

Flood victims get on with their lives

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BATU PAHAT: As the floodwaters continue to recede, families who were forced to flee their inundated homes to seek shelter at relief centres for weeks, now face the arduous task of cleaning up and fixing the damage to their homes.

Like many others, most of Sumadi Parau's belongings were destroyed.

"Icebox (refrigerator) *pun rosak*," said the 84-year-old, shaking his head.

"When the first wave of flood hit, we were still okay. After the second one – *semua habis* (all gone)," said his son Mohd Rizal.

"My brother's motorcycle got stolen as well," he told *theSun* last Thursday.

"But we're thankful for the help that everyone has given," added Sumadi, while watching volunteers from CIMB Group help remove fallen branches from the yard in his home in Parit Sulong here.

Help in cash and kind – pots and pans, stoves, food, fuel, toiletries and even extensions to loan payments – is still pouring in from the government, companies and non-governmental organisations to help flood victims rebuild their homes, and lives.

Responding to the "Adopt-a-Village" programme launched by the Women, Family and Community Development and Information ministries, some companies and organisations are pitching in by providing supplies and helping out in various ways.

Among them are CIMB Group volunteers, who have been going to their 20 adopted villages in Batu Pahat – one of the worst-hit districts in Johor – to lend a hand to clear away the mud, rubbish and fallen trees that litter homes and their surroundings.

At a relief centre in Parit Sulong, Normah Arbain braced herself for the massive task at hand as she prepared to move back to her home that afternoon.

That, however, could not compare with the stress she went through when she gave birth to daughter Noor Faeizati Sidek on Dec 2, two months before she was due.

"I didn't even realise that she was coming, I was too busy cleaning up after the



Normah, with baby Noor Faeizati, at the relief centre in Parit Sulong yesterday.

first flood," she said.

"Most of our things were destroyed but we're not replacing them. With the new addition to the family, plus the repairs for the house, we can't afford it," said the mother of five.

Normah is no stranger to the term "roughing it out", having slept on mats in the relief centre shortly after giving birth.

Many of the children at the relief centre tried to amuse themselves by fishing in drains, some of which are clogged up with household items, plants and clothing.

No surprise then that when Cha-Cha the clown – courtesy of CIMB Group, which also invited reporters for the Batu Pahat visit – showed up at relief centres to perform magic tricks and give goodies to the children, both parents and their young ones were amused.

The recent floods were the worst in the country in the past decade.

The first wave of floods in December affected some 148,000 people while the second wave early last month affected about 134,000 people.