



Watery danger

An aerial view of Sibul yesterday. The water level rose in the morning due to a gush from the hinterland, and the 'king tide' could make things worse. See report on Page 6. — ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE / The Star

Floods force schools to close

Hundreds of shops in Sibü shut, too

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SIBU: The flood situation in Sibü worsened yesterday, forcing 18 primary schools and two secondary schools as well as hundreds of shops in the town to close.

Houses at low-lying areas, which included Jalan Tiong Hua, Jalan Bukit Assek, Jalan Tong Sang as well as Jalan Lanang, were badly affected, with some areas inundated by about three feet of water.

The water level was at 2.90m at 8am but it went up later in the morning and started to recede around noon.

Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Alfred Jabu, who went on an aerial tour of the flood-hit areas, told newsmen that the situation was expected to improve with fine weather forecast at the upper reaches of the Rajang River.

"We have set up 38 evacuation centres in Sibü, eight in Selangau and 54 in Kanowit.

"Only seven families in Song have been evacuated but they returned home after the situation improved," he said, adding that the floods since last Saturday were due to incessant rain.

Meanwhile, the army was dispatched to a longhouse in Stabau, about 70km from here, after the flood operations room received an emergency call from its residents.

Sibü Resident Sim Kok Kee said the call was for the evacuation of schoolchildren as waters rose to 2m.

"The Welfare Department will assist by sending food there if the area is cut off by the floods," he said.

He pointed out that his office had vehicles on standby if the situation worsened.

He advised the public to remain vigilant and cautious when going into flood-hit areas.

Sim said the 24-hour operations room could be reached at 084-329-590 or by sending an SMS to 012-857-5747.

In **Kuching**, state Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism director Wan Ahmad Uzir Wan Sulaiman said the floods in Sibü would cause price hikes for some vegetables due to lower supply in the coming days.

"The floods in Sibü have destroyed vegetables in Sungai Bidot, the main farming area for that division. So we expect farmers and traders will increase the prices of vegetables in a day or two because of high demand and low supply," he said.

He said his officers in Sibü already noted that some traders had increased the price of chillies from RM8 per kilo to RM10 yesterday.

"Such a situation is inevitable and there is little that the department can do except advise traders not to increase the prices too high," he said.



School's out: Pupils of SRK St Mary in Sibü wading through flood water on their way home yesterday after finding out that there would be no classes.