

Monsoon is here... finally

WET WEATHER:

Terengganu is prepared for its year-end deluge

IT came a little bit late, but the monsoon season is finally here and is making up for lost time, judging by the swiftly rising number of flood evacuees in almost every district in the state.

From just 144 people evacuated on Sunday, the figure rose to more than 900 yesterday.

Fortunately, the related government agencies, such as the Fire and Rescue Department, Civil Defence and police had prepared for the floods months ago.

The speed with which those affected were evacuated to relief centres is testimony to their preparedness.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Said wasted no time visiting evacuation centres and affected areas yesterday.

Rather than just offering assistance and words of comfort, Ahmad also noted what should be done at each area to alleviate the problem in the future.

At a glance, the suggested actions may seem trivial in the face of the torrential monsoon rain, but on closer inspection, they embody the proven cause-and-effect approach

to tackling problems.

For example, at Kampung Tanjung Gelam in Gong Badak, he suggested that the culverts be replaced with larger ones to ease the flow of rainwater during downpours.

Some may say that a rich state like Terengganu could use more high-tech solutions or that anyone could have suggested the use of bigger culverts.

It is easy to forget that Ahmad made the suggestion after seeing with his own eyes how the floods could be alleviated or even averted if the rainwater did not have to make its way through small culverts.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to mitigate floods as the causes are not the same in different areas and it is the end result which counts, not how impressive the flood mitigation measures sound.

Although the monsoon downpour was the source of the excess water, it was not the only contributing factor of floods.

The angry sea, fed by strong winds that could bend coconut trees like twigs, produced waves of up to 5m high that could break through embankments and seawalls protecting coastal low-lying areas.

State Drainage and Irrigation De-

partment director Mat Husin Ghani said the floods could spread to coastal areas if the heavy rains persist until Friday, when the tide would be unusually high.

He urged those living in coastal areas to be more alert about the safety of their families, especially children, as the monsoon cocktail of high tides, strong waves and torrential rain could be a recipe for disaster if not taken seriously.

Another source of tragedy when it comes to floods are the roads, as outstation travellers make their way home for the Christmas and New Year holidays.

Although more frustrating to drivers, roads cut off by the floods may not be as dangerous as those that are still accessible but made slippery by the rain, making it easy for vehicles to veer off course.

The accident which killed a family of four in Kemaman last week when their car collided with an express bus is a stark reminder that road safety can only be realised as long as drivers remain in control of their vehicles.

Safety should not be traded for a faster ride and holidaymakers will be better off if they emulate the timing of the monsoon this year.

Better late than never.



ON THE FRONTLINE

with
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More than 900 people have moved to **evacuation centres** after the **monsoon rains** arrived in Terengganu. Pic by Nazdy Harun