

UKM don warns of prolonged dry spell in Sabah

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KOTA KINABALU: Sabah is seeing rainfall in some parts while other areas are experiencing dry conditions associated with the El Nino phenomenon.

A persistent high pressure system over Siberia is said to be behind this and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Climatology and Oceanography Professor Dr Fredo-

lin Tangang said it was causing strong winds and rainfall along the west coast and northern Sabah.

"However, east coast districts such as Tawau have experienced irregular rainfall since Jan 27, which has worsened since Feb 17 when dry conditions took over," he said.

He said the impact of the Siberian high pressure system over Sabah would eventually wane in the coming weeks and then the people in the state would experience extreme-

ly dry and hot conditions.

"The weather fluctuations being experienced now are temporary," he added.

While some areas such as the northern Kota Marudu experienced an entire day of rainfall on Thursday, dry conditions in Tawau for the past 10 days had resulted in a drop at the Tawau River - the main source of raw water for the district.

Sabah Water Department Tawau

district engineer Bahrin Antonio said water production was reduced by half to 15 million litres per day as intake points at the Tawau River were unable to pump sufficient water.

Dr Fredolin warned that all signs were pointing to a prolonged dry spell in Sabah and northern Sarawak, similar to what had occurred in 1997 and 1998.

He said the forecast of the Apec Climate Centre in Busan, S. Korea,

indicated more than 80% likelihood of rainfall below normal over this region in the next three months.

Dr Fredolin said the El Nino phenomenon resulted in a 3°C above average surface temperatures of the Pacific Ocean.

"In comparison, a 5°C increase in the Pacific Ocean two decades ago resulted in widespread drought in Sabah, causing massive forest and bush fires as well as crop failures," he added.