

# Urgent flood warning as reservoirs overwhelmed

## RID DENIES REPEAT OF 2011 CRISIS AS RESIDENTS ALERTED TO SEEK SAFETY ON HIGHER GROUND

THE NATION

WATER HAS already overwhelmed 167 reservoirs in the country, with floods reported in many provinces and flooding risks increasing in several other areas.

Areas of Chaiyaphum, Phitsanulok, Nakhon Sawan, Phayao, Lampang and Pathum Thani are already flooded.

Six Central provinces also received particular warnings from the Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Department (DPMD) yesterday. They were Chai Nat, Sing Buri, Anghong, Lop Buri, Saraburi and Ayutthaya as the Pasak Jolasid Dam, which is located in Lop Buri, is reaching its full storage capacity.

The flooding threat is now imminent, given that rain and heavy downpours will likely continue in many parts of the country through Sunday.

Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister Chatchai Sarikulya yester-

day ordered the Royal Irrigation Department (RID) to closely manage water volumes.

"Relevant agencies must be updated about the situation so that warnings can be issued to people in a timely manner," he said.

He added that authorities were expected to follow news about the weather and prepare equipment to help flood victims.

People living along the Chao Phraya River away from embankment zones, from Nakhon Sawan province southwards, will have to brace for flooding or rising floodwaters as the RID will have to discharge more water from several reservoirs.

As of press time, four major dams in the Chao Phraya River Basin were already 74-per-cent full.

RID director-general Somkiat Prajamwong said assessments suggested as much as 3,100 cubic metres of water per second would fill the Chao Phraya Dam in Chainat province as of Sunday.

“We have to discharge more water from the Chao Phraya Dam from now on to ensure it can cope with the incoming huge volumes of water,” he said.

The water discharged out of the dam will rise from 2,000 to 2,600 cubic metres per second. With such discharge volumes, water levels in downstream areas that are not protected by embankments will rise by 80 centimetres to one metre.

The discharge will also affect people in Ayutthaya, as floodwater levels increase by between 20 and 30 centimetres.

Sin Jantorn, a village head in Ayutthaya, said more than 400 local

families had been struggling with inundation for several months already.

“If more water comes to our areas, our life will become more difficult,” she said.

Tambon Tha Din Daeng Administrative Organisation chief executive officer Nattorn Mongkhonroi, a local leader in Ayutthaya, said prolonged flooding had already caused a conflict among local residents as people in his areas believed their neighbours should agree to diversions of floodwater into their areas.

RID deputy director-general Thongplew Kongjun has tried to

downplay public concerns about the risk of another flooding crisis similar to that seen in 2011 .

“The situation is not that serious,” he said.

In 2011, Thailand was plunged into a serious flood crisis with floodwaters covering large areas of the nation. The flooding affected the lives of millions of Thais and shut down several industrial estates.

“Six years ago, the water volume flowing in the Chao Phraya River in Nakhon Sawan’s Muang district was at 4,650 cubic metres of water per second. At present, the water volume at the same area is just 2,630 cubic metres per second,” he said.

Chatchai also assured that floodwaters would not swamp homes of people living in embankment zones.

People living in areas not protected by embankments along the Chao Phraya River have already been advised to move their belongings to higher ground.

In Nonthaburi and Bangkok, the Chao Phraya has already flooded some unprotected areas.

The water level in the river is supposed to peak between today and Saturday.