

Wrath of Nature batters the coast

Waves as high as 3.5m overturn barge and ground ferry

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GEORGE TOWN: Raging seas caused by stormy winds overturned a barge off Gurney Drive, sinking an excavator doing reclamation work, and forced a ferry from Penang to Langkawi to turn back.

Waves rose as high as 3.5m and the tide swelled from a low 0.63m to 2.53m from 9.30am yesterday.

In just eight seconds, the barge carrying an excavator about 250m from the Gurney Drive coastline keeled over, plunging the machine and its operator into the sea.

A 70-second video in Penang Kini's Facebook page showed the barge heaving dangerously in the waves as the unidentified operator attempted to use the excavator arm to steady his machine.

But the waves continued tilting the barge until its sea-facing side arched skyward, barely leaving the operator time to scramble out of the cab as the barge flipped over.

Fortunately, he only suffered minor bruises, according to a statement from developer Eastern and Oriental Berhad, in charge of the reclamation.

It said the contractors have begun salvaging the equipment.

Meanwhile, the 8.30am ferry from Swettenham Pier to the Kuah jetty in Langkawi turned back after



Stormy seas: Huh waves crashing onto the shore in Pantai Bersih, Bagan Ajam, Butterworth.

sailing just a few nautical miles.

"The sea was too choppy. It gave the passengers a rough ride and the ferry captain made a safety call to turn back," said a spokesman from the ferry service.

He said the trip was postponed to 2pm while the 10.30am ferry from Langkawi to Penang was also postponed to 3pm.

At 6am, the Malaysian Meteorological Department had issued a rough seas warning from Penang to

west Johor.

"We are having an exceptional spring tide season.

"Coupled with rainy weather, the waves can rise above 3.5m with wind speeds of up to 50kph," said a spokesman from the Penang station when contacted.

The department has cancelled the rough seas warning but continues to forecast stormy weather until Monday. It also warns that stormy seas off Phuket in Thailand would

last until today.

In Petaling Jaya, Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) Minister Datuk Seri Madius Tangau said MetMalaysia issued warnings of rough winds since last Wednesday.

During the southwest monsoon, the squall line phenomenon - which is a line of thunderstorms - can cause thunderstorms along with strong winds and waves in the coastlines off the Straits of Malacca.

"At the moment, the high tide is

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also caused by the position of the moon which is close to the earth.

"As a result, these three incidents occurring simultaneously caused the low-lying areas near the beaches to be flooded due to the high tide," he said in a statement.



More on the super waves:
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