

Kedahans on alert before the deluge

Dept warns of heavy rainfall in state

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ALOR SETAR: Villagers in Kedah have started preparing for possible floods following the Meteorological Department's prediction of heavy rainfall in the state.

Among them is housewife Robiatun Ali who keeps checking the water level of Sungai Baru, located several metres from her house in Kampung Simpang 4, Sungai Baru, each time it rained.

She has stored some of her belongings on the upper floor of her double-storey semi-wooden house to keep it safe from floodwaters.

Last year, floodwaters rose to about 1.2m-high in the village.

"We were rescued by boat at the time. This year we are more alert and ready to move out as soon as we hear news about floods," Robiatun, 54, said.

Trader Norshimah Ahmad, 51, also checks the water level of Sungai Alor Gunung located about 2km from Sungai Baru, each time it rains heavily, as her house is also located next to the river.

"Luckily, the weather has been fair and I don't have to worry about floods. However, each time it rains, I watch the water level and wonder if it could happen again," she said.

Norshimah said that since living at the house over 30 years ago, she had endured four flood disasters in 1988, 2000, 2005 and last year.

Hamidah Hashim, 45, from Kampung Alor Gunung, is a little more prepared.

The contractor has two small boats to buy food for the family and help send villagers to relief centres.

"We have been facing floods for many years and the boats are essential transportation for us to get food supply since we usually stay on the upper floor of our double-storey semi-wooden house during the floods," she said.

Hamidah said several other villagers also owned small boats or *sampan* that they used during floods.

Meanwhile, the Kedah Drainage and Irriga-



Keeping tabs: A Muda Agriculture Development Authority pump operator measuring the water level of a river in Kampung Alor Gunung, Mukim Gunung, Alor Setar, yesterday.

tion Department Director Abdul Qahar Osman said the department had been clearing clogged rivers and drains to prepare for possible floods.

"We have identified clogged culverts and have ordered the developer to clear them," he said.

He said the department was giving full attention to Kota Setar district, especially Alor Setar city, since it was the most low-lying area which meant floodwaters from other areas would flow there.

Abdul Qahar urged public members to call the department careline number 1300-80-1010 to report clogged drains or culverts.

Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Azizan Abdul Razak said aluminium boats ordered by the state for flood preparation would be distributed to eight districts today.