

Towns cut off

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Segamat and Kota Tinggi folks stranded by floods

FLOODS worsened in the southern states, with the main roads leading into Kota Tinggi and Segamat in Johor cut off by rising waters since morning.

More than 45,000 people in Johor, Malacca, Negri Sembilan and Pahang have been evacuated.

Some 200 Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) substations in Johor have been shut down, leaving over 3,500 premises without electricity.

Railway services to the south have been cancelled until further notice.

Certain areas in Segamat had their water supply cut off after three treatment plants were closed.

According to the Meteorological Department, more downpours are expected over the next few days.

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SEGAMAT SUBMERGED: Heavy rain caused the Sungai Segamat and other rivers to overflow their banks, causing the town's worst floods since the 1950s. Among the most badly affected areas are Taman Segar and Kampung Abdullah.

-STARpic by GLENN GUAN

Online
<http://thestar.com.my>

Floods wreak more havoc

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AID ON THE WAY: Fire and Rescue Department personnel loading a boat into an Mi7 helicopter to be transported to Segamat to help evacuate flood victims.

SEGAMAT: Two towns in Johor have been cut off by flood waters as heavy rains continue to cause havoc. The flooding has spread to Malacca, Negri Sembilan and Pahang and the situation is expected to worsen.

Flood waters have cut off access to Kota Tinggi and Segamat, where about 12,000 people are stranded. Patients had to be flown to the Segamat Hospital by helicopter.

So far, more than 40,000 people in Johor have been evacuated.

Most of the flood victims have been without tap water or electricity for days. Health authorities in Johor have also reported a rise in water-borne diseases.

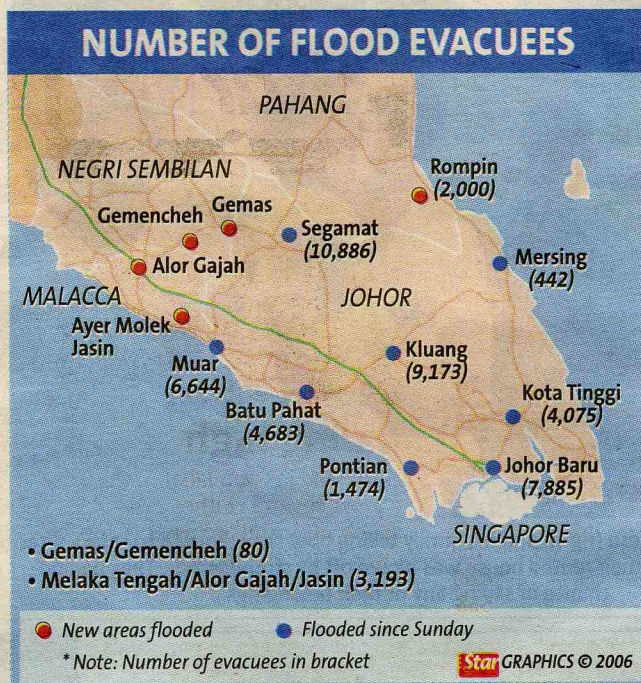
Rescue boats and helicopters have been dispatched to badly affected areas, especially in Johor, where people were picked up from rooftops.

Syarikat Air Johor Holdings (SAJH) has also dispatched 10 tankers to provide clean water to the evacuees.

The floods have also caused extensive damage to roads and bridges and a 2km stretch of the North-South Expressway between Jasin in Malacca and Tangkak in Johor had to be closed off yesterday.

The state, Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said, would look into compensation for those who had suffered losses in income, such as rubber tappers, and damage to crops.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, who visited Muar yesterday, said the floods had damaged emergency supplies like



foodstuff, blankets and mats and these had only been replaced yesterday.

Speaking to reporters in Pagoh, she said that was the reason some relief centres in the state did not have enough blankets and mats for evacuees on Tuesday.

In **Malacca**, 3,193 people from 691 families from Melaka Tengah, Alor Gajah and Jasin left their homes due to rising waters.

A total of 35 relief centres were opened yesterday, with the floods regarded the worst for the three districts in 15 years.

More than 2,000 people were evacuated in several areas in **Rompin, Pahang**, especially in Bandar Tun Razak.

After more than 10 hours of continuous rain, people in Kampung Rekoh in Bandar

Tun Razak were evacuated to nearby community halls.

Other affected areas were Kampung Kurnia, Yayasan Estate and Yayasan Estate II.

At press time, scores of residents in Kamung Serok, an orang asli village, were waiting to be evacuated.

More than 6,000 residents, including settlers in nine Felda Selancar schemes, have also been stranded because of two badly damaged bridges in the area.

In **Negri Sembilan**, the various government departments in charge of flood relief in the state are fully prepared and on standby, said Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan.

Flooded areas include Gemas and Gemenchih and a total of 80 people have been evacuated so far.



HEIGHT MATTERS: A group of young men perching on top of payphone booths to stay out of the flood, even as the water level continues to rise in Kota Tinggi.

Typhoon Utor to blame

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CYBERJAYA: The flood havoc seen in Johor and other states is the result of a new weather phenomenon.

And while people in Johor can look forward to improving conditions by tomorrow, those in Pahang, Malacca, Negri Sembilan and the Klang Valley should remain on the lookout, possibly up to Sunday.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk

Seri Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis said the heavy rainfall was brought by strong winds from the South China Sea and western part of the Pacific Ocean, the after-effect of *Typhoon Utor* which hit the Philippines recently.

"This is certainly not your traditional monsoon rains. This is a new phenomenon," he told a press conference here yesterday.

"However, according to the Meteorological Department, the winds are tailing off, and rains that will fall in these states will be of lesser gravity than what Johor has experienced."

Dr Jamaluddin said the situation in Johor should improve by Friday, but relief agencies and the authorities in Pahang, Malacca, Negri Sembilan and Selangor should, however,

remain on the alert.

"I hope the relevant agencies in these states are prepared for any eventuality.

"While the rainfall is expected to be less heavy than seen in Johor, the situation may warrant the evacuation of people," he added.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department said in a statement that heavy rains were expected to continue over

Malacca, Negri Sembilan, south and east Pahang and south Terengganu up to Sunday.

When contacted, a department spokesman said the rains were not the sole reason for the floods as there were other contributing factors such as development and the drainage system in any particular area.

He also refuted claims that these were the heaviest rains

Johor had encountered over the past 100 years.

According to him, the rainfall readings recorded from Dec 1 to yesterday at the four monitoring stations in Johor were only slightly higher than last year's.

The station at Senai recorded 623mm of rainfall compared with 456.4mm at Kluang, 279mm at Batu Pahat and 182.2mm in Mersing.

Floods raise climate change concerns

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SEEING water rising to rooftop level, people walking around with whatever belongings they have and everyone grouped under one roof in the sophisticated city of Johor Baru is downright heartbreaking. From how quickly the police

reacted to the turn of events, I would say it was truly courageous and efficient. Guess we should be thankful to the police and army right now. It is time the Government raised the importance of the Environment Ministry, because

from what has recently been going on there may be shifts in our current climate patterns that may affect the entire country.
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