

Nazri: Public was warned of possible floods

Star 7/12

KUALA LUMPUR: The public had been warned of a possible flood in Johor on Dec 15 and Dec 16, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz said.

Nazri denied claims by some in the flood-stricken areas that they had no advance warning of the floods.

"The public was informed on Dec 15 and Dec 16," he told reporters after launching a seminar and exhibition in conjunction with the Disaster Awareness Day anniversary at the Putra World Trade Centre here yesterday.

He was asked to comment on public complaints that the people were not informed about the possibility of floods via the media.

"We knew about it in advance. We went down to the ground to inform the people about the rising waters and advised them to evacuate.

"Unfortunately, there were some people who were reluctant to leave their homes although the water level was one foot high. They took the matter lightly," he said.

"And it happened too fast. We did not have time to inform the Information Ministry because we were focusing on rescue efforts.

"I'm not giving excuses but we directed our attention to

more important things. In just a few days, we put in place relief centres. Let's not look at what we could have done."

He said the Meteorological Services Department knew of the possibility of heavy rainfall based on the Dec 13 upgrade of its warning from yellow to orange on Dec 15 and 16 and the red alert warning on Dec 19.

"We always think that it normally occurs in Kelantan and Terengganu. What's important is that within a short time we managed to get 74,000 people to relief centres. That's a great achievement."

Nazri said according to the department, there had been continuous rain in the whole of Johor, beginning yesterday evening.

"We will call those who have returned to their homes following good weather yesterday and the previous day to go back to the relief centres," he said, adding that according to the department, the weather was expected to be wet until Dec 29.

Asked whether the Johor government had requested any allocation to improve the drainage in the state, he said: "There has been a request. Certainly, we have to spend to rectify the drainage system and to prevent a recurrence of the floods."