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Working group to tackle El Nino

HOT AND DRY

SPELL: Agency issues guidelines to ease people's problems

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THE National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) has activated a working group to tackle the warm and dry spell following the El Nino phenomenon that has hit the country.

Nadma director-general Datuk Zaitun Ab Samah said the group would meet periodically to monitor, coordinate and carry out actions to mitigate the situation.

She said the group consisted of members from the state- and district-level disaster management committee, which was headed by the state secretary and district officer.

"Those at the state level are required to inform the committee of locations that face chronic water supply shortages during the warm and dry season.

"This is to enable early preparation to ease the problems faced by the people.

"The implications of El Nino, which brings with it increased temperatures, can affect water levels at dams, cause contamination and increase the possibility of forest fires.

"Since we are aware of this phenomenon, we cannot be complacent. Proactive steps are needed," she said, adding that the high-risk states included Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu, Kedah, Malacca, Sabah and Sarawak.

Zaitun was speaking after chair-



National Disaster Management Agency director-general **Datuk Zaitun Ab Samah** chairing the working group to tackle the El Nino phenomenon in Putrajaya yesterday. **Bernama pic**

ing a high-level committee meeting to tackle the warm and dry spell here yesterday.

She said those living in the mentioned states should conserve drinking water, use water sparingly and not carry out open air burning, especially when the weather was dry.

She said the committee would keep track of water levels in dams nationwide to ensure there was enough water supply.

Zaitun said the Department of Irrigation and Drainage had put up a website that displayed information on drought (infokemarau.water.gov.my), showing river flow, rainfall and water levels, a list of storage dams and the standard precipitation index.

She said the Fire and Rescue Department, Rela, Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, Malaysian Civil Defence Department and Special Malaysian Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team would work together to prevent forest and cross-border fires, as well as open burnings.

She said other measures includ-

ed cloud seeding operations by the **Meteorological Department**, an action plan to prevent open burning by the Department of Environment, as well as the monitoring of open burnings in landfills by local councils.

National Water Services Commission chairman Datuk Ismail Kasim said they had yet to receive reports on the scarcity of water because of the hot weather, but urged water operators to monitor their resources.

Based on predictions by the Meteorological Department, El Nino is expected to exceed the 1997/1998 period, with indicators predicting an from between 0.5°C to 2.0°C nationwide, thus, affecting the volume of rainfall.

El Nino is expected to reach its peak this month, carrying forward into next month and March. In April, conventional rain is expected, with a change in the monsoon winds.

In Malaysia, the phenomenon is expected to reduce rainfall intensity by 20 to 60 per cent starting this month.

Working group to manage hot and dry situation

By JOSEPH KAOS Jr
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PUTRAJAYA: With Malaysia bracing for spells of hot and dry weather due to the El Nino phenomenon, the National Disaster Management Agency has set up a dedicated working group to manage the situation.

The agency's director-general Datuk Zaitun Ab Samad said the working group would meet periodically to monitor the hot and dry situation and coordinate immediate action.

"The hot and dry spell caused by El Nino is expected to hit us in the first quarter of the year.

"Its impact could potentially lead to low water dam levels, forest fires and haze.

"With that, our agency has activated a working group that will be dedicated to tackle this hot and dry season.

"The group will be made up of members of the state and district-level disaster management committees, which are led by the state secretaries and district officers," said Zaitun at a press conference here after chairing a

high-level committee meeting at the Prime Minister's Department here yesterday.

She said the high-level meeting had discussed several things including banning open burning during the dry season, if required.

"We have also informed the respective state governments to identify locations that are expected to face water supply shortage early, so that it could prepare ahead of time before things become worse," said Zaitun.

Malaysian Meteorological Department director-general Datuk Che Gayah Ismail, who was also at the press conference, said the El Nino phenomenon was predicted to hit its peak this month.

"The last time the country faced an El Nino phenomenon of this high intensity was in 1997 and 1998, where temperatures reached 40.1°C.

"The phenomenon will gradually weaken from February to June, when conditions will be back to normal.

"But the impact of El Nino, such as dry spells, forest fires and haze would be felt until April in Malaysia," she said.

Prepare for **scorching** weather conditions

> Intensity of El Nino to reach a climax this month

PUTRAJAYA: The National Disaster Management Committee (Nadma) has activated the working group to immediately tackle the hot and dry weather conditions brought on by the El Nino phenomenon.

