

Sabah must act early as El Niño risks grow, says climatologist

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KOTA KINABALU: Sabah should take the possibility of a strong El Niño very seriously and start preparing now, said a synoptic climatology specialist.

Prof. Datuk Dr. Ramzah Dambul of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) said Sabah may face a convergence of two global pressures this year.

“One involves geopolitical tensions that are already pushing up energy prices, and a prolonged dry spell associated with El Niño, which could disrupt agricultural productivity and water resources.

“For ordinary people, this means a higher cost of living. Rising fuel prices increase transportation and logistics costs, while reduced agricultural output could lead to higher food prices,” he said when contacted.

Since food, transport and utilities constitute a large share of household spending, many families may feel the pressure more acutely, Ramzah cautioned.

For Sabah, food and utility security are particularly critical, he said, adding that prolonged dry conditions can reduce water availability, affect crop production and increase electricity demand significantly, thus putting additional stress on already constrained infrastructure.

“The state and federal governments are undoubtedly putting mitigation measures in place. However, preparedness must also happen at the individual and community levels.

“We need to use water and electricity more prudently, avoid wastage, and strengthen local economic resilience by supporting local producers and purchasing locally sourced food products,” said Ramzah.

The more resilient our local ecosystem becomes, the better Sabah will be able to weather increasingly uncertain global and climatic shocks, he said.