

Flood victims burdened by heavy losses

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BY TEH ENG HOCK

TAJUDEEN Abu Bakar took one look at his house and shook his head in despair. He and his family finally returned home after spending five days at a flood relief centre, and he did not anticipate such extensive damage to his property.

His one-storey house in Taman Kota Jaya, Kota Tinggi, was covered in mud, right up to the ceiling. Needless to say, all his furniture and electrical appliances were damaged by flood waters.

Water spilled out when he opened the doors to his Toyota Avanza and Proton Wira. Both vehicles, parked in his house compound, were completely submerged.

Three days of extensive cleaning later, the house is still not ready for occupation. The walls have been scrubbed clean of mud, but the floors are still wet.

"We will probably have to clean it another two to three times before we can move back in," he says.

Both his cars have been towed away. Tajudeen hopes that the vehicles are repairable as his insurance



NO COMPENSATION: Tajudeen and his family will not be compensated for their losses as his house was not insured against natural disasters. —

STARpic by ABDUL RAHMAN EMBONG

policy does not cover natural disasters. His house is not insured against such calamity, so he will not be compensated for his losses.

"Everything is gone. We will just have to restart our lives with the bare minimum," says the principal of Sekolah Agama Sungai Telur.

Tajudeen, 53, says he has minimal savings now, having just renovated his house in September.

"I have lived here for 13 years, and it has never flooded. Now, I get very worried every time it rains. I am afraid the floods will recur," he says.

Two roads away, Nurlinda Baharom's two-storey house is in slightly better state, and her family have moved back home.

"There is still so much washing to do, but the washing machine is of course spoilt.

"Everything is spoilt. Before I was evacuated, I left my TV set on the landing of my staircase, thinking it was safe. At that time the waters had only reached knee-level. We never expected it to get so bad," she says.

Businesses have been hit hard too, and many retailers were seen putting up signs of clearance sale in the heart of Kota Tinggi town to cut losses.

"I have to pay my staff. I have a family to feed, and so do they. We have no choice but sell everything damaged by the floods on the cheap," says optician Tan Teck Siong, 32, who is offering discounts of

between 10% and 20% for his spectacle frames and sunglasses.

Like many of the businesses around town, Tan did not insure his shop against floods. He estimates his losses at RM160,000.

Down the road, camera shop and photo studio owner Kam Shih Siong stares blankly at his damaged equipment, worth almost RM300,000.

"I don't know whether to laugh or to cry. Look at the mess," says the 24-year-old.

Wong Ai Leng, 27, who runs a mobile phone shop, shares Tan and Kam's sentiments.

"I only insured my shop against fire. It has never flooded before. Who would have known?" she laments.

The sale, with some giving discounts up to 80%, is a hit not only with locals but also for bargain hunters from other parts of the state.

Teacher Zulkifli Miswan, 36, who came all the way from Johor Baru, was seen picking school bags for his children despite them having been soaked in flood water.

"If it is really cheap, then it is okay. We can clean them ourselves," he says.