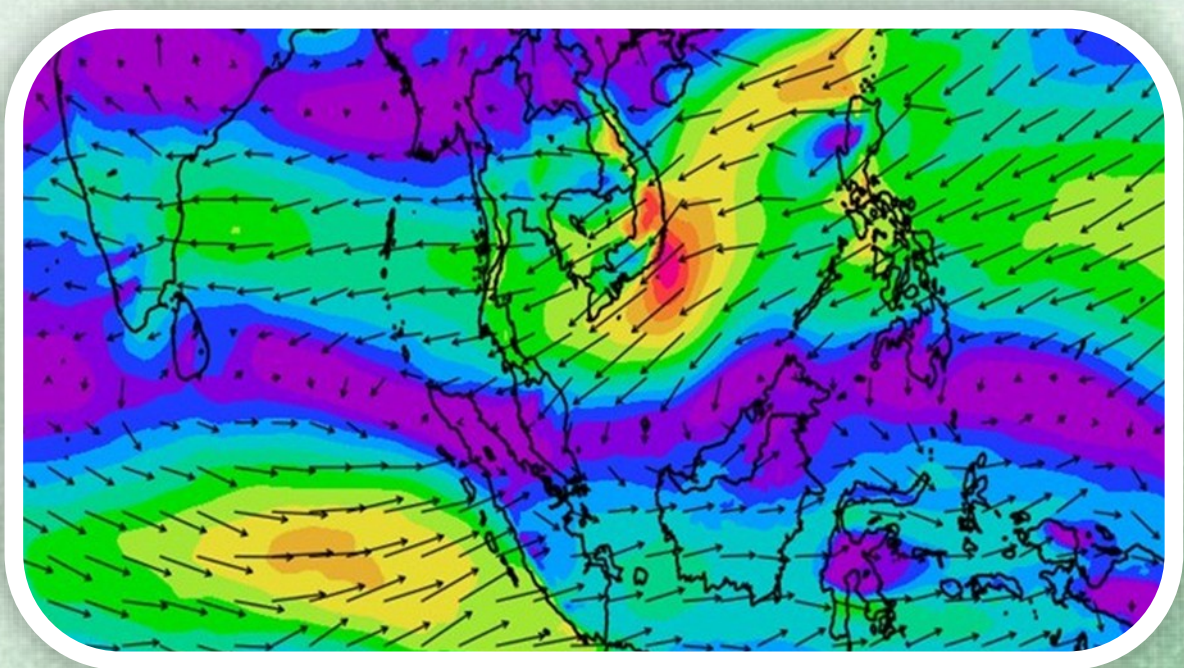




NORTHEAST MONSOON REPORT

KUALA LUMPUR MONSOON ACTIVITY CENTRE

MAY 2026



**MALAYSIAN METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT
MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

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Introduction

ENSO-neutral conditions are present in May 2026 and are forecast to transition to El Niño conditions during the May to July 2026 period. The anticipated El Niño event is likely to persist at least until early 2027. The Relative Oceanic Niño Index (RONI) for the February–March–April (FMA) period was -0.5°C , while the latest weekly sea surface temperature anomaly over the ENSO monitoring region (Niño 3.4) was $+0.4^{\circ}\text{C}$. Over the Indian Ocean (IO), the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) remained in a neutral state from January to April 2026.

The Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO) was generally weak during March 2026. A stronger MJO episode developed in April 2026. During mid-to-late April, the signal moved well outside the unit circle, especially around Phases 8–2, indicating a strong and active MJO event over the western Indian Ocean and Africa region. The MJO was relatively weak during early May 2026 but strengthened significantly during the second half of May, moving well outside the center and developed into a strong event as it propagated through Phases 6–7 by late May 2026.. During January to May 2026, only two tropical cyclones (TCs), namely Tropical Cyclones Nokaen and Penha, were recorded over the western North Pacific basin according to RSMC best-track data.

Weather Conditions from November 2025 to March 2026

Figure 1 presents the monthly and seasonal mean wind circulation at 850 hPa and rainfall distribution during the 2025/26 NDJFM season. In November 2025 (**Figure 1a**), strong easterlies converged with intensified northeasterlies over the East China Sea, enhancing rainfall over the windward coasts of Vietnam, across the South China Sea (SCS), and along the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia (PM). Near the equatorial region, the intrusion of westerlies interacted with the prevailing northeasterly flow, enhancing low-level convergence and producing heavy rainfall over the northern Strait of Malacca.

In December 2025 (**Figure 1b**), the strengthened northeasterlies penetrated farther westward. A diffluent low-level flow over PM caused the northeasterly winds to split into two branches: one extending toward northern PM and the other turning toward East Borneo. This configuration created strong speed convergence over the southeastern PM region, leading to heavy rainfall. In addition, speed convergence along the coastal zone prior to the flow turning toward East Borneo contributed to enhanced coastal rainfall. In January 2026 (**Figure 1c**), subtropical northwesterly winds shifted eastward and converged with easterlies from the Pacific, resulting in heavy rainfall over the windward side of the Philippines. Consequently, the downstream SCS region became comparatively drier during this period.

