

Houses flooded after 6-hour downpour

MUAR: About 100 houses in 12 fishing villages along the Muar-Bagan coastline were flooded following a downpour and huge waves yesterday morning. The six-hour downpour, which began at 4am, was made worse with three-metre high waves that crashed into the shore. This caused water in some areas to rise to about half a metre. However, the flood subsided eight hours later at noon. No casualty was reported and no fishing boat was damaged. Muar-Batu Pahat Fishermen's Association vice-president Tan Yong Hwee advised fishermen to listen to meteorological forecasts before going out to sea. He said the current weather condition was precarious to fishing boats.

Dept: Be wary of dangerous creatures

RANTAU PANJANG: Flood victims returning home have been told to be wary of dangerous creatures, such as snakes, taking refuge in their residence. A farmer in Kampung Gual Tok Deh, near here, on Thursday had a shock of his life when he stumbled upon a three-metre python in his chicken coop. Civil Defence Department personnel had to be called in to catch the snake which was later handed over to the Wildlife and National Parks Department. Kelantan Civil Defence Department director Zainuddin Hussein said dangerous creatures would normally take refuge in houses vacated by their owners during floods. — Bernama

Water rebate for all in Perlis this month

KANGAR: Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Md Isa Sabu yesterday announced that the state government had decided to provide water rebates of up to RM20 for all residential and commercial households this month. "The purpose of this rebate is to lessen the burden of families who were displaced from their homes because of the floods," Isa said this after a visit to the flood relief centre at Sekolah Kebangsaan Datuk Wan Ahmad. He added that he would discuss the matter with the Perlis Water Board to have the rebate included in the next billing statements of the households.



Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (second from left) visiting flood evacuees at the Sultan Abdul Halim Stadium in Alor Star yesterday. With him is Kedah Umno liaison committee deputy chairman Datuk Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah (left). — Bernama picture

DPM wants committee to lead relief efforts

By Noor Adzman Baharuddin and Adib Povera
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ALOR STAR: Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has directed the setting up of a special committee to coordinate efforts to help flood victims in Kedah and Perlis return to their normal lives as quickly as possible.

He said the committee, which should include the National Security Council, would help the Federal Government decide on the form of assistance to be given to the flood victims.

The number of flood victims has risen to more than 60,000 people, the worst for both states in recent years.

Muhyiddin, who was here yesterday to visit the flood victims and inspect the flooded areas, said the committee would be jointly chaired by Kedah Umno liaison committee deputy chairman Datuk Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Chor Chee Heung and Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Mohd Johari Baharom.

"We want the committee to start a record of all the victims and which village or area that they come from.

"Many are still seeking shelter at the various relief centres.

"We want their names and the extent of damage incurred so that we can decide on the type of assistance

to be given."

Muhyiddin's directive was in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's call for all agencies to help alleviate the sufferings of the flood victims in Kedah and Perlis.

On Saturday, Najib, despite being down with chicken pox and warded for minor ulcer and gastritis, had asked that relief efforts to reach flood victims fast.

Muhyiddin said the record should be verified by the council before he submitted it to Najib.

"I am not saying everyone will receive assistance, but deserving cases will get them."

He also urged non-governmental organisations to help the flood victims to return to their normal lives.

"They could help in the clean-up or provide necessary equipment and items to hasten the process."

He said major logistical equipment would remain in Kedah as a proactive measure should a second wave of floods hit the state.

Earlier, when addressing the 2,000-odd flood evacuees at Stadium Sultan Abdul Halim in Suka Menanti, Muhyiddin said the government would not spare any effort to help them return to their normal lives.

"Please be patient. I believe the weather will improve soon and we can return to our normal lives.

"I understand your predicament because I have experienced it when Johor was hit by floods several years ago."

Fewer flood evacuees in Kedah and Perlis

ALOR STAR: Kota Star remains the hardest hit flood district in Kedah while the situation has improved in the Kubang Pasu and Pokok Sena districts.

Kedah National Security Council acting secretary Maj Harris Padzillah Mohamed said as at 4pm yesterday, there were 31,782 people seeking shelter at 83 relief centres compared with 33,350 on the previous day.

The number of evacuees in Kota Star has risen from 18,926 to 21,116.

"The water level at Sungai Kepala Batas, one of two main rivers in the district, is at 3.68m, about 0.12m above the danger level and this is worrying," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

In Kubang Pasu, 16,503 people have returned to their houses, leaving the number of evacuees at 34 re-

lief centres at 9,351 people.

Pokok Sena district has about 1,000 evacuees at three relief centres after 953 people were allowed to return to their houses yesterday.

