

Experts to tackle natural disasters

DPM: New centre and RM20mil grant for management and mitigation research

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PUTRAJAYA: A new Centre of Excellence for Research on disaster management will be set up to bring together academic expertise in the field.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said that aside from the centre, RM20mil in special grants would also be offered for research on disaster management and flood mitigation, through the Long Term Research Grant Scheme and Fundamental Research Grant Scheme.

"Landslides, haze and floods often occur in our country, and there

needs to be a comprehensive and effective approach to disaster management.

"This includes the aspects of environmental management, disaster preparedness, public awareness programmes, relief coordination, communications and the rebuilding of disaster-hit areas," he said in his New Year's address to Education Ministry staff here on Friday.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, said the estimated cost of damage to schools and tertiary institutions in the recent floods was around RM500mil.

"I hope schools and institutions located in flood-prone areas will

prepare for the possibility of floods.

"Students, teachers and parents should also be given disaster awareness education so that they will be physically and mentally prepared for such disasters, and are able to look after their families' safety," he said, adding that the ministry would issue "special appreciation certificates" to volunteers and donors involved in flood relief efforts.

On another matter, Muhyiddin said the Malaysia Education Development Plan (Higher Education) 2015-2025 would be launched in the first quarter of this year.

"This plan will produce innovative and creative talent in line with the

'new academia' agenda of the 11th Malaysia Plan," he said.

Muhyiddin also announced the setting up of the Malaysian Inclusivity, Development and Advancement Institute (Minda) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, which will carry out research on "social and economic inequality in society with a focus on economic development that is inclusive and can narrow the wage gap".

He later handed out letters of autonomy to five universities - Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu and Universiti

Teknikal Malaysia Melaka.

The event also saw the formal reappointment of Universiti Malaya professor Dr Zuraidah Mohd Don as chairman of the English Language Standards and Quality Council.

First set up by the Education Ministry in 2012, the council comprises English language experts and its secretariat is based at the ministry's English Language Teaching Centre.



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