

## 6 weeks later, Karak flood victims still struggle with clean-up works

By **T.N. Alagesh** - January 29, 2022 @ 4:41pm



A brown line measuring three-meters high on his porch wall marks where the murky flood waters reached Arbain Basri's house at the Karak Setia PR1MA housing area, near here, on Dec 18. - NSTP/ FARIZUL HAFIZ AWANG

**BENTONG:** A brown line measuring three-meters high on his porch wall marks where the murky flood waters reached Arbain Basri's house at the Karak Setia PR1MA housing area, near here, on Dec 18.

Six weeks have passed since the catastrophic floods and the 43-year-old lorry driver has been spending long hours daily clearing his damaged belongings. However, the clean-up is far from over.

The father-of-three said it might need another two or three months for him to remove the thick layers of mud which has covered every corner of his garden and discard all the damaged items.

Arbain, who has not started work because his lorry, which was submerged in the floods, was still in the workshop, said he will have to rent a backhoe to clean the garden section.

"Volunteers helped me to clean the inside of my house and we managed to throw away damaged items and wash the premises. It looks just like a new house without any furniture except for some items donated by volunteers and non-governmental organisations.

"Every single thing from inside the house has been brought outside, leaving the entire porch and garden area in a mess. Most of the items are covered in thick sludge and I am taking time to clean with a pressure pump to see if there is anything can be spared," he said when met by the New Straits Times.

Arbain, who just moved into the house in October last year, said a steady stream of volunteers from various parts of the country had come to help with the clean-up work at the settlement. However, there was a limit for them to use their physical strength.

"They helped the victims here discard the damaged items, scoop out the mud and wash the houses... a process which required several days. My garden is covered with debris brought by floodwater from elsewhere and I need to use a backhoe to remove it... it cannot be done manually.

"I am grateful to all those volunteers, but the clean-up works resulting from the mud floods is a lengthy and tiring process.

"I am mentally and physically exhausted, but I am taking each day as it comes... I have sent my wife and children to my in-laws place in Lanchang (Temerloh) while I stay here alone to complete the cleaning works," he said, adding that since most of the neighbours are busy cleaning their own flood-ravaged homes, there is no time to assist each other.

Meanwhile, Arbain said he was away in Kuantan with his family when the floods struck the settlement just before midnight on Dec 18.

"I rushed back here the following day (Dec 19), but firemen did not allow me to enter the settlement as the water was already reaching the roof.

"I noticed that firemen were forced to deploy a helicopter to rescue some of my neighbours who were left stranded on their roofs here.

"Some friends told me they climbed into the house ceiling and tore a hole on the side to allow them to breathe and to allow for rescuers to provide food supplies. Some even removed their house roof tiles so that they could climb onto the roof if the water continued to rise," he said.

On life at the settlement, Arbain said the area has been unusually quiet after the floods as some people have chosen to stay elsewhere until the cleaning works have been completed.

Arbain said the extremely heavy downpour which began on Dec 17 had forced the water in a disused mining pond nearby to overflow to the surrounding areas and the entire settlement, which has about 60 single-storey premises, was inundated in less than 20 minutes.

On Dec 18, heavy rain over two days led to the residents in Karak experiencing the worst floods in years with certain housing settlements completely submerged. The power supply in some areas were cut-off to avoid mishaps.