

## **Chukai hailstorm not a precursor of major floods, says weather expert**



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**KUALA TERENGGANU:** The hailstorm which hit the town of Chukai, Kemaman and its surrounding areas on Wednesday (Oct 23) does not indicate that major floods will happen in the east coast, as claimed by a few parties.

Climate and weather researcher Dr Chung Jing Xiang said instead, hailstones are among the characteristics of the monsoon transition from the Southwest Monsoon since Sept 24 before entering the Northeast Monsoon which is predicted to start early this November.

According to him, the characteristics of the monsoon transition are that the sky is usually clear in the morning and the wind is weak from various directions, which encourage thunderstorms, heavy rain and strong winds in a short period of time, thus potentially generating tornadoes and producing hail.

"It (hailstones) cannot be used to predict whether a major flood will occur or not in an area. However, the east coast will be hit by the monsoon.

"If we go by past history, the risk of flooding is high but a major flood forecast cannot be done at this time," he said when contacted by Bernama on Thursday (Oct 24).

The lecturer at the Faculty of Marine Sciences and Environment in Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) said that in order to predict long-term weather and the potential for major floods, researchers use large-scale atmospheric circulation such as changes in the El Nino Southern Oscillation (warming of ocean), the Bipolar Indian Ocean (Indian Ocean Dipole) and Madden-Julian Oscillation (Madden-Julian Oscillation).

"And we also need to pay attention to atmospheric anomalies such as cold winds from the north and the occurrence of the Borneo Vortex (cyclonic weather) during the occurrence of the monsoon for us to more accurately predict whether a major flood will occur, and where it will occur.

"For example, if there is a La Nina (cooling of ocean, more rain), the probability of heavy rain and floods can occur. Or the presence of strong winds, it can bring moisture to our area and cause prolonged heavy rain and flooding," he said.

Earlier, the Malaysian Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia) through a long-term weather forecast for October 2024 to March 2025, informed that only the Besut district is expected to receive slightly above average rainfall in December this year.

MetMalaysia Director-General Muhammad Helmi Abdullah was also previously reported as saying that La Nina, which usually lasts between five to 18 months, is expected to be of weak or moderate strength based on international forecast models.

On Wednesday (Oct 23), the town of Chukai and the area within a radius of three kilometres around it were hit by hail and a thunderstorm which damaged the infrastructure of more than 200 houses and schools, fallen trees and injured a man who broke his right leg when hit by the debris of a hut while taking shelter from the storm.

A total of 18 victims from seven families, including four children, are now placed in a temporary evacuation centre (PPS) at Kampung Gong Pauh due to severe damage to their houses. – Bernama