There are still 242 evacuees in the Pendang district and the authorities are keeping close tabs on several rivers in the area since two of them are fast reaching the danger level.

Harris said the water level for Sun-

gai Pendang was 2.5m, about 0.2m below the danger level.

Meanwhile, the water level for Sungai Rambai was 0.7m above the 2.4m danger level.

In Perlis, only 8,645 flood victims from 1,217 families are at the 33 temporary shelters.

Meanwhile, the Meteorological Department has forecast intermittent rain at isolated places in Perlis and Kedah until tomorrow.

The selfless streak in Nasir

By Nadia Badarudin
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ALOR STAR: His house may have been flooded, but Nasir Mustafa never forgets to help others in need.

After making sure his family was safe, he went straight into the task.

Such is the case with the 66-year-old pensioner, a volunteer with the Malaysian Red Crescent Society.

“I was at a meeting in Sik when my wife called me to say that water was fast coming into our home on Wednesday.

“I was shocked because our Taman Uda housing estate has never been flooded before,” he said when met while on his rounds here.

Instead of quickly rushing to his family’s aid, Nasir calmly informed his wife and their children and 4-year-old granddaughter to move upstairs of their double-storey house.

He then drove home to find the house almost waist deep in water. By then, most of the important items had been safely tucked away and he quickly rushed back with his co-volunteers to help other flood victims.

Nasir, who is also deputy chairman-cum-director of the society’s Kedah chapter, said 32 years of experience in volunteer work had taught him many survival skills.

“When the water supply was cut off, my family and I used rainwater to



Deputy chairman-cum-director of the Kedah chapter of the Malaysian Red Crescent Society Nasir Mustafa rushing back to help other flood victims after ensuring the safety of his own family members who were trapped by floodwaters yesterday. — NST picture by Syaharim Abidin

bathe and floodwaters to flush the toilet.”

The father of four and grandfather of nine said after attending to his family’s needs, he concentrated on

his volunteer job to coordinate aid for the victims as the situation worsened.

Nasir and about 40 volunteers have been working round the clock to

help the victims at the centres.

“We work in shifts. There is a shortage of people because many of our volunteers are also victims themselves.”

Department: Finding was based on statistics

KUALA LUMPUR: The flood inundating vast areas of Kedah and Perlis was deemed a 100-year event based on reliable data produced by the Drainage and Irrigation Department.

Its director-general, Datuk Ahmad Husaini Sulaiman, said the data was collected at stations operated by the department’s hydrology unit.

“We obtained the flood flow estimates based on the data and came with a finding that such flooding happens only once in every 100 years.”

On Saturday, Husaini said rain had not fallen this heavy in the three states for 100 years, and therefore, described the flooding as a “100-year flood”.

Asked on how the data was collected, he said the unit conducted research and recorded the data on a monthly basis.

“We always come up with new data every week. However, due to the recent heavy rainfall, the data was recorded more frequently.”

The unit observes how frequently floods occur and the average number of years between them.

Open your hearts, give generously

KUALA LUMPUR: The Tabung Bencana NSTP-Media Prima is open for donors and sponsors to ease the burden of tens of thousands of flood victims in Kedah, Perlis and Kelantan.

Among the items sought are food and beverages, personal hygiene products, blankets, infant formulae, diapers, new clothes and other basic necessities.

The fund was launched by Media Prima Bhd on Saturday in view of worsening floods in the three northern states.

All donations can be banked in to Maybank account number 5141-0532-0757.

You can also send a cheque made payable to "Tabung Bencana NSTP-Media Prima" to The New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd (U/P Finance Department) at 31, Jalan Riong, 59100 Kuala Lumpur.

TABUNG BENCANA



NSTP media prima

Contributions can be sent to NSTP Finance Department, 31, Jalan Riong, 59100, Kuala Lumpur or any NSTP branch.

Make out the cheques to "Tabung Bencana NSTP-Media Prima"

You can also make cash deposits into Maybank account no. 514105-320757

(write your full name and address on the back of the cheque)



The elderly is equally burdened. Sara Ahmad, 75, has to wash her house at Kampung Melayu, Telok Wanjah in Alor Star after the floodwaters receded. — NST picture by Syaharim Abidin

Gruelling task of cleaning up homes

By **Adie Suri Zulkefli**
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ALOR STAR: As floodwaters recede in many parts of Kedah, flood victims now face the daunting task of cleaning up their houses.

This is especially so for those living in Kota Star, the hardest hit district in the state.

Abdullah Abas, 80, of Taman Uda here did not expect his housing estate and more than 10 others along Jalan Sultanah Bahiyah here to be hit by the floods recently.