Its director-general, Datuk Zaiton Ab Samah, said this condition is expected to prevail until the first quarter of the year with a potential chain reaction such as forest fires, haze and a drop in water levels at the dams.

"This working group will meet periodically based on the need in monitoring the situation and coordinating quick action," she said at a news conference after chairing the Central Disaster Management High-Level Committee Meeting: Preparing for the Hot

and Dry Weather, here, yesterday.

The group comprises members of the State Disaster Management Committees and District Disaster Management Committees, which are led respectively by the state secretaries and district officers.

Zaiton said yesterday's meeting decided on, among others, monitoring and activating the open burning-prevention action plan and banning order, if required.

"Among the emphasis is the need for the authorities in the states to list out locations facing chronic water supply shortage during the hot season, to make it easier for Nadma to make early preparations," she said.

According to her, the **Malaysian Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia)** predicted the current situation could become worse than the El Nino phenomenon that hit

the country in 1997/1998, with temperatures reaching 40.1 degrees Celsius.

MetMalaysia has forecasted an increase of around 0.5 to 2.0 degrees in temperatures, with maximum intensity occurring in the month of January.

Zaiton said MetMalaysia was also prepared to do cloud seeding to induce rainfall over catchment areas.

Meanwhile, **MetMalaysia director-general Datuk Che Gayah Ismail** said the current El Nino, which is categorised as strong, is still strengthening and would reach a climax later this month.

"It will gradually weaken from February and the condition will be neutral after June, this year."

She said the strong impact of El Nino would continue until April in Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Johor, Malacca and Sabah, and the Limbang and Miri areas in Sarawak. - Bernama

Kumpulan kerja tangani cuaca tidak menentu, El Nino diaktif

Putrajaya: Agensi Pengurusan Bencana Negara (NADMA) mengaktifkan serta merat Kumpulan Kerja bagi Menangani Situasi Panas dan Kering semalam, berikutan keadaan cuaca tidak menentu kesan fenomena El Nino.

Ketua Pengarahnya, Datuk Zaiton Ab Samah, berkata kumpulan kerja itu yang dianggotai oleh ahli Jawatankuasa Pengurusan Bencana Peringkat Negeri dan Daerah akan bersidang secara berkala mengikut keperluan bagi memantau situasi dan menyelaraskan tindakan dengan kadar segera.

"Keadaan panas dan kering yang dijangka berterusan sehingga suku pertama tahun ini berpotensi mewujudkan kesan rangkaian seperti kebakaran hutan, penurunan paras air empangan dan jerebu.

Laksana tindakan segera, proaktif

"Paling utama, bagi menghadapi situasi El Nino kali ini kita akan terus melaksanakan tindakan proaktif tanpa perlu menunggu keadaan meruncing berbanding sebelum ini. Pengalaman banyak mengajar kita," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian pada sidang media selepas mempengerusikan Mesyuarat Jawatankuasa Tertinggi Pengurusan Bencana Pusat: Persediaan Menghadapi Cuaca Panas dan Kering di sini.

Yang turut hadir, **Ketua Pengarah Jabatan Meteorologi Malaysia (MetMalaysia), Datuk Che Gayah Ismail.**

MetMalaysia sebelum ini memaklumkan fenomena El Nino yang sedang melanda dunia, termasuk Malaysia dijangka mencatatkan pemanasan suhu paling tinggi sepanjang bulan ini sehingga awal Mac dan akan pulih sepenuhnya pada Jun tahun ini.

Fenomena juga turut menyebabkan pengurangan, hujan selain negara akan mengalami peningkatan suhu daripada 0.5 hingga 2 darjah Celsius.

Selain itu Zaiton berkata, mesyuarat turut memutuskan pelaksanaan pemantauan dengan mengaktifkan pelan tindakan pencegahan pembakaran terbuka dan perintah larangan apabila perlu.

Pantau lokasi berpotensi

"Penekanan lain yang diberikan termasuk meminta pihak pada peringkat negeri memaklumkan lokasi penempatan yang sering berdepan dengan situasi kronik ketiadaan bekalan air semasa musim panas bagi memudahkan pihak berkuasa melakukan persiapan awal," katanya.

