



Houses inundated by floodwaters at **Kampung Sungai Batu** near Pantai Remis, recently. Pic by Supian Ahmad

# Clearing of mangrove forest blamed for floods

**MANJUNG:** The destruction of more than 80ha of mangrove forest here is being blamed for recent flooding that caused 30 homes at Kampung Sungai Batu near Pantai Remis to be inundated by 1m-deep seawater.

Residents claimed that the floods could last between three and four days at a time, depending on the strength of the high tide, which comes every fortnight.

At its worst, residents claimed that the water levels were waist-deep in low-lying areas of the village, and it would only subside after four to five hours.

Village representative Mohd Fahmi Khalid said the floods were unprecedented in the village's 30-year history.

"We have never seen the sea reach so far inland before this. My neighbours told me they saw jellyfish swimming in front of their doorway, and their houses are more than 1km from the seaside."

He claimed that the phenomenon was caused by recent land-clearing activities, which destroyed mangrove forest in the area.

He also said the absence of mangrove trees, which acted as a natural barrier against coastal erosion or huge waves, had exposed their village to high tide.

It was believed the mangrove forest was cleared to make way for the development of a housing project in 2011, which has yet to be completed.

"After the mangrove trees were cut down, the swamp dried up and the incoming seawater had no escape route," said Fahmi.

He said the problem worsened after the project developers installed a waterway to channel water from the village into the sea.

He said the waterway, which was installed after the clearing of the mangrove forest, had caused seawater to flow into the village dur-

ing high tide.

"Last month, the developers removed a structure that hindered the flow of seawater and deepened the waterway.

"This only opened the floodgates as we experienced the worst flooding on Tuesday," Fahmi said, adding that there was only one small drain that channelled water out of the village at the moment.

Village head Shahrin Effendi Mohamad said the state Land and Mines as well as Drainage and Irrigation Departments had been notified of the problem.

He said the authorities had informed him that they would build a structure to block the flow of seawater into the village over the next two days.

Shahrin said the authorities would be looking at installing a water management system to control the flow of seawater as a long-term solution.