

More thunderstorms until mid-May, says weatherman

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KUALA LUMPUR: Thunderstorms that have been plaguing the west coast of peninsular Malaysia are expected to last until mid-May, said Meteorological Department director-general Datuk Che Gayah Ismail.

She said the thunderstorms and heavy rain were typical in the region this time of year, brought about by the inter-monsoon season.

Most states on the western coast could expect more rain during evenings until mid-May before the dry period starts in June with the south-west monsoon, she added.

The American Red Cross, in an advisory, suggested that people postpone outdoor activities if they observe darkening skies and strong winds, as lightning could occur even when there was no rain.

If a severe thunderstorm warning is issued, people should take shelter in a building or in a vehicle with the windows closed. It recommends staying inside for at least 30 minutes after the last thunderclap.

"If you are driving, try to safely exit the roadway and park. Stay in the vehicle and turn on the emergency flashers until the heavy rain ends. Avoid touching metal or surfaces that conduct electricity in and outside the vehicle.

"If you are outside and cannot reach a safe

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— AMERICAN RED CROSS ADVISORY

building, avoid high ground; water; tall, isolated trees; and metal objects such as fences or bleachers. Picnic shelters, dugouts and sheds are NOT safe," it said on its website.

The Meteorological Department has been issuing thunderstorm warnings almost on a daily basis this month, as the Fire and Rescue Department reported flash floods and falling trees occurring during the evening downpours.

Meanwhile, DUKE Highway officials clarified a report yesterday of a flash flood occurring in Persimpangan Clock Tower near the Batu toll plaza, saying that the flood was on the Federal Highway and not on DUKE.

Malaysia experiences the second highest number of lightning strikes in the world, according to the United States National Lightning Safety Institute in a 2010 report.