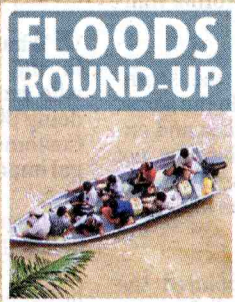


Worst in Kota Tinggi's history



The streets of Kota Tinggi have become waterways as boats cruise outside empty shoplots.

By R. Sittamparam, Sim Bak Heng and Lau Meisan
news@nst.com.my

JOHOR BARU: The discomfort of Johor residents continues as they face another day in the second wave of floods to hit the state in a month.

As of yesterday, 74,525 people have been evacuated to 255 relief centres.

The monsoon rains anticipated from Monday to Wednesday are expected to worsen the situation even further.

The situation here in Johor Baru, which was hit badly yesterday with 19,429 people evacuated to relief centres, is improving as rain stopped for much of the day.

However, several roads remain closed including Jalan Seelong-Ulu Tiram and Km3 of the Ulu Choh-Gelang Patah road.

Meanwhile, heavy rains continued to pound many other parts of Johor, including Segamat, Labis, Cha'ah, Batu Pahat, Pagoh and Muar.

In Kota Tinggi, floodwaters rose over three metres. In a survey by helicopter yesterday afternoon, virtually the entire town was in water. Only the rooftops of houses and shops could be seen.

The situation is the worst in the history of the town, which was once the royal capital of Johor.

The situation is critical, as Sungai Johor burst its banks yesterday following non-stop rain since Thursday and inundated the town. It is now cut off from the rest of Johor, except by

helicopter and boats.

A total of 10,797 people here were relocated to 32 relief centres yesterday.

A Drainage and Irrigation Department spokesperson attributed the severity of the flooding in Kota Tinggi to the flow of rivers upstream, which end up in Sungai Johor.

He said all the excess rain water from the river's catchment areas in Layang-Layang, Sungai Sayung, Benar and Ulu Sebol in Kluang had been flowing down to Kota Tinggi since Thursday. Even floodwaters from Kluang were being carried via Sungai Sayung into Sungai Johor.

Ten roads passing through Kota Tinggi have been closed to traffic. They are the roads from Kota Tinggi to Bandar Tenggara (Km32), Kulai (Km24 and Km26), Johor Baru (Km40), Kluang (Km68.8) and Bandar Tun Sri Lanang.

The other flood-affected roads are Jalan Mawai (Km24) and Jalan Tun Habab while Bandar Tenggara-Kluang and Kota Tinggi-Johor Baru (near Pulada camp) are closed due to landslides there.

Kluang, in the centre of Johor, has also been severely hit by floods. A Johor police headquarters spokesman said 15,717 people from 75 areas in Simpang Renggam, Renggam, Paloh, Kahang, Kluang, Layang-Layang and Sri Lalang were relocated to 52 relief centres.

At Press time, roads in the town remained impassable to all vehicles. A Kluang police flood operations room spokesman said the water levels of Sungai Kahang and Sungai Mengkibol have breached the danger level of

7m and 25.5m, to reach 10m and 26.5m respectively.

The partial collapse of a bridge at Sungai Sembrong has caused the Kluang-Mersing road to be closed to traffic.

Other roads in Johor which are still closed are the Mersing-Kota Tinggi road, Mersing-Kluang, Labis-Yong Peng, Labis-Muar, Kluang-Mersing, Yong Peng-Cha'ah (Km26), Muar-Batu Pahat (Km18.5) and Muar-Labis (Km20).

State executive councillor Tan Kok Hong said 196 TNB substations, including those in Johor Jaya, Ulu Tiram, Desa Cemerlang and Kangkar Tebrau in Johor Baru, had been shut down to prevent short circuits. Other affected areas were Kota Tinggi, Kluang, Segamat 2 and Kulai.

Tan, who is state assemblyman for Bekok, said telecommunication towers were not affected by the floods or power shutdown as they were located on rooftops or high ground and were equipped with batteries that could last three days.

About 100 families in Tan's constituency were evacuated at 4am on Friday after floods hit the area.

He said the Kampung Orang Asli in Bekok was cut off after a wooden bridge to the village was washed away by floodwaters.

In Pahang, only Rompin district was affected by floods yesterday and 679 people were evacuated. They were from Kampung Kurnia, Kampung Perpat, Kampung Rekoh, Ladang Yayasan and Kampung Bukit Seruk.

AT A GLANCE

- Two die from bacteria infection due to contamination from rat urine
- Death toll at 15
- Kota Tinggi almost completely in water
- Kluang also severely hit
- Segamat not passable to traffic via Jalan Yong Peng-Segamat
- Access roads to Cha'ah and Labis submerged
- Jalan Kulai-Kota Tinggi totally cut-off by floodwaters
- Total number of people evacuated to relief centres up to Press Time — 74,525