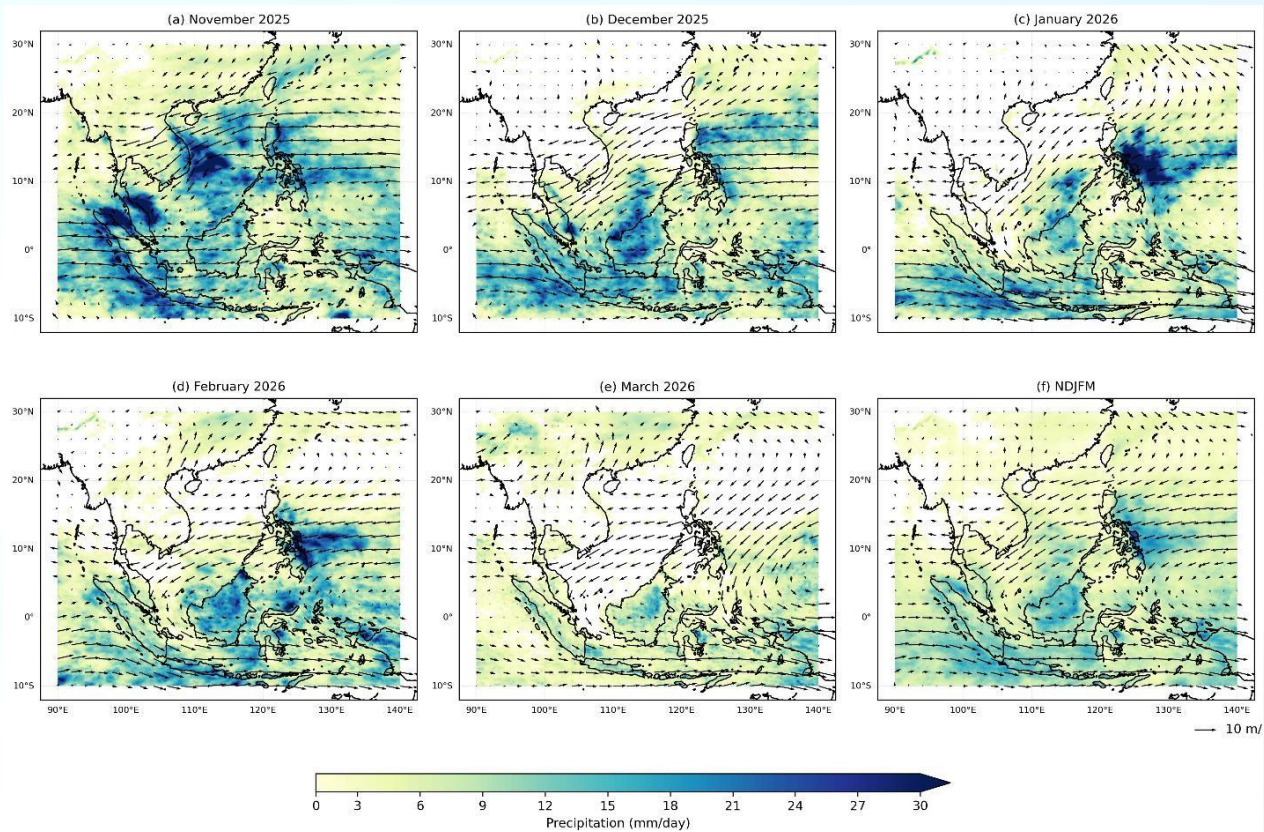


Figure 1. The monthly and seasonal mean wind at 850 hPa (vector, m/s) and rainfall distribution (shaded, mm/day) for (a) November 2025, (b) December 2025, (c) January 2026, (d) February 2026, (e) March 2026, and (f) NDJFM season (Nov 2025 – March 2026)

*Wind data are provided by the ERA5 reanalysis dataset from the Copernicus Climate Data Store (CDS): <https://cds.climate.copernicus.eu/datasets/reanalysis-era5-pressure-levels>.

*Rainfall data are provided by GPM IMERG Late Precipitation L3 1 day 0.1 degree x 0.1 degree V07 (GPM_3IMERGDL) at GES DISC: https://gpm1.gesdisc.eosdis.nasa.gov/opendap/GPM_L3/GPM_3IMERGDL.07/contents.html

During February 2026 (**Figure 1d**), enhanced northwesterly winds over the midlatitudes strengthened the subtropical high, which subsequently generated broad easterlies along its equatorial flank. These strengthened easterlies later split into two branches over the downstream SCS region. One branch extended westward toward the eastern Indian Ocean, while the other crossed the equator into the Southern Hemisphere. The persistent strong easterlies contributed to heavy rainfall over the windward side of the Philippines and northern Borneo.

The subtropical high persisted throughout March (**Figure 1e**), while a vortex was observed over the western Pacific. The easterly wind supply to the vortex contributed to relatively drier conditions near the equatorial region. However, rainfall was still observed over inland Borneo. Overall, the 2025/2026 winter monsoon season was relatively dry, especially in particularly near the equatorial region.

Acknowledgements: ENSO conditions are based on Climate Prediction Center (CPC) issued on May 14, 2026. MJO records are based on Australian Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), accessed online on May 26, 2026. The records of TCs developed in the WNPO were sourced from the Regional Specialized Meteorological Center (RSMC) Tokyo, accessed online on May 26, 2026.