

South Korean President Vows To Overhaul Disaster-prevention Systems
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SEOUL, Aug 8 (Bernama) -- President Lee Myung-bak said Monday the government will overhaul disaster-prevention systems and tighten safety standards, stressing that last month's deadly downpours could repeat next year because of climate change, reports Yonhap news agency.

"The abnormal weather pattern that used to come only once in a century has now become routine. Expecting similar abnormal weather next year, it is necessary for us to make preparations in advance," Lee said in his biweekly radio address. "The flood this time brought home to us the fact that the existing disaster prevention system has already reached its limits."

At least 69 people were killed or are still missing in landslides and flash floods after the heaviest rainfall in nearly a century battered the country late last month.

Lee blamed the torrential rains on climate change, and called for greater efforts to battle the phenomenon.

"Since climate change is a global phenomenon, all countries should cooperate to resolve the problem. Korea is proactively doing its part by carrying out green growth strategies. The government is planning to reduce the estimated business-as-usual emissions by 30 percent by 2020," he said.

The project to refurbish the country's four major rivers is also aimed at preventing floods by quadrupling the number of anti-disaster facilities, Lee said. The project will enable South Korea to cope with "a rainstorm that might come once in 200 years," he said.

Lee also said that many riverside areas were able to avoid the perennial flood damage thanks to the project.

"The government will formulate new disaster preparedness criteria that fit this age of climate change, while setting up comprehensive and long-range response measures," Lee said.

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