

Massive waves hit Penang seafront

Swells rise above lampposts and drench roads at Gurney Drive and Esplanade

GEORGE TOWN: Strong west-south-westerly winds whipped up huge tidal waves here, driving the swells into retaining walls at the Esplanade and Gurney Drive.

The giant waves rose higher than lampposts along the promenade, drenching the roads with sea water.

Pedestrians were seen recording and snapping photographs as vehicles hit by the white foamy breakers inched along.

Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) workers and bulldozers were deployed to both locations to clear sand that was washed onto the roads.

At the Esplanade seafront, MPPP worker S. Prakash, 27, slipped and fell when a large wave hit him as he was clearing the pathway filled with sand.

"Throughout my five years with the MPPP, I've never seen such huge waves.

"I panicked when I saw how high they were," said Prakash who did not suffer any injuries.

Over in Batu Ferringhi, the tidal waves wreaked havoc at the food court in Miami Beach, destroying the tiled floor, tables and chairs.

No one was injured in the incident as most of the stalls were closed yesterday for Hari Raya Haji.

A spokesman from the Meteorological Department said the strong winds over Thailand had caused the huge waves to hit the northern states of Malaysia.

According to the department's website, the strong winds had caused waves of up to 3.5m high over the waters off Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Miri in Sarawak, the west coast of Sabah and Labuan.

The strong winds and rough seas are expected to last until Sunday.

The department warned that current conditions would be dangerous to small crafts, recreational sea activities and sea sports.

State Local Government, Traffic Management and Flood Mitigation Committee chairman Chow Kon Yeow meanwhile said the state government was not evading responsibility by blaming high rain-



Ocean's might: A man and his children watching the rare occurrence of huge waves splashing against the retaining wall at the Esplanade.

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— S. PRAKASH

fall for the recent flash floods.

"We acknowledge that our drainage systems were unable to cope with the intensity of rainfall in the two hours from 8pm to 10pm on Friday," Chow told a press conference.



Aftermath: A council worker checking the damage sustained after waves hit the food court at Miami Beach.