

## Climate Change Doesn't Break a system, It Shows A Broken System

I am a Malaysian. From the bottom of my heart, I have committed steadfast loyalty and patriotism to the land and community that raised me. With my acquaintances, the topics that revolve around our casual conversation are never irrelevant to the current issues in Malaysia. I used to take pride in living in a multiracial country with a moderate climate and pleasing vegetation, and most significantly, we are free from natural disasters. While I boldly say that I love the natural beauty of our country, I must admit that Malaysia is not capable yet of solving the environmental crisis. According to the Swiss Re Institute, Malaysia ranks 47 out of 48 countries in terms of Climate Resilience, it's crumbling ahead of our own eyes.<sup>1</sup> To love the country is to be proud of it, but it also means we have to point out its failures, toil to conquer them, and voice for the unheard.

**Table 1: The top-and-bottom five Climate Economics Index ranking, statistics via Swiss Re Group<sup>1</sup>**

Rank	Country	Physical risk rankings			Current adaptive capability rankings**	Climate Economics Index
		GDP impact	Extreme weather risk*			
			Dry	Wet		
1	Finland	3	8	32	8	11.3
2	Switzerland	4	12	37	2	11.6
3	Austria	7	15	41	6	15.1
4	Portugal	9	21	30	10	15.9
5	Canada	12	18	20	16	16.0
...						
44	Thailand	45	43	11	39	36.0
45	India	42	37	13	46	36.4
46	Philippines	46	48	5	43	37.3
47	Malaysia	48	47	23	33	38.3
48	Indonesia	44	45	19	44	39.2

\*Extreme weather risk is proxied by Swiss Re Institute's climate risk scores that reflect individual country potential exposures to extreme dry and wet weather conditions/events on account of changes to the climate. \*\*The adaptive capacity ranking are based on the Climate Change Adaptive Capacity Index from Verisk Maplecroft. Our sample analysis covers 48 countries accounting for 90% of global GDP in 2019. Source: Verisk Maplecroft, Swiss Re Institute

<sup>1</sup>Saner, Patrick. (2021). *Why no action on climate change is not an option?*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from <https://www.swissre.com/risk-knowledge/mitigating-climate-risk/no-action-climate-change-not-option.html>



**Picture 1: Residents wade through a flooded road in Shah Alam on December 20, 2021<sup>2</sup>**

Amid lockdown when the people of Malaysia anticipated the decline of pollution, instead, the 2021-2022 flood caught Malaysians off guard, the worst flood ever in Malaysia, affecting 8 states across Peninsula with a total death of 54 people and 2 missing.<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, flood due to climate change in Malaysia is no longer something surprising, it has become a norm. Especially on the east coast of Malaysia like Kelantan and Terengganu with the higher rates of poverty<sup>4</sup>, thousands of impoverished families are uncertain and panic about the arrival of intense downpours. Days after days and nights after nights, the public has gotten used to looking at the cold and lifeless statistics while listening to the monotonous and regular flooding news. The flood also submerges the public's emotion to treat the victims as human beings with blood and flesh. I quote from a New York Times article, "Resentment displaces hope and purpose, the way carbon monoxide displaces air".<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Thian, Vincent. (2021). *Rescue Workers in Malaysia Free People Trapped By Flooding*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-20/rescue-workers-in-malaysia-free-people-trapped-by-flooding#xj4y7vzkg>

<sup>3</sup>Zainal, Fatimah. (2022). *Flood: 55 fatalities from December 2021 to January 2022*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/03/08/floods-55-fatalities-from-december-2021-to-january-2022>

<sup>4</sup>Malaysiakini. (2020). *Sabah, Kelantan record the highest poverty rates*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/553618>

<sup>5</sup>Robinson, Marilynne. (2020). *Don't give up on America*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/09/opinion/sunday/america-patriotism.html>



**Picture 2: Department stores on Java Street-now Jalan Tun Perak-were among thousands of businesses affected by the "Great Flood" of 1926.<sup>6</sup>**

Looking back into history, the flood has been a can of worm for almost a century, from Malaya's "Great Flood" of 1926 when Kuala Lumpur turned into a sea of muddy water to the most recent deadly flash flood in Baling, Kedah with inundated and heart-shattering flood scene."I thought I was going to die because I did not see anyone coming for us." Recounting the harrowing experience, 58-year-old Hasnah said she tried to scream for help but no one had heard her, and all she could do was wait until rescuers arrived. <sup>7</sup>In the face of cries and pleas, our leader's promises are empty, hands bloody. While the people who were half-submerged in the flood are screaming for help, we have minister who was in a NADMA boat full of photographers and staff to visit victims. While people are suffering from the damage of living quarters and businesses, we have minister who blamed people for failing to take the government's weather warning seriously. While people are struggling with waterborne diseases, we have minister cleaning spotless floor using water jet. While people's mental well-being was disrupted, we have politicians who have put the flood in the name of God to silent the critics. This is the Malaysia today.

