

Headline	Kelantan flood victims grateful to government for assistance		
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# Kelantan flood victims grateful to government for assistance

**KOTA BAHARU:** "My family and I are thankful to be able to move out in time to this flood relief centre," said Shamsiah Saufi, 41, a resident of Kampung Tasik, here, whose home was submerged by the floods last month.

Shamsiah, her husband and 10 children were relocated to the Sekolah Kebangsaan Banggu flood relief centre here, together with other residents in the village when the flood water rose to waist level, the worst ever flood to hit the village.

"It humbles me to receive this assistance as everything is provided to meet our needs," she added.

She is one of the almost 7,000 residents who were evacuated because of the floods in the Kelantan, through a planned evacuation operation involving the Fire and Rescue Department, Civil Defence Department, the armed forces and the police.

The natural disaster, which occurred during the monsoon season between November and March, has a huge impact on the lives of the affected residents, especially when their property and crops were also damaged.

Majority of the flood victims are left helpless as the flood affect preparations for the new school season and the farmers suffering losses as a result of the damage to their crops.

However, they are thankful that the evacuation process went smoothly and the assistance provided, such as food and blankets, were adequate.

The government also presented RM500 per family to those who were forced to evacuate because of the flood to help eased their burden, as announced by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin last month.

Through the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry, the government also gave out RM2.916 million in compassionate money to 2,192 padi-farmers in Kelantan whose crops were destroyed in the floods last year.

Farmers who received this aid were delighted by the government's immediate response to help them to start replanting.

Mokhtar Yusoff, 55, from Kampung Siram, Pasir Mas, said the aid was meaningful to them as they relied solely on the padi crop for income.

"Various assistance are provided by the government to help ease the burden of those affected by natural disasters, like the floods, said farmer Abdul Rahman Abdul Ghani, 64, from Alor Bakat, Bachok.

Four of the 6.8 hectares of padi crop planted by Abdul Rahman was destroyed in the flood.

A total of 729 flood relief centres, capable of accommodating more than 150,000 people, were set in Kelantan during the monsoon season.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, who is National Natural Disaster Relief Committee chairman, during a visit to look at the flood preparations made in Kelantan last October, said 170 forward bases were set up to keep food supply and other necessities for flood victims, besides 110 sites identified for helicopter landing.

"We respond well every time there's a disaster, except for tsunami because it has never happened. There is an SOP (standard operating procedure) for government departments and agencies to respond.

"No one drowns due to floods, but they drowned because they play in the flood water. This shows the government is well-prepared," said an entrepreneur and Universiti Utara Malaysia Adjunct Professor Datuk Hassan Harun.

Hassan, who lives in Binjai, Kubang Kerian, here, said the National Security Council was a special body formed by the government to coordinate all forms of aid to ensure effective distribution.

"No one has held a demonstration to show the aid has not reached them, which shows the government's success compared

to other countries hit by floods and hurricanes but they cannot respond as well as the Malaysian government because they lack the infrastructure.

"We can see (the response) because the government always finds the best way to distribute the country's assets, which is possible because each citizen can be traced using the identification card system," said Hassan.

He said there was no practice of favouritism in the distribution of government aid.

The Kelantan Fire and Rescue Department, one of the front liners providing aid to flood victims, also set up a patrol unit to monitor low-lying areas, as well as a medical emergency unit and counseling unit to help flood victims.

The Kelantan Health Department mobilised 80 medical teams and 73 health teams, involving 700 officers and personnel, to help flood victims statewide.

According to State Health Director Datuk Dr Ahmad Razin Ahmad Maher, the medical teams were also stationed at flood relief centres.

The department also put chlorine in wells located at flood relief centres and nearby areas to prevent water-borne diseases and carried out fogging to prevent breeding of aedes mosquitoes.

Meanwhile, some 1,000 personnel from the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) involved in cleaning up public areas in Kelantan and Terengganu after the flood water subsided and the situation has returned to normal.

The Kelantan Civil Defence Department mobilised more than 1,000 permanent staff and volunteers in a flood rehabilitation operation when situation returned to normal.

The roles played by the Meteorological Department, Irrigation and Drainage Department and other relevant department have helped the public, especially in low-lying areas, to make early preparations for the floods.

Also involved in helping the

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food victims were non-governmental organisations such as the Girl Guides Association of Malaysia and the National Service Volunteer Brigade (BSKN). Kelantan People's Action Council president Azmi Ali said Malaysia was unique in the way it cared for the people's welfare. "The government provides shelter, food and other facilities while many agencies focusing on people's welfare give them special attention during disaster, not because of the coming general election," he added.

– Bernama