

Non-stop rain causes major flooding

KUCHING: Incessant rainfall all through Monday night caused major flooding in low-lying areas here, cutting off access roads to a number of villages and schools as well as causing close to a thousand people to evacuate from their homes.

The first area to experience flooding was low-lying Bau district, affecting a number of villages in the Siniawan, Taiton, Krokong and Opar area.

Continuous rainfall for a period of 10 hours straight also caused two schools in the district, namely SK Suba Buan and SK Jagoi, to cease operation with their access roads inundated.

Apart from Bau, the other affected areas were Desa Wira and Kampung Sinar Budi in the Batu Kawa area.

The State Operations Room located at Wisma Bapa Malaysia recorded its first distress call from the public at Desa Wira near midnight after continuous heavy downpour from 9pm.

An official told *The Star* at press time that three evacuation centres, namely Dewan Stapok along Jalan Stephen Yong, Dewan Kampung Sinar Budi and Balai Raya Kampung Sinar Budi, had kicked into action with 169 families comprising 790 flood victims already being given shelter there.

Two tents were also erected at Kampung Batu Kitang and Kampung Sungai Balam to accommodate 100 evacuees.

She said the Meteorology Services Department had forecast the heavy rainfall to last till tomorrow and



Family in distress: Mohamad Nizam Bustaman, 34, his daughter Mellie Mohamad Nizam, his wife Nurul Sakinah and son Mohamad Syahriel Mohamad Nizam waddle through a metre of flood water in their kitchen.

classified Kuching to be in the Orange stage, which indicated a sign of alert.

As such, all ops flood rooms in the state, divisional and district levels had started operating 24 hours since Monday. It is learnt that Sarawak's 200 over evacuation centres are also on standby mode.

She said that so far, the State Operations Room had not received any reports of flooding in other divisions of the state.

When visiting Batu Kitang yesterday, Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr George Chan said Kuching recorded more than 300mm of rainfall from midnight, which was almost half of what it usually got in a month.

"Kuching normally gets 600mm to 700mm rainfall in January but since Monday midnight, we have already recorded 300mm," he told reporters.

Dr Chan, who is the State Disaster Relief Committee chairman, said the

rainy weather was far from over as continuous rainfall was expected to occur throughout these few days as heavy north-easterly rain clouds blow inland.

"We see heavy clouds coming from the sea and if that is so, then we are really in trouble. Luckily, the king tide just finished on Monday or it (flood situation) could have been worse.

"Nonetheless, we still have to be prepared ... it does not look too good this year," he added.