

Floods hit Penampang

4 DAYS OF RAIN: 100,000 residents affected, 18 schools closed

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SOME 100,000 people here were affected by floods after Sungai Moyog broke its banks following four days of heavy rain.

It brought the district to a near standstill and was described as the worst floods since 1999, when a large part of the district was inundated for several days.

The river swelled in the last several days because of the persistent downpour, and things took a turn for the worse when it did not stop from Monday evening until yesterday morning.

Nearby districts, such as Papar Kota Kinabalu and Kota Belud, were also affected by floods, forcing 18 schools to close.

According to the Meteorological Department, heavy rain will continue until tomorrow along the west coast right up to Kudat in the north.

District Officer William Sampil said water began rising early yesterday in the lower Sungai Moyog area, affecting at least 70 villages and a few housing estates.

"The floods affected nearly two-thirds of the 160,000 population, either by the rising water level, or because the roads were impassable, bringing the district to a near standstill. The last time it flooded



Rescuers from the Fire and Rescue, and Civil Defence Departments **evacuating children to safety in Penampang.** Pic by Mohd Adam Arinin

this bad was in 1999.

"The water level began subsiding around noon but there are still some residents trapped in their homes or are unable to move out of the area because of the flooded roads."

William said the district natural disaster relief committee was activated earlier, with the police, Fire and Rescue Department and Civil Defence Department moving in when the river broke its banks early in the morning.

No one was evacuated but William said the committee had mobilised teams to deliver food or assist those who called for help.

"There were also reports of a few landslips, such as along the Penampang-Tambunan road and Kolopis."

Native District Chief Brian Matasing said most of the villages affected were in the lower Sungai Moyog area.

"Low-lying villages like Penampang, Dabak, Ramayah, Minintod, Nambazan, Babah, Dungkahang, Kambau, Kolopis, Tuavon, Kibabag and Tanaki would normally be hit by floods, but this time, it went higher," he said, adding that the water rose by over 5m in some villages.

State Meteorological Depart-

ment director Abdul Malek Tussin said the bad weather was caused by irregular winds over the South China Sea.

"This abnormal pattern is caused by two typhoons, Phanfone, that had landed in Japan, and Vongfong, which is moving from the north Pacific Ocean towards the Philippines.

"It is not a direct effect of the typhoon, but it has caused the winds over the South China Sea to become strong," he said, adding the west coast of the state was in a transitional period from the south-westerly monsoon to the north-easterly monsoon.