

**More Than RM1 Million Allocated For Flood Victims In Sabah - Shahidan
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MEMBAKUT, March 5 (Bernama) -- More than RM1 million has been allocated to 2,118 families who moved to flood relief centres in nine districts which were affected by floods in Sabah in December and January.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, who disclosed this Thursday, said, of the total, 1,214 families were from Membakut and Beaufort.

"The other districts involved were Keningau, Tenom, Bongawan, Kota Marudu, Pitas, Kudat and Sipitang," he told reporters after handing over flood compassionate aid at the Membakut Multi-Purpose hall in Mambakut.

He said the aspect of management and comfort of flood victims at relief centres would be improved, namely, by evacuating victims before a flood took place and ensuring their homes were guarded from theft.

He also said an increase in logistics for the Malaysian Civil Defence Department in the districts would be implemented to meet the need of the agencies involved in moving victims to relief centres.

"District offices must register the names of all volunteers under the National Security Council (MKN) who would also be helping during floods.

"Every district has a core agency such as the Fire and Rescue Department, Civil Defence Department, police and district offices who manage the flood victims. It will be ascertained that the work of these departments and agencies will always be ongoing," he said.

Shahidan said the severe flood which inundated Malaysia was caused by rain and the depleted forests which could not act as effective catchment areas for the rainfall.

He said forest areas which were affected by illegal activities including illegal loggings and intrusions for the planting of oil palms had caused the extraordinary floods.

"The floods in Kelantan, Pahang and Terengganu were caused by water flowing from Gunung Gagau, while in Membakut, the water flow was from the Ulu Membakut highlands," he said.

Shahidan said discussions at agency level such as the Forestry Department with the Federal Government must be held to improve and intensify enforcements of the law on illegal activities in forest reserves.

Meanwhile, a local resident, Dali Ag Yusof, 50, a teacher at SMK Beaufort, said the flood which inundated Membakut in January was the worst in the district when water came up to

chest level and destroyed all furniture at his house in Taman Desa Jaya.

"The burden to buy items that I need for the house is eased through the aid provided by the government," he said.

Awang Zaini Awang Yusof, 36, a trader at the Membakut Old Town, was affected when his place of business was destroyed and his house was inundated.

"We greatly appreciate the government's concern in easing our burden," he added.

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