

# Government staring at RM1.5 billion bill

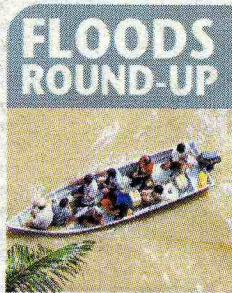
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**PUTRAJAYA:** The recent floods cost the government RM1.5 billion, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

The losses do not include those suffered by businesses and individuals.

"Losses to the government include rehabilitation work, damage and other forms of assistance extended to flood victims. These are losses to the government's accounts, not individuals or private companies," he said after chairing a meeting of the special Cabinet Committee on Crisis and Natu-



ral Disasters Management at his office.

The meeting was also attended by several ministers and menteri besar, including Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman.

The floods last month

wreaked havoc in several states, with Johor the worst hit.

More than 300,000 people in the state were evacuated during two rounds of floods last month.

Najib said an estimated RM350 million would be spent by the Public Works Department to carry out repairs on roads and bridges.

The committee also wanted the Drainage and Irrigation Department to come up with a new estimate on the actual costs required to repair damaged infrastructure and other medium- and long-term measures to prevent a recurrence.

"Other ministries and de-

partments have also been told to embark on immediate remedial measures. About RM137 million needs to be spent to repair damaged roads in rural areas while the education ministry is expected to spend about RM102 million for repairs to schools and other educational facilities," Najib said.

He added that Bank Negara and the ministry of international trade and industry would assist small businesses, small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs and companies affected by the floods.

"I will make the announcement on the various proposals later," he said.

## Assistance for flood victims:

- Houses destroyed will be re-built by the government
- Up to RM3,000 for damage to house
- RM200 for evacuees during the first round of floods in Johor
- RM200 for evacuees during the second round of floods in Johor
- RM500 for families who moved to flood relief centres
- RM300 for families who sought shelter with relatives
- RM5,000 for families of those killed in the floods
- RM573 per hectare as replanting assistance for padi farmers
- RM2,000 per hectare for vegetable farmers
- RM500 for fruit growers with less than one hectare, and RM1,000 for those with one hectare
- RM700 per cow (up to 10 cows) for livestock breeders, RM600 per buffalo (up to 10), RM150 per goat (up to 20), and RM5 per duck or chicken (up to 100 birds)
- RM1,500 per hectare (maximum of two hectares) for commercial-scale aquaculture breeders
- RM200 per cage, up to a maximum of 12 cages, for small breeders who rear fish

## Rental and rate exemption for Johor victims

**MUAR:** Flood victims in Johor will be exempted from paying quit rent, house assessment and rental for local authority food stalls for six months.

Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the state government had decided on these measures as most of the victims had lost everything in the recent wave of floods that hit Johor.

"We hope this will help lessen their financial burden as the floods had caused much damage and destruction to property and belongings.

"Many of them also suffered loss of income because they could not do their business or report for work.

"We have, therefore, decided to exempt them from paying quit rent and assessment rates for six months. Hawkers and petty traders renting local authority stalls also need not pay rent for this period," he said.

Ghani said an in-depth study of the drainage and irrigation system in Johor, especially in Batu Pahat, was also under way to prevent floods of this scale.

He said that the study would include comprehensive plans to have more outlets for the water to flow from Batu Pahat

directly into the Straits of Malacca, upgrading of six existing dams and installation of more pumps to draw out excessive water from the flooded areas.

Ghani said the "unusual" recent rainfall made it necessary for the state government to review these facilities to ensure that any future rainfall of such density could be handled quickly.

"We have to prepare for any eventuality at all times as the current global climatic changes are likely to cause strange climatic patterns," he said after presenting certificates of appreciation to about 2,000 workers in Muar involved in the recent floods at the sports complex in Pagoh here.

On the dams, Ghani said the DID had been told to give priority to upgrading the six existing ones, especially the Sembrong and Bekok dams in Batu Pahat, with a view to enlarging their capacity to hold more water.

He said he will present a complete list of damage caused by the two Johor floods to the National Disaster Relief Committee chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.



The Parit Karjo Muslim cemetery in Batu Pahat is still inundated by flood waters.