

PRIME NEWS

3 states on monsoon surge alert

ON STANDBY: National Security Council operation centres reactivated

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THE National Security Council's operation rooms have been reactivated, while rescue personnel are now on standby because of a forecast monsoon surge in Johor, Sabah and Sarawak.

People in flood-prone areas were advised to be on alert via news tickers and crawlers on television, which also broadcast instructions to evacuate in the event of floods.

A Meteorological Department senior officer Ambun Dindang said the reactivation of NSC operation centres was in anticipation of the monsoon surge on Wednesday and Thursday.

The surge is likely to bring heavy rainfall for up to three days over the three states.

He said areas which had not previously flooded could be inundated this time around as water levels at rivers could rise.

He cited southern Sarawak as an area that should be on high alert for floods.

"We saw what happened in Kelantan when thousands of people were stranded because they couldn't evacuate in time.

"Therefore, we urge the people to act fast," he told the *New Straits Times*.

"We cannot rely on rescuers to come for us at the last minutes because they, too, will be dealing with their own con-

straints and complications."

He said the Meteorological Department would release updates on the weather condition, water levels at rivers and water flow so that the public can take the necessary actions in case of any eventuality.

In Kudat, Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Abdul Rahim Bakri advised the public in flood-prone areas to immediately evacuate to relief centres if ordered to do so by the authorities.

Rahim told Bernama that the people should not wait until floodwaters had reached an alarming level before moving out of their homes.

"A flood disaster relief committee has been set up in every district, involving all the relevant government agencies, and is chaired by the respective district officers," said Rahim, who is also Kudat member of parliament, after visiting a flood relief centre at SK Sikuati and distributing food and drinks to the over 900 evacuees there.

Rahim advised all village chiefs and chairmen of village development and security committees to be prepared to face the floods and to contact the district flood operations rooms should an emergency surface.

He said the 5th Infantry Brigade based in Sabah had deployed 64 soldiers and a medical team as well as six boats and eight three-tonne trucks to help out in the event of floods in northern Sabah, especially Kota Belud, Pitas and Kudat.



FLOOD DISASTER
THE AFTERMATH



Mohamad Hussin, 83, showing his damaged trishaw, which served as his only means of income before the floods, in Kota Baru yesterday.



Strong waves seen along the coastal road in Tanjung Lipat, Kota Kinabalu. Monsoon rains coupled with strong winds are expected to hit Sandakan, Kudat and the interior districts of Sabah as early as tomorrow.

Families need tents, supplies

KUCHING: The flood situation in Sarawak is under control, although rain in the past few days may have triggered flash floods in some parts of the state.

State Fire and Rescue Department director Nor Hisham Mohammad said this in Kampung Masjid Baru, Merapok in Lawas, which was inundated by flash floods.

Nor Hisham said the situation was expected to improve soon as water was rapidly receding.

"As of yesterday, 52 villagers from 13 families were seeking shelter at SMK Meragong in Lawas, which was turned into a relief centre. On Saturday night, the water level rose up to two feet. The continuous downpour caused flash floods," said Nor Hisham yesterday, adding that evacuees were expected to return home as soon as today.

Eight firemen and two support vehicles from the Lawas district Fire and Rescue Department were dispatched to the affected village. No casualties were reported and state Welfare Department personnel were on the ground to assist victims.

According to the Kuching Meteorological Department, no thunderstorms or heavy rains were expected in the coming week.

A department spokesman said forecasts only showed isolated showers in the evenings and at night.

The Sarawak Irrigation and Drainage Department said all 53 river stations in the state registered normal river levels.

Meanwhile in Sabah, 931 people, all victims

of flash floods here, returned to their homes yesterday. The evacuees, who had sought shelter at SK Sikuati, were from Kampung Naradang Darat, Kampung Andap Jawa, Kampung Purina and Kampung Korina.

District officer Sapdin Ibrahim said floodwaters had receded and the skies were clear.

"We will close the relief centres once the remaining 232 families return home."

Kudat was among several districts in Sabah hit by flash floods this week. The others were in Kota Belud, Tawau, Pitas and Kinabatangan.

Sabah Education Department director Datuk Jame Alip said among the schools affected by the floods were SK Batu 22, SK Kuala Apas, SK Wakuba and SMK Balung in Tawau.

"The staff have cleaned up the schools as not much damage was reported," he said.

Over at Kota Belud, flood victim Tan Hui Ren said she would buy school necessities for her three school-going children today.

"They lost all their new shoes, socks, stationery and schoolbags.

"As we were evacuated in a hurry by fire and rescue personnel, I could only take important documents with me," she said.

In Kuala Krai, among the priorities of flood

victims who had lost their homes in the floods was to procure a tent.

Bernama found families in Kampung Manik Urai Lama living in makeshift shelters of canvas and wooden planks, while others had replaced damaged house roofs with zinc sheets.

Rohaiza Abdul Rahim, 45, said her home had been almost fully submerged in floodwaters, badly damaging it.

She said she and her husband built a temporary shelter using canvas as the makeshift roof and walls while screw pine mats served as the floor.

"This was our only option. We are still searching for any belongings which can be salvaged. I hope the government will expedite its distribution of aid so that we can get tents as it gets cold at night in our canvas accommodation."

In Manik Urai Lama, the situation looked bleak as evacuees returned home to badly destroyed homes.

Jusoh Yahya, 56, said he had to build a hut as his house was badly damaged.

"I almost fainted when I saw the house destroyed, but I want to clean up as much as I can. I had to build a hut to live in until tents arrive."

