

Brace for very bad weather

DANGER: Tropical storm Washi producing strong winds and waves

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STRONG winds and rough seas are expected in several coastal states until Dec 29.

The Meteorological Department issued a warning on northeasterly winds reaching speeds of up to 60kph and waves exceeding 5.5m in waters off Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, eastern Johor, Sarawak, Labuan, Sabah (interior,

west coast and Kudat), Samui, Tioman, Bunguran, Condore, Reef North, Reef South, Layang-Layang and Palawan.

This is because of tropical storm Washi. The storm was located at latitude 9.6N and longitude 112.5E, 593km west of Palawan, the Philippines, as of 11am yesterday. The storm had tracked westwards at a speed of 20kph.

Strong northeasterly winds of 40kph to 50kph, with waves of up to 3.5m off Langkawi, Perlis, north-

ern Kedah, Sabah (Sandakan), Phuket and Sulu are also expected to continue until Saturday.

The condition is dangerous for small craft, recreational sea activities and sea sports.

The department also issued a warning for coastal areas of the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, which are vulnerable to a rise in sea level. This poses a danger to small boats, beach activities, ferries and ships as well as oil rigs. It is expected to continue until Saturday.

Thunderstorms in waters off Condore, Bunguran and Reef North are expected to continue until today. In waters off Malacca, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and south of the Straits of Malacca, thunderstorms were expected to die down yesterday.

Drainage and Irrigation Department water resources management and hydrology division director Hanapi Mohamad

Noor said the water levels at Sungai Lenik in Batu Pahat and Sungai Mengkibol in Kluang had risen

above the danger level, recording 6.3m and 26.07m respectively, at 2pm yesterday.

The danger level for Sungai Lenik is 6m while for Sungai Mengkibol, it is 25.46m.

The department is also monitoring the rainfall in the state, with the heaviest recorded at 53mm in Jalan Yong Peng on Sunday night. The average reading is less than 40mm.

Two evacuation centres were opened in Kluang on Sunday night to accommodate 144 evacuees.

The centres are at SK Kampung Mengkibol and SJKC Ping Ming.

A total of 350 Orang Asli living in five villages in Kahang were cut off from the main road by floods.

Johor

Water levels at Sungai Lenik in Batu Pahat and Sungai Mengkibol in Kluang had risen above the danger level, recording 6.3m and 26.07m respectively.



These beachgoers seem **oblivious** to the dangers of **strong waves** in Pantai Cempaka, Kuantan, yesterday. Pic by Luqman Hakim Zubir

Avoid sea activities, warns maritime agency

JOHOR BARU: The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) has issued an alert to those residing in the coastal areas of eastern Johor due to strong winds and waves.

The alert follows a Category Three warning by the Meteorological Department after tropical storm Washi

hit Palawan, the Philippines, early yesterday.

MMEA southern region chief First Maritime Admiral Zulkifli Abu Bakar said coastal areas of Mersing, Tanjung Sedili, Desaru and Sungai Rengit would be hit by storms with strong winds of up to 60kph and

waves as high as 5.5m.

Zulkifli said the choppy seas and strong winds made it dangerous for any beach or sea activities.

He said three drownings were reported within a week. A 19-year-old drowned in Tanjung Balau on Dec 14, followed by a 14-year-old and a

21-year-old off Desaru on Sunday.

"Rescuers found the body of the 14-year-old at 1pm on Sunday, while efforts are ongoing to recover the body of the 21-year-old man," he said, adding that initial investigations revealed that the victims did not adhere to the red-flag warning.

Zulkifli reminded the public not to bring their families to the beach on the east coast of Johor because of the monsoon season.

"Beach hotel and resort operators have also been advised to take action to prevent visitors from going to the beach."

RM85m to tackle flood woes in KL

MITIGATION EFFORTS: Drainage improvement and maintenance of rivers among measures to be taken next year

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THE Kuala Lumpur City Hall has allocated RM85 million for drainage improvement and maintenance of rivers next year under its 2012 budget.

Mayor Tan Sri Ahmad Fuad Ismail said of the amount, RM4.25 million will be put aside to improve river embankments.

