

'Joint federal-state action'

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PAK LAH SAYS RESTORING NORMALCY TO LIVES OF FLOOD VICTIMS WILL BE ARDUOUS

JOHOR BARU: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday called on the federal and state governments to work together through joint actions to restore the living conditions of the tens of thousands of flood evacuees, who have to seek shelter in relief centres following the second wave of floods.

He said it would be an arduous task to bring to normalcy the lives of the flood victims, uprooted from their homes.

"I've told Ghani (Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman) that the state government must cooperate with the federal government in the joint actions to restore the evacuees' living conditions," he told reporters after visiting flood victims at Sekolah Kebangsaan Bukit Mutiara in Kangkar Tebrau here yesterday.

Abdullah also visited Kota Tinggi district, which was under one to two metres of water, following the overflow of Sungai Johor.

Road links between the town and Johor Baru and Mersing had been cut off since Friday.

He arrived on a government helicopter at 10am and started the tour on an army boat.

He was accompanied by Ghani, Foreign

Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, who is also Kota Tinggi member of Parliament, and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz.

Abdullah said: "What I saw during my tour of Kota Tinggi is the urgent need for efforts to restore the evacuees' living conditions like ensuring the shops are open and back in business again and flood victims return to their homes to re-start their nor-

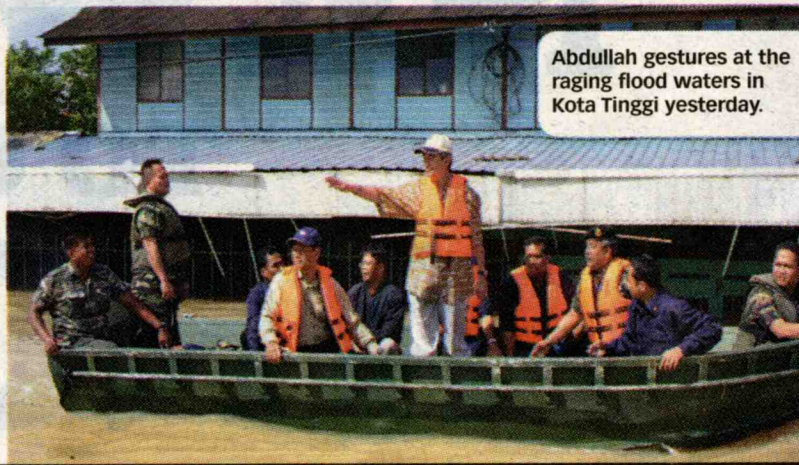
mal life."

He also called for relief and contributions to be channelled to the victims without delay and distributed fairly regardless of race and status.

Abdullah praised the armed forces, police, Rela, civil defence department and non-governmental organisations for their tireless work.

To a question, Abdullah reiterated that an emergency would not be declared in Johor. "There is no need, why should it be? There is no reason at all," he said.

He also said the more serious second wave of floods in Johor did not affect the implementation of the multi-billion ringgit Iskandar Development Region. - Bernama



Abdullah gestures at the raging flood waters in Kota Tinggi yesterday.