

Floods worsen in three states

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KUALA LUMPUR: The floods that hit Johor, Malacca and Negri Sembilan worsened yesterday with 24,594 people evacuated to relief centres in the afternoon.

National Crisis Management and Disaster Bureau Directorate director Che Moin Umar said Johor, the worst hit, has 21,925 people sheltered in relief centres, compared with only 10,000 on Tuesday.

Northbound motorists from Johor Baru using the Senai highway early yesterday were caught in an almost two-hour crawl as some sections of the road near Skudai were under 45cm of water.

With the water level at Sungai Skudai above the danger level, traffic police on the scene were kept busy as some smaller cars and motorcycles stalled in the water, contributing to the jam.

Motorists using the North-South Expressway heading north reported that both sides of the low-lying areas near Merlimau were flooded.

In several sections before the Ayer Keroh exit, northbound traffic was diverted onto the southbound lane to accommodate repair work caused by the flooding.

In Malacca, the number of evacuees rose from 650 in the morning to 2,534 in the afternoon. In Negri Sembilan, it jumped from 61 to 135.

Science, Technology and Innovations Minister Datuk Seri Dr Jamaludin Jarjis told reporters northern Johor, the south and east of Pahang, south Terengganu, Malacca and Negri Sembilan were still experiencing

heavy rainfall.

He said the situation was expected to persist until Sunday, except for Johor, forecast to return to normal by tomorrow.

R. Manirajan reports: The cabinet committee on natural disaster has asked the Johor government to open up all the flood relief centres in the state and channel assistance to the flood victims.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak said the committee met after the weekly cabinet meeting yesterday.

The government is prepared to provide additional allocations, including funds, food and other equipment to the affected areas should the need arise, Najib told reporters after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding on diploma courses between the Royal Malaysian Navy and Tun Abdul Razak University.

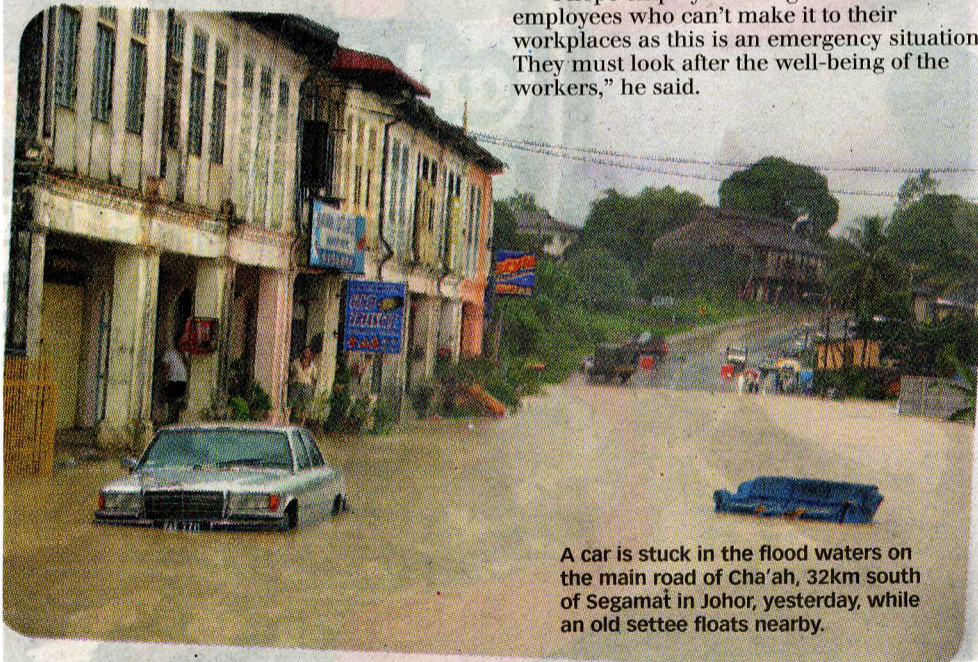
The Armed Forces have been told to evaluate the situation and increase the number of officers and equipment, which include helicopters, boats and lorries, to the flood areas.

Asked about compensation for flood victims, he said it has not been evaluated yet and payments will only be made after the floods have subsided and a proper damage assessment was done.

Najib is visiting the flood victims in Johor today.

In **Putrajaya**, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn appealed to employers to let workers affected by the floods take time off to deal with the situation.

"I hope employers will grant leave to employees who can't make it to their workplaces as this is an emergency situation. They must look after the well-being of the workers," he said.



A car is stuck in the flood waters on the main road of Cha'ah, 32km south of Segamat in Johor, yesterday, while an old settee floats nearby.