

KERATAN AKHBAR

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A flash flood in Kuantan last year. The authorities are trying to prevent floods of the scale of the 2014 disaster that affected more than 200,000 people and left 21 dead. FILE PIC

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In December 2014, floodwaters forced more than 24,000 people in Kelantan and 21,000 people in Terengganu to flee their homes.

In Pahang, state Fire and Rescue Department director Nor Hisham Mohammed said the department was monitoring weather conditions this month and next month to predict how heavily the east coast states would be hit in the monsoon season.

He said with just three months left till the end of the year, rainfall had reached only 40 per cent up to August for Pahang.

Pahang's annual rainfall totals 2,000mm to 2,500mm, on average, he said.

"We are worried that if the rain does not spread out in September and October, it will lead to intense weather during the monsoon season.

"We will be very concerned if the rain falls for three days non-stop, such as what happened in Kuala Krai in 2014.

"The intense rain for three days brought what was equivalent to 60 days of rainwater."

In 2014, Pahang was also badly hit, with more than 10,000 people becoming flood victims.

The worst-hit areas were Kuantan, Maran, Jerantut, Lipis and Pekan.

The floods left dozens of foreign tourists stranded in Taman

Negara, with the authorities having to rescue them via boats and helicopters.

Meanwhile, Nor Hisham said it was vital for the rain to fall regularly in the next few weeks, at least once in two days.

"We hope the rainfall will be regular until October, once in two days at least, so that we can prepare for what is to come.

"We will be worried if there is no rain at all in these two months as the downpours in November will be too great, leading to extreme flooding."

Nor Hisham said in terms of logistics and equipment, the department was at its highest level of preparedness.

He said the department focused on educating the public on safety during water activities as school holidays and the monsoon season would coincide.

He said the department would organise a community outreach programme in Teluk Cempedak on Oct 19 to educate the public on water safety.

"Red flags are usually hung at beaches as warning signs against swimming or playing in the water at the beach. But many ignore it," he said, urging the public to be more aware of the dangers of strong currents.

Page 1 pic: A couple removing their belongings from their flood-hit home in Kuantan in January last year.