---

<sup>6</sup> Wong, Noel. (2022). *A look back at Malaya's 'Great Flood' of 1926*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/leisure/2022/03/11/a-look-back-at-malayas-great-flood-of-1926/>  
<sup>7</sup>Bernama,. (2022). *Elderly woman clutches onto a tree to save herself from floods*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from <https://www.newsarawaktribune.com.my/elderly-woman-clutches-onto-a-tree-to-save-herself-from-floods/>

So, when is the end of this series of catastrophic episodes? Are we continuing to be on the thin ice to face the same calamity every year? Climate change doesn't break a system, it shows a broken system. How should the government repair and reform it? First and foremost, according to New Strait Times, it was reported that a total of 68 agencies were involved in the disaster management structure, consisting of 27 federal agencies, 22 states and 19 district agencies.<sup>8</sup> Despite all these efforts that cost the government billion ringgits on flood control, its effectiveness is evident. A lecturer at University Sains Malaysia noted, "The federal government's agencies don't have enough info -- what is the exact location that is prone to be impacted during disasters. So, when the federal government came in and mobilized resources to the area without consulting the local experts, this is where certain areas lack of support and other areas got more support."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, better coordination among a large number of agencies needs to be constructed to centralize the aids and unify the command. Let's take concrete steps, the federal government should only tackle the strategic aspect of flood response such as distributing the deployed resources, while the state and district level committees should lead the responses and on-site operations at their respective levels.

Apart from that, a transparent, high-precision, and improved forecasting warning system to address climate change events is desperately needed. Instead of just having a warning system that could warn floods a few hours or days in advance, we demand an early warning system that could be easily assessed even at 2 am when the disaster strikes. Let's take a look at the situation in the Philippines, they can predict the typhoon will be crossing the district and affecting 150, 000 people as they have proper analysis and a good database.<sup>10</sup> A comprehensive warning system that owns data

---

<sup>8</sup>Mansor, Norma. (2019). *Managing flood problem*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2019/10/532457/managing-flood-problems>

<sup>9</sup>Lim, Ida. (2022). *How Malaysia can handle massive floods better: Here's a checklist*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from [https://malaysia.news.yahoo.com/malaysia-handle-massive-floods-better-205853952.html?guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAHr9-9LaDDr5B60-ekk5CzgQCehY196Nb89x-zEwSjsJUyA8zfSsJwv8qiS\\_XF2OtxsezcyliGV9W19704OWRLDOiQ4ehW7FQaVIboMdh7res9BGcSjnDx3u3lPDLv0vgpBAB2O1-gvQyZGLYHeSLgy-rMjXu0WJ3PEeSjupoP8Q&gucounter=2](https://malaysia.news.yahoo.com/malaysia-handle-massive-floods-better-205853952.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAHr9-9LaDDr5B60-ekk5CzgQCehY196Nb89x-zEwSjsJUyA8zfSsJwv8qiS_XF2OtxsezcyliGV9W19704OWRLDOiQ4ehW7FQaVIboMdh7res9BGcSjnDx3u3lPDLv0vgpBAB2O1-gvQyZGLYHeSLgy-rMjXu0WJ3PEeSjupoP8Q&gucounter=2)

<sup>10</sup>Benar News Staff,. (2020). *Philippines Battered by Year's Strongest Typhoon*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/philippine/typhoon-goni-11012020105209.html>

Written by Felicia Koh En Min on 1 July 2022

issued with how many people are affected - how many of them are male or female, how many of them are underprivileged needs to be invested.

Last but not empathetically least, the government needs to fund proper maintenance of drainage such as paying contractors to clean up and remove rubbish from drains two months before the monsoon season. Moreover, the use of nature-based solutions such as conserving and restoring mangroves should also be explored to reduce the risk of flooding as these measures are eco-friendlier and more affordable.

Climate change is never a distant issue, yet flood will deteriorate due to climate change, we cannot eradicate natural disasters, but we could arm ourselves with knowledge: so many lives wouldn't have to be lost if there was enough disaster preparedness. To the beloved Malaysians reading this, please continue to survive and pull through the ordeals, and never feel desperate. To the NGOs reading this, please never stop donating and supporting the victims.

Not against the government but urge for better implementation of policies.

Other references:

AidilIman,. (2021). *The Floods in Malaysia is a Climate Crisis!*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CXsabYUv2Ws/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/p/CXsabYUv2Ws/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)

Alatas, Sharifah Munirah. (2021). *To love Malaysia, we must first know Malaysia*. Retrieved 1 July 2022, from

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/opinion/2021/05/03/to-love-malaysia-we-must-first-know-malaysia/>