Tambah beliau, MetMalaysia juga meramalkan keadaan yang sedang berlaku berkemungkinan boleh mengatasi kekuatan El Nino yang pernah melanda negara pada tahun 1997/1998, yang mencecah 40.1 darjah Celsius.

Sementara itu Che Gayah berkata, tahap El-Nino kini dikategorikan sebagai sangat kuat dan intensiti fenomena El-Nino dijangka mencapai kemuncak pada bulan ini.

"Impak El-Nino yang kuat itu akan berterusan sehingga Mac di beberapa negeri, antaranya Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Johor, Melaka, Sabah dan bahagian Limbang dan Miri di Sarawak," katanya.

Nadma aktifkan serta-merta kumpulan kerja hadapi cuaca panas

Tangani fenomena El Nino

PUTRAJAYA – Agensi Pengurusan Bencana Negara (Nadma) mengaktifkan serta-merta kumpulan kerja bagi menangani situasi panas dan kering berikutan fenomena El Nino, kata Ketua Pengarahnya, Datuk Zaiton Ab. Samah.

Beliau berkata, keadaan panas dan kering yang dijangka berterusan sehingga suku pertama tahun ini berpotensi mewujudkan kesan rantaian seperti kebakaran hutan, penurunan paras air empangan dan juga jerebu.

"Kumpulan kerja ini akan bersidang secara berkala mengikut keperluan bagi memantau situasi dan menyelaras tindakan kadar segera," katanya pada sidang akhbar selepas mempengerusikan Mesyuarat Jawatankuasa Tertinggi



KERATAN Kosmo! 14 Januari 2016.

Pengurusan Bencana Pusat, Persediaan Menghadapi Cuaca Panas dan Kering di sini semalam.

Kumpulan itu dianggotai oleh ahli-ahli Jawatankuasa Pengurusan Bencana Peringkat Negeri dan Daerah yang masing-masing diterajui oleh setiausaha kerajaan negeri dan pegawai daerah, katanya.

Zaiton berkata, mesyuarat semalam antara lain memutuskan pelaksanaan pemantauan dengan meng-

aktifkan pelan tindakan pencegahan pembakaran terbuka dan perintah larangan apabila perlu.

"Antara penekanan yang diberi adalah pihak terlibat di peringkat negeri perlu memaklumkan lokasi penempatan yang sering berdepan dengan situasi kronik ketiadaan bekalan air semasa musim panas bagi memudahkan pihak berkuasa untuk melakukan persiapan awal," katanya.

Menurut Zaiton, Jabatan



ZAITUN mempengerusikan mesyuarat khas mengenai cuaca panas dan kering agensi itu di Bangunan Perdana Putra, Putrajaya semalam.

Meteorologi Malaysia (MetMalaysia) meramalkan keadaan yang sedang berlaku berkemungkinan boleh mengatasi kekuatan El Nino yang pernah melanda negara pada tahun 1997/1998, yang mencecah 40.1 darjah Celsius.

MetMalaysia menjangka-

kan terdapat peningkatan suhu sekitar 0.5 hingga 2.0 darjah Celsius, dan memberi impak intensiti yang maksimum pada bulan Januari, jelasnya.

Zaiton berkata, MetMalaysia juga bersedia untuk melaksanakan operasi pembenihan awan bagi

tujuan membentuk awan hujan atau pengairan empangan.

Sementara itu, Ketua Pengarah MetMalaysia Datuk Che Gayah Ismail berkata, tahap El Nino kini dikategorikan sebagai sangat kuat dan intensiti fenomena El Nino dijangka mencapai kemuncak pada bulan ini.

"Ia (fenomena) ini akan beransur lemah mulai Februari dan keadaan dijangka menjadi neutral selepas Jun tahun ini," jelas beliau.

Beliau berkata, impak El Nino yang kuat itu akan berterusan sehingga April di beberapa negeri antaranya Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Johor, Melaka, Sabah dan bahagian Limbang dan Miri di Sarawak. - Bernama

Red tape muffles calls to be 'heard'

Do-gooders shouldn't have to jump through bureaucratic hoops to help the deaf lead better lives

LAST Christmas season was indeed unique; for breakfast, I had the opportunity to meet a young entrepreneur who was passionate about setting up a tertiary-level school for the deaf in Malaysia.

He has invested more than RM1.3mil to pursue his dream of making the deaf more visible, mobile, more relevant and mainly more "heard" in society.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that about 5% of the world's population (roughly 360 million) suffer from disabling hearing loss.

