

Planting season delayed

All ready to till the soil – except there's just no water

FOUR states have hit 'heat wave' status, with six areas exceeded the threshold of being considered a heat wave.

The areas are Chuping in Perlis; Alor Setar in Kedah; Ipoh and Lubok Merbau in Perak; and Batu Embun and Temerloh in Pahang, said Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Madius Tangau.

The indicator for a heat wave is when the highest temperature daily (or maximum temperature) reaches 35°C five days in a row, and also has increased by more than two degrees from the long-term average maximum temperature; or when the highest daily temperature reaches or exceeds 37°C degrees for a period of three consecutive days.

ALOR SETAR: Padi farmers in Kedah and Perlis here have got their plots ready, tilled the land and prepared the soil to begin the planting for the new season. But they are just sitting around.

They cannot plant because the rains are not coming and there is a water shortage. They have been forced to delay their new planting season which is supposed to be between now and April.

Mad Kamal Ismail, 48, from Kampung Tempayan Pecah, Mukim Ayer Hitam said his plot was ready for sowing two weeks ago.

"I am waiting for the water to be released but it's not been done yet. The problem is even if the water is released, it will flow into the main irrigation canal, which is far from my fields.

"Because the water level is so low now, I'm afraid it may not flow into the sub-canal to reach my plot," he said, adding that at the moment, the sub canal had dried up.

He said 10 relong (2.8ha) of padi field had dried up because water from the main irrigation canal could not reach the area.

"The water shortage problem has affected most padi farmers in

Kedah and Perlis," he said.

Mad Kamal said the only way to overcome this problem was to flood the fields with water from Pedu, Muda, Beris and Ah Ning dams.

Abdullah Wan Teh, 45, from Hutan Tualang in Ayer Hitam said his padi field had also faced the same problem since January.

"My income has been affected as I depend solely on the padi field," he said.

Padi farmers Yudoh Kamis, 75, and Hatijah Ahmad Saad, 63, from Kampung Kok Klang in Chuping, Perlis, also could not do any planting.

"Now, I have no income and depend on my son to give me money for my daily expenses," said Yudoh.

"There are about 100 relong of padi fields in Kok Klang with 300 families. All face the same problem."

Bernama reported that since the earlier padi crop was harvested in January, replanting should begin in late March or early April but as of now, the Penang Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) has not been able to supply water.

It reported that the Kedah state government was considering cloud



Sun-baked: Yudoh (right) and fellow farmer Hatijah Ahmad Saad, 63, standing on a parched padi field.

seeding or rescheduling padi replanting if the hot weather persists.

The padi fields in Perak may fare better with the Department of Irrigation and Drainage rescheduling the release of water from the Bukit Merah dam.

Director Datuk Ir Abdul Razak Dahalan said the release of water for padi cultivation began on Feb 20 and would go on up to April 10. The original plan was to release water only on March 25.

The Bukit Merah dam supplies water for the whole of the Kerian Irrigation Scheme.

Fish breeders are also worried with about 10,000 carp, snapper

and grouper fish fry in Kuala Sangga and Kuala Sepetang near Taiping reported dead due to the weather.

The deaths cost fish farmers hundreds of thousands of ringgit.

Breeder Chuah Thye Guan, 50, said he put thousands of carp fish fry in the cages last week, but was shocked to find them all dead.

"I found the sea water had receded to the bottom of the cages," he told *Bernama*.



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and page 6**