

Five more pumps installed

Floodwaters should recede within 10 days

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JOHOR BARU: Five more pumps have been installed to drain water out of waterlogged Batu Pahat district.

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said that along with the existing seven pumps, the new pumps in Semerah and Seri Medan pumped water 24 hours into the Malacca Straits and would only be shut down for maintenance works.

He said that if the sun continued shining, floodwaters in Batu Pahat should go down in about a week or 10 days. He, however, added that if it rained, it could possibly take another two weeks or more.

"People ask why there is such a big flood in Johor. It boils down to the extraordinary rain-

fall in the state," said Abdul Ghani after chairing the executive councillors meeting here yesterday.

"In the first wave, 500mm of rain fell on Segamat within 48 hours. That amount is equivalent to four months of rain."

Abdul Ghani said there had been no such massive flood in Batu Pahat for the past 20 years because the Sembrong and Bekok dams retained the rainwater first and then slowly released it into the sea.

At the moment, however, the rainfall was too much for the dams to accommodate and the water level had reached a dangerous point, he said.

"So, the water overflows from the dam to



Not taking chances: Sarah Sebah, 72, and her daughter Kamariah Jantan, 48, moving their belongings to higher ground and preparing for the worst at their home in Kampung Laut, Skudai, after hearing the warning of the possibility of a third wave of floods hitting Johor.

the villages in Batu Pahat, and because of the high water pressure at the dams, we also have to release the water, which flows into the village as well," he added.

"This water is released slowly. It would be even more dangerous if the water were not released. The dam would burst under pressure and strong currents of water would rush down to the villages swiftly."

As at 4pm, a total of 51,429 evacuees remained in 110 relief centres in Batu Pahat. All other relief centres in other districts in the state have been closed.

State Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) director Chong Chee Han said the Sembrong and Bekok dams would be opened between 5% and 10% as the water levels were above the danger mark and could not sustain more water if a third flood occurred.

The decision was reached during a Johor state exco meeting yesterday where councillors received a briefing from the Meteorological Services Department officers on the heavy rain warning.

However, Chong said the water release was minimal.