

# On the hot path of disease

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HEAT waves and heat stress could become issues for Malaysia as temperatures rise, says the Health Ministry's Disease Control Division.

Extreme weather, in turn, promises more food and water-borne diseases.

The division's Dr Rozlan Ishak told conference delegates that there was also concern that if adaptation measures failed, diseases like malaria could reach the high levels of yesteryears.

Warmer weather, he explained, promised to boost breeding of disease-bearing mosquitoes, extend the transmission season and reach.

So dengue cases could also double from their already frightening numbers, if the country was unable to control the problem, he said.

More heavy downpours could also drive rodents from their burrows and increase the risk of zoonotic diseases, as it did during the Johor floods last year.

There could be a potential depletion of resources like food and water due to these climatic changes and sea-level rise and these could lead to nutrition problems.

But these projections were just best estimates, stressed Dr Rozlan.

He said a special health impacts committee on climate change had been formed and was studying several areas of concern, including vector borne diseases, heat and nutrition-related health problems.