"This has never happened and I have lived here for most of my life," the retired health inspector of the state Health Department said at his double-storey house yesterday.

Abas and several family members were busy clearing the mud from their house last Wednesday night.

Unlike others in the neighbourhood, he and his family did not seek refuge at a relief centre but stayed on the top floor of their house when the area was submerged waist-deep.

"All my furniture and electrical appliances are damaged. It is going to be very expensive for us to start buying them again.

"However, I am glad we are all safe and I hope we don't have to go through this again," he said, in between breaks while helping his son, Ahmad Shahaz, 40, and daughter-in-law, Rosmina Abu Bakar, 36, scrub the floor.

Sharing Abas' sentiments was bank officer Rizaldin Sarajudin, 34,



Akhbar Sauqi, 10, hanging his muddied clothes after retrieving them from his flood-hit home. — NST picture by Shahrizal Md Noor

of Taman Seroja, another densely populated housing area in Jalan Sultanah Bahiyah.

"I woke up on Thursday morning to find our neighbourhood in knee-deep water.

"I moved some furniture and electrical appliances to the upper floor but they were already wet because our house was already flooded."

Fearing for the safety of his younger children, aged between 1 and 6, he and his family went to stay with a relative in Hutan Kampung.

"Today, we are trying to clean up

the mess so that we can resume our normal lives.

"The floods have come and gone, and now we are left with a massive clean up to do," he said.

Rizaldin's neighbour, Nawiyah Ahmad, 32, from nearby Taman Rakyat, said she did not move any furniture when the floods came.

"I didn't think it would be that bad and left the house with my parents to stay at a hotel throughout the ordeal.

"When we returned home yesterday, the house was in a mess," she said in despair.

Media Prima head touched by response

BATU KAWAN: Media Prima Bhd chairman Datuk Johan Jaaffar has set an example by being personally involved in the Tabung Bencana NSTP-Media Prima donation drive.

He spearheaded the initiative to step up the collection process to help the tens of thousands of people displaced by floods in the three states.

Led by Johan, several Media Prima staff went around and approached the people for help at TV3's *Jom Heboh* Carnival site at the Batu Kawan stadium here yesterday.

Droves of people responded to Johan's clarion call and chipped in their donations at mobile phone boxes and booths placed at the site.

He was elated by the generosity shown by the *Jom Heboh* visitors.

"I am very happy to receive such overwhelming support.

"Some of them came all the way from the affected areas to attend the carnival and help raise money. Their noble action is beyond expectation."

Johan said Media Prima news and editorial operations executive director Datuk Ahmad A. Talib would coordinate with volunteers to assist evacuees.

"He will oversee the effort and work hand-in-hand with Media Prima staff, local governments and non-governmental organisations to help the victims."

Banks, companies and NGOs do their bit

ALOR STAR: Concerned with the plight of flood victims, many corporate companies and non-governmental organisations had lent support to alleviate their sufferings.

The big players among the local firms were CIMB group which donated RM50,000 to Yayasan Salam Malaysia to buy food and necessities.

Yayasan Salam project coordinator Arif Halim Abdul Aziz said the foundation would also do more for the victims, including helping them to clean up their houses.

The AmBank Group, too, had donated food and other necessities, in-

cluding rations to 1,600 flood victims in Kubang Pasu district.

Other major companies were Proton Holdings Bhd, Bank Rakyat and Bank Muamalat. Yayasan Pahang pitched in kind and cash.

The Welfare Association of Wives of Ministers and Deputy Ministers, and Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir's office have also contributed.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak's political secretary, Datuk Shahlan Ismail, said the Prime Minister's Office had collected RM400,000 to buy 10,000 gas stoves for the victims.



Floodwaters at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport and the Royal Malaysian Air Force College have receded, leaving behind a layer of mud. — Bernama picture



Kampung Bakau in Kangar is still flooded, although the situation in other areas in Perlis has improved. — NST picture by Adha Ghazali



Residents of Kampung Bakau, Kangar, using a boat to move around the village to get their supplies. — NST picture by Adha Ghazali



Traffic flowing smoothly along the highway between Alor Star and the Hutan Kampung toll plaza. This section, which was closed on Wednesday because of floods, is now open to all vehicles. — Bernama picture



Halijah Hassan of Kampung Melayu Jalan Temenggong in Telok Wanjah, Alor Star, sweeping away the muddy water in her house. — NST picture by Syaharim Abidin



Farmer Sudin Nor of Kampung Penghulu Jaafar in Kangar showing the padi crop that was destroyed by the floods. — NST picture by Rizal Braim