



The welcome sign in Kota Tinggi in 3m of water yesterday. — NST picture by Ahmad Othman

Drains fail to remove water in Batu Pahat

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JOHOR BARU: The number of evacuees passed 100,000 yesterday as Batu Pahat became the latest to be inundated by a second and worse round of flooding.

The floods have caught many here by surprise because the district is dotted with *parit* or drains designed to draw excess water into rivers and the sea.

At Press time yesterday, a total of 101,020 people from 22,613 families had been moved to 340 relief centres throughout the state.

In Kota Tinggi, one of the worst-hit districts, floodwaters were still rising despite a let-up in the rains that have been pounding parts of the state since last Thursday.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, the MP for Kota Tinggi who returned early from the Asean Summit in the Philippines on Saturday night, promised the federal and state governments would work closely to deliver aid to victims.

“The pooling of resources to

manage the flood victims is going smoothly,” he said at the Kota Kecil Multi-Purpose Hall flood relief centre.

Kluang in central Johor is similarly deluged, with houses and bridges washed away by the raging floodwaters.

There were 11,329 evacuees in various relief centres in Kota Tinggi yesterday, which was under more than 3m of water.

The town, inundated when the Sungai Johor burst its banks on Saturday, is still cut off.

The only access is by boat and two helicopters from the Fire and Rescue Department, which has been mobilised for the emergency airlifting of victims and relief supplies.

The flood situation caused panic yesterday morning as waters rose

to more than 4m, engulfing terrace houses, traffic lights and petrol stations.

National Security Division (Crisis and Disaster Management) director Che Moin Umar said in Putrajaya that conditions in Johor, though dire, had not reached a state of emergency.

“If the number of victims in Johor exceeds 100,000 or the water level at dams reaches the ‘crash’ level, we may declare a state of emergency but there are many other factors to be considered,” he said.

Welfare Department director-general Datuk Rafek Residullah said in Kuala Lumpur that additional relief centres had been opened to house an expected influx of evacuees.

Since the second round of flood-

ing struck Kota Tinggi on Thursday, the department has opened five centres on the first day, 12 on the second, 17 on the third and two yesterday.

Shopkeepers who had restocked after last month’s floods lost everything again with losses running into millions of ringgit.

Sedili assemblyman Dr Abdul Rashid Abd Mokti said the water level was almost double that of last month’s flooding.

At 7pm yesterday, Sungai Johor’s level was at 5.45m, almost double its danger level of 2.80m.

In Batu Pahat, where 33,495 people have been evacuated to 117 relief centres, the Sri Medan and Parit Sulong areas were swallowed up by the overflowing Bekok and Sembrong dams, which breached the danger level of 17.5m and 12m to reach 20.21m and 13.08m respectively.

In Kluang, 16,383 people have been evacuated to 57 relief centres, while in Segamat, 6,383 people were moved to 32 relief centres. The others are Muar (5,604 in 21 centres), Johor Baru (17,960 in 28 centres), Mersing (6,443 in 15 centres) and Pontian (3,420 in 32 centres).

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NST 15/11