He said that work was ongoing for sedimentation treatment, garbage collection and repair works on collapsed river embank-

ments.

"We will be constructing nine flood mitigation projects next year in the crucial areas," said Fuad at the unveiling of the Kuala Lumpur City Hall 2012 budget here yesterday.

Under the budget, three new flood retention ponds will be built at Intan Baiduri, Kepong, and near Pasar Borong, Selayang.

Meanwhile, floodwater pump houses would also be built at Kampung Baru and Kampung Kasipillay.

Plans are also underway for more monsoon drains in Sungai Besi, Kampung Pandan, and the Royal

Selangor Golf and Country Club.

Currently, flood retention ponds at Kampung Bohol in Puchong and Universiti Malaya are being built.

Meanwhile, the troubled Sungai Bunus, one of the main rivers in the city centre here has been cleaned up after overflowing its banks, causing flash floods in the city centre last week.

However, there have been irresponsible quarters throwing rubbish into the river, impeding clean-up efforts, said Federal Territory Drainage and Irrigation Department director Mat Rahim Ismail.

"DID and City Hall had been working hard to remove debris and



Workers carrying out **dredging works** along **Sungai Kerayong** in Kuala Lumpur. Pic by Aizuddin Saad

rubbish after the flash flood episode last week. we would like to advise people to refrain from dumping into the river."

He said the city folk should be more civic-minded as the actions of certain irresponsible quarters could bring disaster to the city.

He said besides more retention ponds to reduce the flow into the water, his department was considering installing log booms along the river to collect rubbish.

Dredging works to deepen the river is expected to start next month.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, flash floods in the city centre had brought traffic to a standstill after the river overflowed because of heavy rain.

Many areas were inundated and these included Jalan Semarak, Kampung Baru, Jalan Raja Chulan, Jalan Pudu, Jalan Tun Razak and Jalan Sultan Ismail.

Traders moan losses

RANTAU PANJANG: The number of locals visiting the popular Mundok market just across the border here has trickled down due to the rising waters of Sungai Golok and the deaths of six people, including a 2-year-old boy, in the recent floods.

Due to the intermittent rain in the state since last week, water in Sungai Golok, which separates the market on the Thai side and Kampung Bukit Lata here, continues to remain above the alert level of 8m and the water is overflowing to some villages in low-lying places, including the parking lots for visitors.

The situation which remained unchanged since last week had resulted in the traders losing thousands of ringgit, especially on Fridays when the morning market is normally packed with Malaysians looking for bargains.

A trader, Ali Bakar, whose fruit stall remained open at the market, said: "I was really frustrated last Friday as shoppers shied away from the market and many of us suffered losses."

Azimah Aziz, 27, said many locals had stopped going to the market because they were afraid of risking their lives as the river current was strong.

"The six drownings in the recent floods also make us more wary of taking a boat to cross the river as there is always fear that it will capsize," said the clerk from Kota Baru who came with several friends.



Rela volunteers helping **Maznah Jaalam**, 64, and her grandson, **Hafid Jamhadi**, 3, to move to an evacuation centre after her home in **Kampung Mengkibol**, **Batu 4, Jalan Renggam, Kluang** was flooded. The water was at waist level. Pic by Shahrul M. Zain

119 families in Johor move to evacuation centres

BATU PAHAT: Continuous rain over the last three days have resulted in floods that have forced two families in Batu Pahat and 82 families in Kluang to be evacuated.

The two families here, comprising

11 victims, have been evacuated to the Kampung Haji Kamisan community hall in Yong Peng.

In **Kluang**, the victims, numbering 338, were from 14 villages and have been placed at nine evacuation

centres around the district.

Kluang flood operations centre spokesperson said among the areas affected by the floods were Jalan Yap Tau Sah, Mengkibol, Simpang Renggam and Kampung Gajah.

Meanwhile, in **Johor Baru**, 33 families had been evacuated from the flood-hit Kampung Laut in Skudai.

This latest evacuation follows a more than a 24-hour downpour that the city faced since Saturday.