Agency To Be More Robust - Muhyiddin Bernama

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From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin

SEDAI (Japan), March 14 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is mooting to reshape its disaster management agency to make it more robust in order to be able to keep up with the current disaster scenario of the country, said Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

The Deputy Prime Minister said Malaysia also intended to establish a centre of excellence for research on disaster management, as well as to have an effective early warning system.

"The December 2014 floods experienced by Malaysia serve to remind us that we still have more to do in building the nation's resilience towards disasters.

"We are now looking into and learning from the best practices of other countries with a view to adapt them where suitable," he said when addressing delegates at the Third United Nations World Conference On Disaster Reduction here today.

He said an effective early warning system could make the difference between life and death and for this purpose, Malaysia is looking towards integrating the country's early warning systems.

"The ability to deliver vital information and impact forecast to the right target groups allows for swift and correct decision making," he said.

Muhyiddin said the latest changes affecting the environment made it mandatory for Malaysia to make disaster management more holistic and innovative.

"This has become more urgent given the close inter-relationship and inextricable links that exist between disaster risk and other key challenges of poverty reduction, urbanisation and sustainable reduction. These are real challenges to the stability of our environment in the face of global climate change," he said.

Muhyiddin said Disaster Risk Reduction had always been part and parcel Malaysia's development policy and Malaysia has manifested this by providing substantial resources to reduce underlying risk factors and promote sustainable development in its Five-Year Malaysia plans.

"We are now into our 11th Malaysia Plan and there will be explicit focus on strengthening disaster risk management, covering both structural and non-structural measures. The five phases of disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery will be given emphasis to tackle the problem of floods and other emerging hazards in a holistic way," said Muhyiddin.

The Deputy Prime Minister said Malaysia is a country that has always been considered less

vulnerable but in recent years, Malaysia's exposure to a range of climate-related disasters had intensified in part, due to climate change.

" The 2014 year end monsoon and the resulting floods was the worst ever in the country's history, affecting more than half a million people and damage public infrastructure alone was estimated at RM2.851 billion.

"Areas that have never experienced floods before were also inundated and flood water rose at an unprecedented level," he said.

Muhyiddin said in context of Southeast Asia, the establishment of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) in 2003, had brought progress towards building the resilience of ASEAN member states.

"Malaysia is fully committed towards supporting ASEAN initiatives for reducing risks and responding collectively and expeditiously to disasters in the region. As Chairman of ASEAN for the current year, Malaysia will take initiatives to realize the vision of "ASEAN Responding to Disaster as One," he said.

Muhyiddin arrived here yesterday for a four-day working visit to Japan. He is attending the conference today and tomorrow.

The Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, about 380 km from Tokyo, started today and ends March 18. It takes place in the centre of the Tohoku region, which bore the brunt of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that led to the Fukushima nuclear meltdown.

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