

Schools in Sabah brace for closure

HEAVY RAIN: About 9,000 schoolchildren in flood-prone areas may be affected

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WHEN the new school term begins next Tuesday, 96 schools in the interior of Sabah may be forced to close if the downpour continues throughout this week.

These primary and secondary schools, with an estimated 9,000 schoolchildren, are in Beaufort, Kota Marudu, Kinabatangan and Pitas, which have a high risk of flooding.

The state Education Department has set up a task force to identify flood-hit schools so that the closure order can be issued.

Its director, Datuk Dr Muhiddin Yusin, said yesterday this was a precautionary measure to prevent any untoward incident among schoolchildren.

"The schools will only be closed if there is severe flooding, especially in rural areas."

"Some schools in the state capital are also prone to flooding but usually, it is not serious and the pupils can still go to school."

So far, Muhiddin said, the department had yet to receive reports of flood-hit schools in the state.

In Kudat, flash floods hit three villages following a continuous downpour since Saturday.

About 200 villagers from Kam-

pung Korina Sikuati, Kampung Bak Bak and Kampung Sri Aman were affected.

Kudat Fire and Rescue Department chief Jamaludin Hussin said the main road linking the villages was closed. However, there was no evacuation.

In Sandakan, 351 people from 101 families in Kampung Gum Gum were evacuated to a flood relief centre on Sunday when floods hit their homes.

Yesterday, the number of evacuees was down to 243.

Sandakan Municipal Council secretary Jeffrey Aman said those still taking shelter were mostly women and children.

"The situation is getting better and floodwaters have receded in some areas."

Yesterday, the Meteorological Department issued a heavy rain warning (orange stage) in several parts of Sabah as the downpour continued.

The department has forecast intermittent rain and thunderstorms in Kudat, Sandakan and the west coast (Kota Belud and Ranau) until tomorrow.

According to the National Security Council flood portal, the road at Km2.7 of Jalan SPS1 in Beluran district is temporarily closed to light vehicles due to floods.

Meanwhile, the weather in Sarawak has improved over the

"The schools will only be closed if there is **severe flooding**, especially in rural areas."

Datuk Dr Muhiddin Yusin
Sarawak Education Department director



Several family members in **Kampung Rantau Panjang**, Kuching, moving **furniture** from their flooded home yesterday. **Pix by Azahan Rosli**

past 24 hours.

A state flood operations department spokesman said 6,143 victims were evacuated as of yesterday.

In Kuching, which was the worst hit, 2,825 victims were staying at nine relief centres, namely SK Beradik, Dewan Baru Semariang Batu, Dewan Kampung Tupong, SK Tupong, Masjid Darul Istiqlah, Balai Raya Kampung Sg Laru, Tadika Kemas Kampung Semilang, Tadika Kemas Kampung Gita and SK St Peter.

Out of the 4,000 people evacuated on Monday, 1,964 from Kampung Sarpan Ulu, Kampung Asajaya Ulu and its surrounding areas are still taking shelter at the relief centres.

In Balingian, the situation remained bad with the water level still rising in low-lying areas. The number of evacuees had increased to 432 yesterday.

The rainfall in Sarawak yesterday was 69mm compared with 207mm the previous day.

Page 1 pic: Workers distributing aid from the Sarawak government at a flood relief centre in **Kampung Simpok**, Tapah, Sarawak, yesterday. The aid includes rice, sugar and other basic necessities. **Pic by Nadim Bokhari**



Evacuees spending their **third day** at **Dewan Baru Semariang Batu**, Kuching, yesterday.



Red Crescent Society members distributing **food** to **flood victims** at **Dewan Baru Semariang Batu**, Kuching, yesterday.

Wet weather to continue for several days

KUALA LUMPUR: The rainy spell in Pahang, Johor, Sabah and Sarawak is expected to continue for several days.

The Meteorological Department's director of central forecast office, Lim Ze Hui, said moderate and periodic rain was expected from today until Friday in Rompin, Pekan and Kuantan (Pahang) and Kota Tinggi and Mersing (Johor).

There will be scattered thunderstorms in western Johor, Negri Sembilan and Malacca in the afternoon.

In Sabah, intermittent rain is expected in Kudat, Sandakan and the west coast until tomorrow.

Tawau and the interior will experience moderate rainfall until tomorrow. Kuching and Samarahan in Sarawak will likely see heavy rain until today.

Lim said the weather in other parts of the country was expected to be generally fair.

The National Security Council advised the public to be on the alert as water levels in Sungai Bekok, Sungai Lenik, Sungai Senggarang, Sungai Simpang Kiri and Sungai Muar in Johor were high.

The number of flood victims in relief centres in Sarawak, Pahang,

Johor and Sabah stood at 10,266 as of 4pm yesterday.

In Johor, there were 1,177 evacuees at 16 flood relief centres compared with 1,200 in 19 centres on Monday.

The road leading to Kampung Orang Asli Peta in the Endau-Rompin National Park near Mersing, which was closed since Dec 20, is now open.

In Pahang, two flood relief centres

in Rompin stayed open after the second wave of floods on Sunday night inundated several low-lying areas.

Yesterday, 567 people remained at the two evacuation centres, with 430 people at SK Piangu and 137 at SK Sarang Tiong. Tengku Puan Pahang Tengku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Sultan Iskandar visited the victims at SK Piangu and handed some aid to them.