

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The meteorological department has declared "Red Alert" in Terengganu, where the number of evacuees has soared to over 2,200 people overnight.

Sabah as well as Kelantan and Pahang on the east coast of the peninsula have also been issued with the highest flood warning due to heavy rains that are expected to last till the end of the week.

In Sabah, a repeat of the disastrous floods which hit the Kinabatangan valley in 1967 and 1973 with water levels reaching a record 23m, looms for the villagers there who saw the river level inching up to 8.88m yesterday.

Kelantan is also bracing for a similar wet situation as last year, when thousands were evacuated, and over RM5mil was lost in damage to property and income losses.

In Johor, the Batu Pahat district continued to shelter 7,733 victims at 35 relief centres while 80 more are still being housed in Muar and 50 in Segamat.

The meteorological department said strong winds and incessant waves in the South China Sea, particularly off the east coast of the



**Out it goes:** Abdullah Awang getting rid of a damaged mattress with some help from UTM students at his home in Kampung Pant, Johor.

## 'Investor confidence not affected'

**KOTA TINGGI:** The floods that hit Johor had not affected investor confidence in the Iskandar Development Region, the state's southern economic corridor, said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

"Places all over the world are prone to floods, even London and Paris. What is important is how the situation is managed. The relief efforts were well coordinated between the state and Federal governments," said Syed Hamid, who is Kota Tinggi MP.

He dismissed reports of racial preference in the rescue efforts and suggestions that rescuers demanded money in return for aid.

"There was no discrimination at all. Just because you wear camouflage trousers doesn't mean that you are from the army," he said, adding that the allegations had been investigated and found to be baseless.

Syed Hamid said what was important was that Malaysians would be better prepared in future.

"In future, our concern will be to ensure that we know how to handle the possibility of typhoons. We cannot expect to be free of problems," he said, adding that after the recent floods, Malaysians should be prepared for disasters and know how to undertake relief work.

On a recent BBC article on racial profiling of tourists, Syed Hamid said the article centred on an isolated incident.

"They should look at how, if you are arrested in America, both your legs are chained. There are so many cases in the United States and Britain where you are beaten up to death," he said.

On Malaysia's decision to decline foreign aid during the height of the floods, he said: "If we can handle it ourselves, why ask for help? I think the Deputy Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak) made the right decision."



**Blanket of filth:** ASP Lajis looking at the garbage that has covered the Muar in Muar yesterday.

## 239 flood prone areas identified

**KUALA TERENGGANU:** The weather at 2pm yesterday showed some improvement when it turned sunny after a downpour in the morning, coupled with strong winds.

However, the authorities have identified 239 areas state wide as high flood prone spots and are monitoring the situation there closely.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Aziz who visited the flood operations centre at Wisma Seri Amar here said the state is more than prepared to face the situation.

"The state is often lashed by the monsoon during this time of the year and all machinery have been prepared much earlier to face major floods," he said.

Nazri said the preparation included 310 relief centres to accommodate 46,526 victims at one time.

He said 88 centres have also been set up to store food, blankets and other essential items for flood victims.

"We have also provided one facility where the Government would compensate grocery shops at flood prone areas to supply essential food items to victims," he said.

Nazri said relevant rescue agencies, including the armed forces, have prepared 366 types of vehicles to help in flood evacuation.

Eighty-one spots have been designated as helicopter landing pads to facilitate airborne rescue missions.



**Learning to cope:** Children at Kampung Penambang along Jalan Pantai Cahaya Bulan in Kota Baru making the best of the flood situation as they use an inner tube and sampans to get around the village yesterday.

# Alert declared in Terengganu

## n and Pahang also warned

peninsula, would continue till Jan 12.

The waves are expected to reach a high of 6m in the east coast and up to 3m or 4m in the northern part of the Straits of Malacca till tomorrow.

In **KUALA TERENGGANU**, an air rescue mission was initiated to reach trapped victims in remote homes. Up till yesterday, 2,202 people had been evacuated to 31 relief centres in the state.

Most were from the Besur and Huku Terengganu districts. The others were from Dungun and Setiu.

Two Royal Malaysian Air Force helicopters combed secluded villages and will be stationed at Kuala Terengganu and Gong Kedak, near the Kelantan border until the situation returns to normal.

