

Having my kitchen flooded is nothing

My neighbour said she had seen worse in Terengganu.



SATIMAN JAMIN

COMING home to a flooded kitchen after spending the day covering the flood in Terengganu was my first flood experience.

It was in 2010, the year I got transferred to Terengganu from Johor.

Coming from a hilly village in Masai, Johor, my only knowledge of floods before that was based on what I saw and read in the news.

Long, my songket-weaver neighbour, was sympathetic, but made it clear that it was nothing compared with what she had seen, and she had seen worse.

The only thing she had never seen before was me feeding the stray hen that had laid eggs in the basket of my motorcycle. The hen could not find food as the front yard had turned into a murky pool with water up to my calves.

Upon hearing that, the flood novice in me immediately looked for a house in a less flood-prone area. I moved to Tok Jembal the following year.

Although the primary school in Tok Jembal was turned into a flood evacuation centre every time floods hit Terengganu, the housing area that I moved to in 2011 was never affected.

The monsoon season is cold and my favourite place to escape the strong, cold winds is the La hot spring in Kampung La, Besut.

The problem is, big floods are a fact of life in Kampung La and the villages around it.

In 2012, I went to Kampung Bukit Payung, a few kilometres from Kampung La, to cover the flood situation there, thinking that I could visit the hot spring after finishing my assignment.

In a matter of hours, all the exit routes were flooded and I ended up staying at a friend's house there for four days.

It was the first time I saw people being evacuated in boats and I understood why Long said my flooded kitchen was "nothing".

Being surrounded by floodwater is depressing. It is more so for villagers as they cannot earn a living, not to mention having to think about cleaning up and repair works when the flood subsides.

Luckily, there were no human casualties.

On the other hand, kids and youngsters were having the time of their life.

Youngsters on dirt bikes would

go around testing how far their machines could go in a flooded area before the engines get killed by the water, while others would hitch rides on excavators making their rounds helping villagers or rescuing livestock.

I tried riding my 16-year-old motorcycle through a flooded road, but the engine died after the water reached the seat. No, it was not a dangerous stunt as I had a bunch of people around who were also trying to cross the flooded road on motorcycles and excavators.

My motorcycle did not suffer any damage and I was able to restart it after draining the water from the exhaust pipe.

A word of caution: do not try to restart your vehicle while the engine is underwater as the engine could be hydro-locked.

Water, like any liquid, cannot be compressed, and if it gets into the cylinder, the piston will get jammed when you crank it up.

The incompressible quality of water allows it to transfer energy, becoming violent in surging floods or beneficial when applied to hydroelectric dams.

Rumours of dams releasing water that leads to floods are not new.

On my rounds to get comments from villagers who refuse to move to the evacuation centre, an elderly gentleman told me to write about dams releasing water, which he said was the real cause of floods in Terengganu.

"*Bakpo set wartawe tokse tulls empange wat nyakyo ko ore kapung, pelepas air ikut dae.*" (Why don't journalists write about the dams making our lives miserable by releasing water as they please?)

Telling him that journalists would surely report on it if there was proof of such things had only convinced him that I was "in cahoots with the belligerent dam people". I gave up.

So I went to write about people who saw floods as an opportunity to net freshwater fish instead.

The water receded after four days and I was finally able to enjoy a dip at the La hot spring.

The writer is a Kuala Terengganu-based independent journalist

Residents taking a sampan ride to look for food as their home remains flooded, in Tumpat, Kelantan, yesterday. PIC BY NIK ABDULLAH NIK OMAR

"Another case yesterday (Wednesday) was due to an electric shock. So three deaths have been recorded," he said at the Kelantan police headquarters here yesterday.

He advised the public not to turn the flood season into a "water festival".

He said many places in the state seemed to have become "water theme parks", with many parents

taking their children to play.

"Although the water level in the place where the 'festival' is held is not that deep, there are areas with rapid currents. Things can go wrong in the blink of an eye."

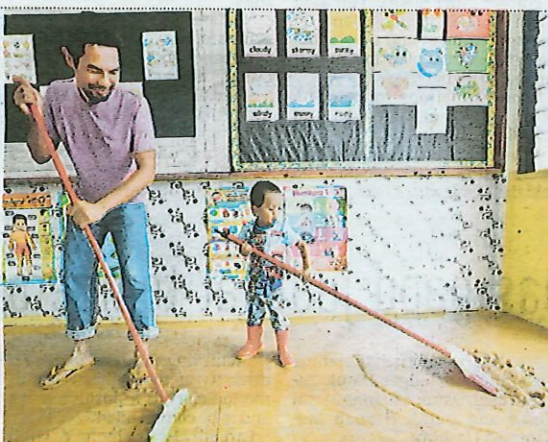
Division commander Major-General Datuk Mardzuki Muhammad.

Mardzuki said the country's security along the Malaysian-Thai border would continue to be safeguarded despite the floods.

He said armed forces personnel were manning flooded security outpost, refuting claims that security measures had been compromised due to the floods.

"Despite the floods, we will still perform our duty, along with police and other agencies.

"Although some security posts are flooded, personnel are stationed at the border and carrying out their duties as usual," he told Bernama.



Mohd Azeeri Mohd Radzali and his son, Mohd Afeef, cleaning a flooded classroom at SK Lubuk Periuk in Hulu Terengganu yesterday. PIC BY GHAZALI KORI