

For immediate release

MEDIA STATEMENT

IDEAS calls for Active Involvement of State Governments in Post-Flood Relief Management and for the Flood Crisis to be Debated in Parliament

Kuala Lumpur, 20 December 2021 - Following the heaviest rainfall in 100 years and the flood crisis that has hit Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Terengganu and Pahang in Peninsular Malaysia, IDEAS calls on the federal government to actively involve all state governments in post-flood relief management. Better coordination is required, which can be achieved through existing platforms such as the National Security Council or the formation of a Federal-State Flood Crisis Council to collectively respond to the aftermath of the disaster.

IDEAS CEO Tricia Yeoh commented, "While there already exists a National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA), and the federal government is reportedly co-operating with state governments in efforts to repair houses and public infrastructure, a formal structure such as a Federal-State Flood Crisis Council would allow for systematic decision-making. This is the time for the federal, state and even local governments to come together and coordinate their efforts in a cohesive manner. The Council should be chaired by the Prime Minister, whose members consist of the Chief Ministers of all states. Time is of the essence in any disaster management situation, and state and local governments are well-placed and in the best positions to respond to local requirements in the most effective and efficient manner."

"We regret the statement issued by Datuk Dr. Abdul Latiff Ahmad, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, who said that NADMA is not supposed to be directly involved in managing the disaster, but only to disburse aid to the victims. The statement contradicts NADMA's own Client Charter that clearly outlines NADMA's responsibility to deploy NADMA's personnel to coordinate and monitor the disaster response, and ensure all disaster response is activated within 24 hours".

IDEAS also calls for the flood crisis to be immediately debated in Parliament and for the Minister in charge of this portfolio to answer MPs' questions on the matter. Yeoh stated, "Similar to the MoU that was signed between the Government and the Opposition, this is the time for Members of Parliament from all sides to come together in a bipartisan manner to debate what is essentially a national emergency. The issue must be given priority and debated immediately, in the interest of public knowledge of what the government is doing to address the situation, and based on the principles of transparency and accountability."

In the coming weeks, government agencies must act swiftly and comprehensively to address the following issues: First, communities that are most vulnerable without housing and access to basic necessities will require temporary housing, food and water; Second, the clearing of abandoned cars, rubble and debris; Third, the repairs of roads and all infrastructure.

Yeoh added, "On this note, IDEAS welcomes the government's allocation of RM200 million to address the impact of floods, but also calls for transparency in how funds are disbursed and

allocated. IDEAS also commends the numerous NGO groups and charities that have acted rapidly to deploy resources. However, these efforts would be even more effective with government cooperation. For instance, sending a lorry to clear trees would allow charities to more quickly access communities to deliver much-needed items.”

In the longer term, there must be a serious evaluation of the environmental impact of all development and infrastructure projects around the country to take into account drainage systems and the impact of deforestation. Efforts must be taken to understand the impact of climate change on the country, and the government together with researchers and the community must prepare our infrastructure and allocate budgets to mitigate risks.

Yeoh concluded, “Malaysia can no longer take lightly the devastation that is brought about by natural disasters. A tragedy such as this must be better mitigated in the future through a coordinated response by all levels of government and a thorough assessment of how climate change has accelerated the negative impacts on our weather system. There must be overall disaster preparedness, especially at this time of year when heavy rains and flash floods are to be expected - even in the Klang Valley. Early warning systems must be put in place, and the government must have a strategy of clear, continuous and responsive communications.”

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About IDEAS

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