

## Indonesia should be prepared for massive flooding: President

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has instructed governors to be prepared for massive floods in the near future, saying that Indonesia should learn lessons from the floods that have recently beset neighboring Thailand. The President plans to issue a presidential instruction, known as inpres, that will outline steps that local governments should take to prevent floods and landslides in their respective areas.

"The regulation will require local governments to establish emergency posts so that we can respond to flood-related disasters quicker," presidential spokesman Julian Aldrin Pasha said on Friday.

Also on Friday, the president held a limited meeting with several ministers, governors and Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) officials to discuss preparations for significant floods that may hit the nation.

Among the ministers attending the meeting were Coordinating Political, Legal and Security Affairs Minister Djoko Suyanto, Coordinating Economic Minister Hatta Radjasa and Transportation Minister E.E. Mangindaan. According to Julian, the government has received information on possible flood and landslide disasters from the BMKG and Jakarta governor Fauzi Bowo.

"We need to anticipate these possibilities, not only in Jakarta but also in all provinces," Julian said, quoting the President.

The spokesman added, that the President would also issue a decree to speed up the disbursement of funds to mitigate the risks of flood and landslide disasters.

"Although we have a budget for emergencies, it doesn't mean that operations in relation to disasters will run smoothly. It needs a regulation to disburse the budget so there will be no problem in the future," said Julian.

Yudhoyono added that Indonesia should be serious in anticipating the possibility of floods as neighboring countries such as Thailand and Vietnam were still struggling with such disasters.

Since July, more than a fifth of Thailand's 64 million people have been affected by the country's worst flooding in more than 50 years, and at least 606 have died, AP reported.

Seventeen provinces remain under water, including western Bangkok, where floodwaters are much lower than earlier predicted and are moving only slowly toward the sea.

Central Bangkok has remained dry but most buildings in the area have constructed sandbag barriers or even temporary cement walls because of fears that the entire city would be engulfed. In Vietnam, flooding has killed more than 100 people as of early this month.

"The flooding in those countries is not over yet," Yudhoyono said.

He added that the government would prepare a budget allocation to prevent any disasters.

Based on the BMKG's prediction, extreme weather in Indonesia will likely occur at the turn of the year.

The head of the BMKG, Sri Woro, said that the agency had predicted water overflows from the Pacific and Indian Oceans for the next five months.

"If we talk about the global climate it will be normal, however if we see from day to day, we need to be aware of the possibility of disaster just like in Thailand," Sri Woro said.

Jakarta governor Fauzi told reporters that there were around 78 flood areas that caused big flooding in Jakarta in 2007, but after construction of the East Flood Canal, flooding areas had been reduced to 62 areas.

"We will prepare emergency routes if roads are closed. We hope roads to the airport will not be affected like they were in 2007," Foke said, adding the Jakarta administration had prepared alternative routes to the airport from Tangerang.