

# Nation's rice bowl under threat from constant floods

THE STAR 28/10/2006

**ALOR STAR:** The Rice Bowl of Malaysia is under threat because of frequent floods in Kedah lately.

State Area Farmers Organisation chairman Datuk Badri Yunus warned that the incessant floods might jeopardise national food production.

He said the floods caused financial hardship to farmers and affected national rice production because Kedah contributed 40% of the 1.2

million tonnes of rice produced each season.

"We are importing rice because farmers in Malaysia can only supply 1.2 million tones per season against the 1.8 million tonne demand.

"When poor production is aggravated by massive floods, the country will have to import more rice," he said when contacted yesterday.

Badri said that massive floods used to be rare in Kedah.

"The last major flood to hit Kedah was 30 years ago. Now, within 10 months, we have two big floods."

Badri said the crops could have stood a chance if the floods lasted a few days.

"But when the field is submerged in water for many days, like what is happening now, we expect a much higher loss," he said.

Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid said an assessment of the

losses would be made after the floodwaters subsided.

"It is difficult to assess now when properties and farms are still inundated," he said.

As at noon yesterday, 1,112 flood victims were still staying at 17 relief centres in Kota Star district. A total of 209 flood victims from Pendang are at a sports complex.

Floods have hit 22 areas in Kota Star and Pendang.