

Malaysia Looking At New Structure To Better Manage Disasters - Muhyiddin

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From Kamarul Ariffin Md Yassin

TOKYO, March 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is considering a new structure as well as special laws for the better management of disasters, said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

He said that currently all matters pertaining to disasters came under the purview of the National Security Council (NSC) because they were related to security, but the burden became too heavy during disasters.

It was hoped that disasters would be better managed under a new structure, with one senior officer fully empowered to mobilise facilities, resources and assets during a disaster, he said.

"We will study (the new structure). We do not have special laws. We have to study the structural governance, strengthen certain laws for easier, more effective management of disasters.

"It will no longer be like the present, where everything comes under the NSC. NSC looks at all aspects of national security, but disasters impose a heavy burden on the NSC," Muhyiddin told Malaysian journalists on Monday, the final day of his four-day visit to Japan.

Muhyiddin arrived in Tokyo last Friday for a four-day working visit during which he also attended the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, about 380km from Japan's capital city.

In Sendai, the deputy prime minister met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last Saturday and Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Akihiro Ota on Sunday.

Muhyiddin on Monday attended a briefing on disaster management and counter measures policies given by the Director-General for Disaster Management, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, Hirofumi Hihara.

Deputy Prime Minister, who is chairman of the Malaysian National Disaster Management Committee, said he learned from the briefing that Japan did not have a special agency to manage disasters but only structural governance and special laws.

"A structure such as a council to handle disasters in Japan, headed by the prime minister himself. The coordination is handled by a senior officer of the rank of director-general with wide powers to mobilise human resources and assets during disasters and follow-up rehabilitation measures.

"This is a model that we can learn from. Although earthquakes are the major disasters in

Japan, they have experience handling floods and have undertaken mitigation measures to reduce the impact of floods.

"It has been very successful. We will give priority to this aspect. I agree that we should send our senior officers here to look at their structure, their council. If it is suitable, we can apply it in Malaysia," he said.

He said Ota proposed cooperation in disaster management, whereby Malaysia could benefit from the US\$4 billion (RM14.85 billion) fund announced last Saturday by Abe to help developing countries facing disasters.

Muhyiddin, who is also education minister, held a meeting with Japan's Education, Culture, Science and Technology Minister Hakubun Shimomura here Monday and they signed a memorandum of cooperation in education between the two countries.

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