

El Nino affecting fishing and agriculture sectors

KANGAR: The El Nino phenomenon is affecting the agriculture and fishing sectors in Perlis, besides testing the country's preparedness in facing a long drought.

Farmers who have been dependent on rain have no choice but to postpone padi planting. The northern part of Perlis is the most affected, while small coastal fishermen are also feeling the effects of the dry spell.

Harum manis mango orchard owners are forced to work overtime to get water supply for their mango trees, while the yields this season have dropped by almost 50 per cent.

The latest report that Malaysia is expected to experience a water supply shortage due to the hot and dry weather forecasted to continue until next month is worrying them even more.

Seberang Alor Village Security and Development Committee (JKKK) chairman Azman Ahmad said the livelihood of 2,000-odd fishermen in Kuala Perlis was badly affected, as their average daily catch was down to 5kg from almost 100kg since two months ago.

"Before El Nino happened, we would go out to sea at 8am and return two hours later as the catch was

substantial. But now, we leave at 3am and return about 4pm, and the catch is not much.

"Normally, we would earn RM1,000 to RM2,000 per week, but since February, we earn only RM300 to RM700 per week," he said.

Hamzah Mat, 57, who plants rock melon on a 1ha piece of land in Batu Bertangkup, Chuping, said the quality of his fruit had dropped and the size was also small.

"This is probably due to the soil not getting enough water.

"A good rock melon can be sold for RM5 per kg. But the price now is only RM3.50 per kg, or three or four fruits at RM10," said Hamzah, whose 1.5ha harum manis mango orchard is also affected by the drought.

Meanwhile, 6,403 padi farmers in northern Perlis who are dependent on water supply from Timah Tasoh Dam are unable to work their 10,043ha of land as the water at the dam has reached the below-critical level.

Perlis Farmers Organisation Authority director, Shaidan Nordin said 1,440ha of padi land in Padang Siding, however, were receiving water supply from the Muda Agriculture Development Authority. **Berna-**