

What's behind this weather?

Ocean conditions influencing unusually wet season, says expert

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PETALING JAYA: It is an unusual southwest monsoon season.

The current season, which lasts from May until August, typically ushers in dry and hot weather. But this year has instead seen rolling thunderstorms, floods and wet weather in many parts of the country.

Climatologist Prof Dr Fredolin Tangang said the unusual condition had dominated much of the southwest monsoon season since early June.

"Two conditions may be influencing this condition we have seen since early June.

"According to the United States Climate Prediction Centre (CPC), since early June, the condition in the Indian Ocean has been dominated by phase one and two of the so-called Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO), a large-scale weather disturbance," said the department head of earth sciences and environment, science and technology faculty of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM).

"According to our research at UKM, the southwest monsoon wind is weakened during phase one and two of the MJO and as a result, weaker winds prevailed over the peninsula during June and July and favoured a local convection, hence why we are seeing thunderstorms.

"This is akin to reverting the condition in June and July to the condition like in April and May.

"This is why we have been seeing plenty of thunderstorms in June and in July, similar to April and May," he said when contacted yesterday.

According to Prof Fredolin, once



Nature's impact: Several areas in the Klang Valley have been hit by flash floods recently, causing damage to roads and homes.

MJO appears, it tends to propagate eastward crossing the Maritime Continent, but this time it got "stuck" over the Indian Ocean with little propagation.

This could be due to a warmer sea surface temperature over the South-East Asian seas.

"The second reason why this southwest monsoon is unusually wet is the favourable La Nina condition in the Pacific Ocean.

"Though the US CPC put its advisory as 'La Nina Watch' and has yet to declare that La Nina is occurring, what we have in our region is already almost like a La Nina condition.

"This is where we have warmer

sea surface temperature and plenty of moisture and moisture availability, fuelling the convection we have been seeing," said Prof Fredolin.

The US CPC has forecast the current condition of MJO to last until the end of this month.

"However, the La Nina-like condition will persist and in the next few months, the sea surface temperature will be warmer than normal in this region and there will be plenty of moisture to fuel a convection," Prof Fredolin added.

Regional haze, which usually occurs between June and October, is an unlikely scenario for now.

This is because with the current

wet weather and La Nina-like condition, above normal rainfall is forecast over the region, especially over Sumatra and Kalimantan.

Yesterday, Malaysian Meteorological Department director-general Jailan Simon said the current wet conditions with on-and-off thunderstorms were expected to continue until mid-August.

Several areas in the Klang Valley were hit by flash floods over the last few weeks following heavy rain.

The authorities have advised the public to be cautious of water columns in waterfall areas and to avoid parking vehicles in flood-prone areas.