

Huge waves lash fishing boats



Fishermen in Bagan Ajam struggling to secure their boats from the strong waves lashing the coast after a nine-hour downpour yesterday. — NST picture by Zulfa Mohamad

**By Adie Suri Zulkefli
Sharanpal Singh Randhaw
and Yiswaree Palansamy**
news@nst.com.my

BUTTERWORTH: Coastal fishermen in Bagan Ajam here were forced to risk their lives and limbs to prevent their boats from being washed away by strong waves during a downpour yesterday.

Fortunately, no one was injured in the 10.30am incident.

However, five of the boats along the coast were turned upside-down and nearly swept away by the strong currents after the ropes used to secure

them snapped.

Fisherman Abdul Zali Bashah, 51, said the waves occurred following a nine-hour downpour beginning early yesterday, which was followed by strong winds.

He said strong waves were normal during the monsoon season between September and October each year, but the strength of yesterday's waves was beyond what they had expected.

"Luckily, we were in the vicinity and immediately jumped into the water to secure the boats, otherwise most of the 100-odd fishermen here would have suffered hefty losses," he said.

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"The boats suffered estimated damage of RM50,000, which the fishermen will not be able to raise," Seberang Perai Fishermen Association's Butterworth unit chief Azizan Darus, 53, said, adding that the incident had also deprived the fishermen of any income as they would be unable to fish for the next one week or longer while their boats were being repaired.

He said a report had been lodged at the Butterworth police station on the matter.

Azizan said the affected fishermen depended solely on fishing and did

not have any other source of income to rely on.

State Health, Environment, and Welfare and Caring Society Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh said some 150 voluntary fire and rescue personnel were called in to help bring the boats ashore.

"The damage on the boats were mainly to the engines and nets. They were brought to the shore once the tides receded, and there were no reports of injuries," Phee, who is also Sungai Puyu assemblyman, said.

In Perlis, three days of continuous heavy rain forced 150 people from 40 families to be evacuated to relief centres yesterday after their homes were flooded.

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At press time, two relief centres were opened, one in Titi Tinggi which sheltered 26 families and the other in Panggas Besar, which housed 14 families.

Perlis Department of Irrigation and Drainage director Nishad Mohamed Mohd Shaffy said as of 5.30pm yesterday, water levels at Sungai Pelarit, Sungai Jarum and Sungai Buloh were at an alarming level, while the reading at the Timah Tasoh dam was nearing the alert level owing to the unexpected heavy rainfall in the past few days.