

ABDULLAH'S DARE

NST 17/1/07



- **TO EDUCATION MINISTER DATUK SERI HISHAMMUDDIN HUSSEIN:**

‘Deliver on your promise to improve the quality of the education system.’



- **TO HIGHER EDUCATION MINISTER DATUK MUSTAPA MOHAMED:**

‘Hisham has promised to deliver the best students to your universities. Can your universities produce the best graduates?’



The prime minister being taken around Kota Tinggi in a boat to see for himself the flood situation in the town.

Air force to 'drag rain' out to sea

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PUTRAJAYA: The Royal Malaysian Air Force is expected to start cloud-seeding over the sea tomorrow so the rain falls out at sea rather than on land.

National Security Division head (security and crisis management) Che Moin Omar said the division made an official request to RMAF to use its C-130 plane.

"It is likely that the exercise will start tomorrow," he said during an update on the Johor flood situation.

Che Moin also said the Drainage and Irrigation Department has been given the task of keeping the authorities updated on the water levels at all dams in Johor.

"There are six dams in the state. Three are under DID, while the others are managed by Syarikat Air Johor. We want DID to update us on water levels at all dams," he said.

As of yesterday morning, about 91,000 people were sheltering in

286 relief centres in Johor, against 103,577 on Monday.

In Sabah, there are 887 people at 13 centres, while 1,836 victims in Pahang remain in 14 relief centres.

The Meteorological Department said the rain is expected to ease in Johor. The state, which has experienced heavy rain over the past few days, is expected to get occasionally scattered slight to moderate rain from today until Sunday, as in Alor Star, Kangar and Kota Baru.

The department said in a statement that the bad weather in Pahang is also expected to improve, with moderate rain expected until Sunday.

But a red alert has been issued for Sabah, especially in Kudat and Sandakan in the Sungai Kinabatangan valley. Moderate to heavy rain is expected in the west coast and interior of Sabah.

In Sarawak the moderate rain is expected to persist until Saturday



Some workers from the Sungai Sembrong oil palm plantation in Johor forming a human chain to unload food supplies from a Fire and Rescue Department helicopter yesterday. — NST picture by Amran Hamid

PM: Big task ahead is rebuilding lives

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JOHOR BARU: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the efforts needed to rebuild the lives of flood victims would dwarf the rescue and relief operations so far, and called on federal and state governments to work together.

Abdullah, in a visit to Kota Tinggi yesterday, which is still under 2m of water, said the government's top priority now was the rehabilitation of flood victims.

He said the federal government must work with Johor authorities to ensure that the more than 100,000 flood evacuees were given every assistance to resume their daily lives.

Abdullah, speaking at the Sekolah Kebangsaan Bukit Mutiara relief centre in Kangkar Tebrau here, said: "This task of rehabilitating the flood victims will be much bigger than the flood rescue operations that we've been doing so far."

"After touring the flood-hit areas in Kota Tinggi, I realise that there is an urgent need to help restore the livelihoods of the flood victims now that the floodwaters are receding and the rains have stopped.

"The shops that have been submerged in the floods need to be reopened while the evacuees have to return to their homes."

He also added that the Education



Othman; Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar (who is also the MP for Kota Tinggi) and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, thanked the Johor government, government agencies and non-governmental organisations for ensuring that the flood rescue operations went smoothly.

Asked if the Johor floods would affect the implementation of the multi-billion ringgit Iskandar Development Region project here, he said the project would proceed as scheduled.

Meanwhile, a spokesman from the state police flood operations room here said the flood situation in most districts was improving with 172 flood relief centres now closed.

The number of people still sheltered in 254 evacuation centres statewide had gone down to 80,755 last night from over 104,000 earlier.

However, in Batu Pahat, the number of evacuees has risen to 42,957 with floodwaters still rising in parts of the district.

The spokesman said many roads in the district were under 0.5m of water and only passable to heavy traffic and four-wheel-drive vehicles.

He said most of the evacuees were in Kota Tinggi (14,121), followed by Kluang (6,642), Segamat (4,593), Mersing (4,563), Johor Baru (3,142), Pontian (2,438) and Muar (2,299).

Ministry would come up with a programme for schoolchildren who had missed their classes due to the floods, to catch up with their studies.

Abdullah said it was his hope that the improving weather over the last two days would bring an end to the flooding that has devastated Johor.

Asked to comment on complaints that the RM200 relief to flood victims had still not been fully distributed, Abdullah said he would ask the authorities to speed it up.

"Flood victims should also ensure that they and their children receive the appropriate vaccination for water borne diseases like typhoid."

The local authorities are providing free vaccinations.

Abdullah, who was accompanied by Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani