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WOES IN MALAY HEARTLAND

PADI FARMERS IN JERLUN STRUGGLING

They want solutions to managing padi farms, rising cost of living, bad roads and poor water supply

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PADI farmers have a laundry list of issues they want their elected representatives to address. The skyrocketing cost of padi farming, high cost of living, bad road conditions, poor water supply and climate change were among the issues raised by constituents in this Malay heartland.

For padi farmer Aziz Jallil, 69, his



(From left) Aziz Jallil, Roslan Ali and Zahalia Md Isa



biggest concern is the increasing cost of padi farming, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The cost of operating a padi farm has increased by more than two-fold in the past few months."

"I make just RM400 in profit after spending RM1,600 on costs."

"Things got worse when bad weather ruined my harvest. I had to rely on selling fruit to supple-

ment my income, but I can barely make ends meet."

The spike in prices of essential items further burdened many Jerlun households, most of whom rely on padi farming and agricultural activities to make a living.

"I wonder if politicians understand our predicament," Aziz said.

His friend, durian trader Roslan Ali, 55, said his business took a

beating as not many people can afford to buy the king of fruits.

"I hardly get local customers anymore."

"Making only about RML500 a month, they have to prioritise the necessities, not durian. So most of my customers are from Jitra and Alor Star."

He said petty traders in the constituency need help to weather challenging times.

He bemoaned the poverty in Jerlun, which he believed, if not addressed could lead to growing social injustice.

For vegetable trader Zahalia Md Isa, 55, water supply woes in her village is affecting her daily life.

"It is a major headache for us. The population here is growing, but nothing is being done to improve water services."

"The authorities said they need approval from the Muda Agricultural Development Authority to

enlarge water pipes.

"We hope our elected representative will carry our voice to Parliament."

Like many Jerlun residents, Zahalia also wanted better maintenance of roads.

In the last general election, Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir won the Jerlun parliamentary seat with a 5,866-vote majority. The former Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia deputy president had contested the seat as a Pakatan Harapan candidate under a PKR ticket.

Mukhriz is now Parti Pejuang Tanah Air president.

In the 15th General Election, Mukhriz is defending the seat in a four-cornered fight against former Jerlun member of parliament Datuk Othman Aziz of Barisan Nasional, Perikatan Nasional's Dr Abd Ghani Ahmad and Pakatan Harapan's Dr Mohamed Fadzil Mohd Ali.