



The situation in Kota Tinggi town has not changed for a week. — NST picture by Ahmad Othman

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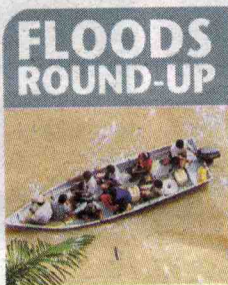
Homes wrecked, but people's spirit intact

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JOHOR BARU: Despite extensive damage caused by the floods, the people of Johor have shown remarkable resilience in overcoming their personal loss.

Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the disaster had also brought out the best in human values and compassion for those who had lost everything in the floods.

"The floods wrought terrible damage and destruction. Most



villagers lost everything. All they had was the clothes on their backs.

"Yet, their spirits have not

been broken. This is the unique feature about our people, particularly the Malays. They regard this as nothing more than a test from God."

Ghani, who has visited flood-hit areas since Dec 19, said he had never seen such extraordinary strength and courage in the people.

The Menteri Besar, who spearheaded the flood rescue and relief operation in the state, also noted that, despite their trauma, the flood victims were not whining.

"Not one (of the victims) has complained about clogged drains or poor infrastructure."

Ghani said another human trait that emerged was the community spirit to reach out and help others in distress.

He also paid tribute to government offices, saying they did a fine job responding speedily to the emergency, even though many were on year-end leave. He said the floods had reinforced the need for Johor to step up efforts to resettle squatters in low-lying areas to higher ground.