The majority of people with disabling hearing loss live in low- and middle-income countries.

The young entrepreneur, Ambrose Solomon, has opened an academy for the deaf in Technology Park Malaysia (TPM) and has six students under the tutelage of an American deaf teacher.

The objective of the academy is to train children to take up jobs in the animation industry, an avenue suitable for the deaf.

Ambrose's ultimate aim is to train more deaf children to embark on this programme so that they can have a better future.

There is only one university for the deaf in the world - Gallaudet University, which is based in Washington in the United States.

Ambrose wants to establish the second of such a university and has the determination and passion needed to achieve his ambition.

One of the main impacts of hear-

ing loss is on the individual's ability to communicate with others.

Spoken language development is often delayed in children with deafness.

Hearing loss and ear diseases such as otitis media can have a significantly adverse effect on the academic performance of children.

However, when opportunities are provided for people with hearing loss to communicate, they can participate on an equal basis with others.

The communication may be through spoken/written language or sign language.

Without this, limited access to services and exclusion from communication can have a significant impact on everyday life, causing feelings of loneliness, isolation and frustration, particularly among older people with hearing loss.

Children with hearing loss and deafness in developing countries rarely receive any schooling.

Adults with hearing loss also have a much higher unemployment rate.

Among those who are employed, a higher percentage of people with hearing loss are in the lower grades of employment compared to the general workforce.

Improving access to education and vocational rehabilitation services, and raising awareness especially among employers, on the needs of people with hearing loss, could help reduce the unemployment rate in this group.

In addition to the economic impact of hearing loss at an individual level, hearing loss substantially affects social and economic development in communities and countries.

For the past two years, Ambrose has visited several educational institutions, politicians and even ministers, wanting to get their support and cooperation in realising his dream.

"Educational institutions are keen on picking up my intellectual property and want to start separate units to teach the deaf but this would defeat the purpose," he said.

Despite having a complete syllabus, teaching methods and modules, and having had this programme mentioned in the Dewan Negara by Senator Bathmavathi Krishnan, the initiatives to ensure the disabled and deaf community get better job opportunities have been abandoned as our politicians and ministers remain doubtful.

As a result of the prolonged challenges in realising his dream, Ambrose plans to go online and borderless.

If there are no takers in Malaysia, he plans to move to Singapore and ensure that more deaf folk are heard are able to communicate with their loved ones and society at large.

This idea needs no physical space but, instead, an online portal, and Malaysia should seriously engage with this young entrepreneur in its continuous aim to bring excellence to all sectors, including

science, medicine and commerce.

To facilitate this, the government should look into several issues, including admissions.

Because of archaic requirements, it can take months to fulfil the conditions and this bureaucratic delay has resulted in many students losing interest in joining the academy, making it one of the major reasons why Ambrose wants to take the courses online.

In Malaysia, most of the deaf children complete their studies before Form 3.

The next step should be to start with skills training (SKM) level 2 and level 3.

This requires a specific licence to operate from Skills Department under the Human Resources Ministry.

According to Ambrose, he had attempted applying for the SKM licence.

Unfortunately after a long waiting period of six months, the ministry informed him that the submitted document had gone missing and he would have to start the process all over again.

Malaysia should also start welcoming young entrepreneurs with great ideas and help make them a reality so that it can contribute to the economy.

Otherwise, great ideas and entrepreneurs will eventually leave the country in search of equal opportunity elsewhere.

We must move away from a "who-we-know" era to a "what-we-know" era, which would benefit

the economy and our nation as a whole.

Malaysia's 33 primary schools for the deaf produce about 400 students a year.

Out of these 400 students, less than 10% go on to secondary school while the rest take up menial jobs in the food and beverage industry.

They receive monthly wages of between RM400 and RM500, in addition to a government aid of RM350 a month.

This monthly income is barely sufficient for a decent living.

Studies indicate that an employer's lack of skills in communicating with the deaf is another major problem, made worse by the "impaired" perception.

Employers should be trained and taught to converse with the deaf members of their staff to overcome this obstacle.

Ambrose's idea and proposal are a wonderful gift to the world.

It is a pity if no private investors or the government, through various ministries, is willing to study the proposal and fund the project, making Malaysia a beacon of hope for the 55,000 registered deaf Malaysians as well as the 360 million people worldwide.

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