

At least four dead, thousands evacuated in Malaysia floods

March 4 2023, by Patrick LEE and M JEGATHESAN in Kuala Lumpur



A woman and her children prepare to evacuate their home in a flooded area in Yong Peng, Malaysia's Johor state.

At least four people have died and nearly 41,000 evacuated in Malaysia after floodwaters caused by "unusual" torrential rains lasting days swept

through several states, officials said Saturday.

Local reports and social media posts showed images of flooded roads, submerged cars, waterlogged homes and rows of shops shuttered in the affected areas, mainly in the southern state of Johor near neighbouring Singapore.

The rains have continued unabated, hampering [relief efforts](#).

Police said at least four people have died since Wednesday, including a man whose car was swept by floodwaters and an elderly couple who drowned.

Nearly 41,000 people from six states—but mostly from Johor—have been evacuated to schools and community centres where food, water and clothes were provided.

The latest fatality was a 68-year-old woman who drowned near her flooded house after she left an evacuation centre in Segamat town in Johor, police said.

In the Johor town of Yong Peng, AFP journalists saw a family wading in brownish, above knee-deep waters outside their home, with their children using interior tire tubes as floats.

Safiee Hassan, 38, said he and his family managed to save their refrigerator, sofa and some electrical items.

"Other things like our bed, mattress, cupboard, are damaged," he told AFP.

Malaysian Nature Society president Vincent Chow told AFP said these were "the worst floods to hit Johor" in over five decades, since 1969.

"Now, the weather is unpredictable. Climate change has outfoxed the weatherman," he said.



Malaysia is facing unprecedented continuous torrential rain from the annual monsoon season that began in November.

He added he has received urgent calls for help from villagers living along a riverbank in Peta village, about 120 kilometres (70 miles) north of Yong Peng.

"People are crying for food and medicine. The only way to provide food and clothes is by air," he said.

Malaysia is facing unprecedented continuous torrential rain from the annual monsoon season that began in November. Its worst flooding in decades last took place in 2014, forcing about 118,000 people to flee their homes.

The Southeast Asian nation often experiences [stormy weather](#) around the year's end, with seasonal flooding regularly causing mass evacuations and deaths.

'Unusual' rainfall volume

But Meenakshi Raman, president of environmental group Friends of the Earth Malaysia, said the large volume of rainfall is "unusual" at this time of the year, blaming the flooding on the lack of green spaces.

"Forest and land clearings in the upper reaches of our rural areas, towns and cities lead to our rivers and drains choked with [soil erosion](#) and they cannot contain the increased volumes of rainfall.

"Moreover, the over-concretising of areas also leads to overflows of water, as there is little green left to act as sponges."

The Meteorological Department has warned that the rain could go on until April.

Some victims were fatalistic.

"We just accept this, whatever God has given. What can we do?" said Kabibah Siam, 54.

"We cannot moan about our luck because over here, everyone is going through the same thing."

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