

## **Mahathir wants ASEAN to help disaster-struck Indonesia**

**BERNAMA**

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PUTRAJAYA, Oct 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) has a major role to play in coordinating and extending assistance and support to Indonesia in their undaunting task in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and tsunami that hit Sulawesi last week.

He said several areas in Sulawesi - Palu, Donggala and Sigi – suffered massive destruction from the catastrophe and the reported deaths are more than a thousand while more than 60,000 homes were damaged and 60,000 more people are displaced.

“While such a tragedy is heart-wrenching, as neighbours, we do not want to be sitting and watching from the sidelines.

“But to attempt to help without proper coordination and strategic planning will result in causing a chaotic situation more chaotic. Instead of helping, we may end up troubling the other rescuers.

“It is obvious that under such circumstances, ACDM has a major role to play,” he said at the opening of the 33rd meeting of the ACDM, 6th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management (AMMDM) and Related Meetings here today.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, ASEAN secretary-general Datuk Kim Jock Hoi and the director-general of the National Disaster Management Agency of Malaysia (NADMA), Datuk Mohtar Mohd Abd Rahman.

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that each member state of ACDM would extend assistance to Indonesia through their own disaster management body.

“Together, I am sure we can help our neighbour to ease her burden,” he said.

He said Malaysia’s NADMA has been coordinating with relevant agencies and stands ready to deploy search and rescue teams as well as humanitarian assistance to the Government of Indonesia.

At the event, Dr Mahathir also witnessed the handing over of humanitarian aid worth RM1 million to the Sulawesi Aid Fund.

The mock cheque was presented by Dr Wan Azizah to an Indonesian representative.

Dr Mahathir said the risk of disasters should be taken seriously in view of the severity of its impact to lives and livelihood as well as the development of the nations.

He said almost half of the disasters in the world occurred in Asia, making this region the world’s most disaster-prone area.

According to the global data, he said, for the period of 2000 to 2017, the Asia Pacific Region constituted 45 per cent of global disasters, 60 per cent of global disaster mortalities and 85 per cent of global disaster-affected people.

“Malaysia is in full agreement that disasters should not be viewed within the context of natural catastrophes but to be assessed alongside human crises and conflicts.

“The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) has proven to be the regional treaty that has been hailed as among the world’s best practice, progressive and comprehensive and legally binding for all the 10 ASEAN member states.

“ASEAN’s strong commitment to reducing the impact of disasters should be reflected in its joint response to disaster emergencies apart from working towards becoming a world leader in disaster management,” he said.

Dr Mahathir also proposed an e-Time Capsule for a Resilient ASEAN that may include the state of disasters’ whole cycle in the region by referring to the World Risk Index or any other globally accepted indicators.

“It can be unlocked as early as 2025 in conjunction with the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 or in 2030 for comparison with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

“I hope this idea can materialise at the 7th AMMDM in Myanmar. If possible, with the assistance of the ASEAN Secretariat,” he said.

Asked about media reports that three deep-water buoys used to gather data for a tsunami early warning system were disposed of as they were no longer functioning, he said the government will look into it.

The installation of the Norway-made equipment, worth RM7.2 million, was done in phases since 2006 at three locations - the Andaman Sea, Sulu Sea and South China Sea.

The tsunami buoy project, or tsunameter, is the result of Malaysia-Indonesia collaboration following the 2004 Aceh earthquake and tsunami, which killed more than 230,000 people from 14 nations, including Malaysia.

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