

# Kelantan flood victims soldier on

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**KUALA KRAI** — In a makeshift kitchen on the site of a house ruined by floods in Kampung Laloh here, Rozita Mat Saad and some of her family members cooked *nasi goreng ikan bilis* (anchovy fried rice) in a big wok.

At an adjacent space covered by salvaged building materials, a few of her siblings were frying *cek mek molek*, a Kelantanese fritter made from sweet potatoes.

“We are cooking more than we need, those who have lost their homes and can’t cook can come and eat with us. We are ready to share whatever we have,” she said.

Since her home was ruined by the floods, Rozita had been staying with her parents and siblings some 500 metres away.

“Never mind. What happened has happened. I pray that Allah will guide us in rebuilding my house so I can go home,” said Rozita, who hopes her family will get on with life as the days go by.

Rozita is among the thousands of people in Kelantan who are slowly rebuilding their lives as the state recovers from the recent devastating floods that displaced more than 134,000 people and destroyed thousands of homes and infrastructure.



Despite attributing the floods to fate, they have not given up.

A brief survey by Bernama in early January during the immediate post-flood period from Gua Musang to Kuala Krai, about 180km apart, indicates the Kelantanese have been showing great resilience in starting over.

Some like mobile vegetable vendors Muhammad Salleh, 57, and wife Maimun Mamat, 56, are already back in full swing in Kampung Manek Urai Lama even though their outlet in Kampung Sungai Mengkuang, near Kuala Krai, was submerged in water.

"We suffered losses but by resuming our business, we can start over again. We can also help the villagers who may not have eaten in a while," noted Muhammad.

*Pasar tani* (farmers' market) trader Syukri Din, 45, said he had to carry on with business as his services were much sought-after now.

"The flood victims are busy cleaning their homes. There is no guarantee the appliances will work. This is where the business community could help," he said.

Syukri feels it is time for businesses to help those in need and not take advantage of the situation by increasing prices.

The survey also indicated more traders had resumed business as the days went by, including the biggest supermarket here, Pasaraya Pantai Timur, which is starting to see more patrons.

Despite the numerous aid promised by the government and private sectors, rebuilding over 2,000 houses that have either been washed away or badly damaged is a daunting task.

Ahmad Hamzah, 52, and Sarimah Bakar, 50, live with nine of their 11 children in Kampung Manek Urai Lama.

"As far as I'm concerned, I will accept



Ahmad salvages some kitchen utensils near his house in Kampung Manek Urai Lama. — Picture by Bernama

with an open heart any housing assistance. At the same time, if provided the tool and construction material, I'm ready to rebuild the house myself," he said.

He admitted he was devastated to see his house, built under the Hardcore Poor Programme in 1997, destroyed in the floods.

"What is left is the concrete staircase that now serves as the base for my family's temporary shelter," said Ahmad, who has to undergo medical follow-ups for a heart bypass.

"I cried when I saw the destruction, but I cannot keep on crying. Many people are here to assist, provide us with food, school uniforms and even money.

"This is what gives me the strength to keep going. I have not given up hope. I want to rebuild my house on this land and

get on with life. Never mind if it takes a long time, what is more important is we should not lose hope."

As for Sarimah, she hopes the house will be rebuilt soon and aid like food and other necessities continues to pour in until the situation stabilises.

Meanwhile, more than 100 families have been taking refuge at a temporary shelter at Bandar Utama in Gua Musang until their temporary homes are ready.

The homes are among the immediate steps taken by the Kelantan Post Flood Committee, chaired jointly by Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Yakob and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Sri Mustapa Mohamed, who is also Jeli MP, to set up temporary shelters.

They come with amenities like water, electricity and free food provided by

the Social Welfare Department and Civil Defence Force.

Mariam Zainuddin, 32, has been putting up at the shelter since it opened on Dec 12 with her husband and four children.

"We did not want to leave our house or whatever was left of it. However, to help facilitate repair work and for our own convenience, we accepted the offer to put up here," she said.

The views were shared by Saodah Salleh, 56, and husband Ramli Yaacob, 60, who have been putting up at the shelter with their children and grandchildren, the youngest being one-and-a-half years old.

While preparing formula milk for her grandchild, Saodah said the flood victims were prepared to face difficulties for the time being in order to move on.

— Bernama