



HOSPITAL VISIT

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak visiting patients at Kajang Hospital in Selangor yesterday. Bernama pic

Panel gears up to better manage disasters

BE PREPARED: Dept to widen rivers to tackle floods, says Zahid

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IMPROVEMENTS are being made to facilities and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to better manage disasters, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi yesterday.

Zahid, who chaired the Central Disaster Management and Aid Committee, said the committee would meet again in 60 days to gauge the progress made, especially in managing floods.

"The committee has deliberated on several matters, including how best to fully use facilities without the need for additional allocation, as well as steps that must be taken to better manage flood disasters," he said.

Present was Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim.

Zahid said the committee had instructed the Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) to widen and deepen rivers to address floods.

"The Finance Ministry can consider giving additional allocation

for flood-mitigation works," he said, adding that DID had a list of rivers and called for speedy action to address flood issues.

With the formation of the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), the committee would ensure better coordination between agencies in line with the National Blue Ocean Strategy, said Zahid.

He said all disaster-related matters would no longer come under the National Security Council (NSC), which takes charge of national security and safety.

However, Zahid said, the NSC Order 20 for National Disaster Management Mechanism and Policy would still be used by NDMA.

Under the order, the local police chief would be the disaster operation commander, while the Fire and Rescue Department chief would be the deputy commander.

"Disaster management does not only involve the response phase alone, but also from prevention and mitigation, preparedness to recovery and rehabilitation."