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Rescuers ready for flash floods in Cameron Highlands

CAMERON HIGHLANDS: Three areas prone to floods have been identified and the authorities are ready to evacuate residents from there.

The areas are Bertam Valley, Terisu and Kampung Raja, said Cameron Highlands fire station chief Muhamad Haziq Hazmi.

He said that based on previous experiences, the areas would see flash floods if there was heavy rain.

Also, Terisu was likely to suffer landslides, he said.

"It is now raining almost daily and we are monitoring the situation.

"If the water rises to an alarming level in Sungai Ringlet, we will evacuate villagers near the banks and hillslopes," he told *The Star*.

Muhamad Haziq said that at present, the station has 29 firemen looking after the 73,000ha of highlands and that all leave had been frozen until next year.

He said that should the need arise, they would call for backup from stations in Simpang Pulai and Lipis, where rescue boats were already stationed.

"The Bertam Valley community hall is the main flood relief centre and police will open up more centres if there is a need to.

"Tenaga Nasional will also tell us about one to three hours earlier if water needs to be released from the Sultan Abu Bakar dam as a safety measure," he said.

In October 2013, four people died in a massive mudslide and flood in Bertam Valley after water was released from the dam which was in danger of bursting.

The deluge also destroyed about 100 houses and damaged vehicles as well as other properties.

Muhamad Haziq said that all trekking activities at Gunung Irau, Gunung Brinchang, Gunung Jasar and Gunung Berembun had been suspended until further notice.

Regional Environmental Awareness Cameron Highlands president R. Ramakrishnan said residents were ill prepared for a massive flood like the one previously.

He urged the authorities to act fast and alert residents early of any situation, to avoid another catastrophe.

"Land clearing and hillside development are still happening at the expense of the environment," he said.

He also questioned the need to build more houses in the area.

"With a population of around 36,000, there are already more than enough houses there," he said.

