

El Nino reaches maximum intensity this month

EXTREME HEAT: It could cause water shortage and hazy conditions

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THE sweltering El Nino phenomenon is expected to reach its peak this month, Meteorological Department director-general Datuk Che Gayah Ismail said.

She said the intensity would depend on the sea surface temperature of the Pacific Ocean in the equatorial region.

"El Nino will reach its maximum intensity this month when the sea surface temperature of the Pacific Ocean within the equatorial region will be between 2.3 and 2.8°C.

"It will start to weaken next month and last for a few months before returning to normal after June."

An increase in the sea surface temperature of 0.5 to 0.9°C indicates a weak El Nino, 1 to 1.5°C a moderate El Nino and anything above 1.5°C points to a strong El Nino.

"The impacts of this intense El Nino are an increase in temperature of between 0.2 and 2°C and decreased rainfall distribution of between 20 and 60 per cent.

"The areas most affected by the



A padi farmer catching fish at a receding water canal in Permatang Tok Loba, Kepala Batas, yesterday. Pic by Amir Irsyad Omar

decrease in rainfall are the northern states of Kedah, Perlis, and Penang, Sabah, and Limbang and Miri in Sarawak. Kelantan and Terengganu will experience a decrease of between 20 and 40 per cent," said Che Gayah. She also warned that the

haze could return.

"Based on past experience, cities like Kuala Lumpur and Penang could see haze during a hot and dry spell. Already, there are areas which show a moderate level of Air Pollutant Index (API)."

Checks by the *New Straits Times* revealed that, as of 3pm yesterday, nine areas recorded a moderate API level of between 50 and 100, including Jalan Tasek in Ipoh (74), Seberang Jaya 2 in Prai (64), Petaling Jaya (56) and Port Klang (53).