Six victims from rural villages in Hulu Terengganu were airlifted in the morning, with rescue agencies fearing that more victims could be trapped in their homes.

In **KOTA BARU**, parts of the Kelantan state capital was hit by floods and the drainage and irrigation department (DID) forecast more areas would be affected today.

By 7pm, a total of 143 people had

been evacuated, 133 from Kuala Krai and the others from Pasir Mas.

State DID director Lim Chow Hock advised parents against allowing their children to play in the floodwaters.

Commercial transportation from trains to aircraft and helicopter services continued to operate normally.

In **KOTA KINABALU**, thousands of villagers living along the 560km long Sungai Kinabatangan are bracing for the worst, following warnings that heavy rains were expected to persist over Sabah's east coast until the end of the week.

Kinabatangan MP Datuk Bung Mokhtar Radin said should the water level in the nation's second longest waterway reach the 16m mark, some 8,000 people would have to be evacuated.

Kinabatangan district officer Abdul Latiff Kandok said 11 evacuation centres had been prepared.

Over in the south western Beaufort district, nearly 300 flood evacuees remained at the Pak Musa community hall as water levels at the Sungai Padas continued to exceed the 8.7m danger mark.



**Diligent duo:** Noor Hasanah Mohd Jusoh (left) and Siti Hajar Mohd Aziz catching up on their lessons, despite not being able to attend school due to the floods in Terengganu.

## Garbage and carcasses clogging river mouth

**MUAR:** Tonnes of garbage, including animal carcasses and broken furniture, washed downriver by floodwaters, are collecting at the mouth of Sungai Muar.

Muar marine police commander Asst Supt Lajis Tahir said a strong tidal current in the Malacca Straits was blocking efforts to push the garbage into the sea.

He said the garbage had to be pushed out before it became a health hazard to the marine policemen stationed at the base here and also to patrons of the food stalls along the river.

"The river is filled with garbage after floods last month hit villages and towns such as Panchor, Kundang Ulu, Lenga, Bukit Kepong and Segamat," he said.

"Some of the garbage managed to float into the Malacca Straits but

some got stuck near the estuary."

Maharani assemblyman Datuk Mohd Ismail Mohd Shah urged the Drainage and Irrigation Department to clear the garbage.

He said the department should find ways to stop garbage caused by the recent floods from floating down Sungai Muar and collecting at jetties near the estuary.

"We hope other departments too would look into ways to clean Sungai Muar," he added.



ar River at the marine police jetty



**Above water:** A youth assessing the floodwaters while standing on a makeshift raft in Kampung Panjang, Tanah Merah, Kelantan, yesterday.

## Over 13,000 farmers suffer loss of income

**MUAR:** More than 19,900ha of crops were destroyed in the recent Johor floods, affecting the livelihood of over 13,000 farmers.

The bulk of destroyed crops (excluding rubber and oil palm) were in Batu Pahat, where more than 14,200ha of land were flooded.

"If we base the needed aid on rates approved by the Government for flood-affected areas in the northern states last year, it is estimated that RM20.34mil is needed for farmers in Johor," said Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"Whether the aid this time round would be increased, reduced or remain the same is up to the Cabinet and disaster committee to decide," he told reporters at Felda Maokil 4 in Pagoh here yesterday.

According to the former rate, padi farmers received RM573 per hectare, vegetable farmers RM2,000 per hectare and those whose land was less than one hectare RM500. Fruit

farmers received a maximum of RM1,000 per hectare.

Muhyiddin said the rate took into consideration the costs needed to prepare the land for replanting, crop-replanting, fertiliser and seed expenses.

"I have already asked my officers to identify what immediate help can be given to affected farmers and not wait until the aid is approved," he added. On another matter, Muhyiddin said the ministry would have a meeting to compile data on the livestock losses involved (excluding freshwater fish farming).

On the threat of diseases caused by carcasses, Muhyiddin said the health and veterinary services departments were working together and had taken all necessary steps to prevent any outbreak. Earlier, Muhyiddin, who is Pagoh MP, visited the family of drowned victim Mohd Farhan Mokhtar and presented RM300 and a hamper from the Pagoh Umno division.



**Life goes on:** Motorists and motorcyclists continuing to use the flooded streets of Kota Baru yesterday.

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