

Zahid Hails Sarawak Flood Mitigation Measures

Bernama

Jan 5, 2016

KUCHING, Jan 5 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi on Tuesday hailed the long-term flood mitigation measures in Sarawak and said they can be emulated by other states.

The Deputy Prime Minister said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim would document the Sarawak experience in a memorandum for discussion by the Cabinet.

The discussion would also touch on cooperation among the flood-prone states such as Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan with the Department of Drainage and Irrigation on the construction of barrages as a long-term flood mitigation solution, he told a press conference after attending a briefing on flood mitigation at the State Operations Room here.

The briefing, at the government administration building of Wisma Bapa Malaysia, was also attended by Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem, Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Alfred Jabu, Shahidan, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek, several state cabinet ministers and heads of departments and agencies handling floods in the state.

"Insya Allah (God Willing), we will put forward the proposal so that a special allocation can be provided, although in stages, for the Sarawak experience to be emulated by the National Disaster Management Agency and the Department of Drainage and Irrigation at the national and state levels," Ahmad Zahid said.

He praised the Sarawak government for having implemented the Sungai Sarawak Barrage for flood mitigation as well as the effective integrated measures by the various agencies under the State Disaster Management Committee led by Jabu.

He also praised the work of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in Sarawak which he said had been structured to become the "most effective community engagement" in the country.

Ahmad Zahid said the work structure of CERT under the Sarawak Department of Civil Defence would be utilised as the national template on preparedness in facing any disaster.

In acknowledging the effectiveness of the Sarawak Disaster Management Committee, the Deputy Prime Minister announced the conferment of the Gold Star Award on the committee which he himself would present to the state government soon.

As for cash aid for flood victims, he said that based on the Kemaman template, a portion of the cash aid would be used to purchase insurance to enable the victims to receive a better benefit should they have to put up with the floods again.

Ahmad Zahid also announced the approval of RM1.1 million for the construction of a retaining wall near the Rh Jonathan Philip longhouse in Bintulu where a landslide had occurred.

He also announced the purchase of a RM650,000 boat for use during flood relief operations.

Replying to a question, Ahmad Zahid said that according to a forecast of the Meteorological Department, the second and third wave of floods in Sarawak would not pose a high risk for the state.

He said Sarawak now had 15,000 officers and personnel specially to assist in flood relief work and the number did not include volunteers and members of NGOs.

Adenan, at the same press conference, expressed his thanks to Ahmad Zahid for his presence in Sarawak and said it reflected the concern of the Deputy Prime Minister for the welfare of the people.

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