

January 7, 2016, Thursday

PUTRAJAYA: The Cabinet meeting yesterday approved the setting up of the Water Activities Safety Council (MKAA), said Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak was very concerned about the increasing fatalities involving water activities and wanted priority to be given to tackle the problem.

“With the setting up of this council, it is hoped deaths due to drowning can be reduced when the people become more aware on the importance of safety when engaging in water activities,” he said in a statement here yesterday.

He said according to the Department of Statistics, the average number of deaths due to drowning yearly from 2009 till 2013 was 596, and an analysis of the data showed on average two people died daily due to drowning.

The locations with the highest number of casualties were rivers and irrigation canals at 57 per cent, followed by beaches (25 per cent) and lakes and mining ponds (12 per cent).

Children formed the highest number of casualties at almost 50 per cent.

MKAA will be chaired by the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister with the members made up of representatives of government agencies, non governmental organisations and also from the private sector.

The council will be assisted by an executive committee which will be chaired by the secretary-general of the Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Ministry and supported by a special committee.

Abdul Rahman added that the Fire and Rescue Department which comes under his ministry would play a key role in

increasing awareness among the public on the importance of water safety.

He said based on the Fire and Rescue Department’s statistics, Sarawak had the highest number of drowning cases from 2012 till 2015 at 218 cases, followed by Selangor (142 cases) and Sabah (136 cases).

In Seremban, Malaysian Civil Defence Department director-general Ogu Salim Omar said the department would be forming emergency rescue teams which will be stationed at popular water recreation spots to render assistance in cases like drowning.

Speaking to reporters after launching one such team at the Hutan Lipur Ulu Bendul water recreation spot in Kuala Pilah near here, he said the teams, made up of four to six members, would be deployed during weekends, school holidays and public holidays. — Bernama