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BIL.	TAJUK KERATAN AKHBAR	KEMENTERIAN / JABATAN / AGENSI
1.	SMART HYDROPONIC FARMING TO EXPAND, NEWS, THE STAR, M/S – 5	LAIN-LAIN
2.	HOT AND DRY WEATHER SPELL GOOD NEWS FOR FARMER, NATION, THE STAR, M/S – 8	
3.	USAHAWAN JELI ANGKAT HERBA ORANG ASLI, BISNES, SINAR HARIAN, M/S – 30	
4.	VEGGIE BILLS SOAR, FRONT PAGE, NEW STRAITS TIMES, M/S – 1	
5.	RAINS WREAK HAVOC ON CAMERONS' FARMS, NEWS, NEW STRAITS TIMES, M/S – 2	
6.	'STRENGTHEN FAMA TO STABILISE PRICES', NATION, NEW STRAITS TIMES, M/S – 3	
7.	CUTTING BACK ON VEGGIES AS FLOODS SEE PRICES SOAR, NEWS, NEW STRAITS TIMES, M/S – 4	

UKK KPKM

UNIT KOMUNIKASI KORPORAT
KEMENTERIAN PERTANIAN DAN KETERJAMINAN MAKANAN
(UNTUK EDARAN DALAMAN KPKM, JABATAN DAN AGENSI SAHAJA)

By MYSARA FAUZI
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MORE communities including schools in Johor are set to implement smart hydroponic and solar system farming to strengthen renewable energy adoption and urban agriculture.

The Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) initiative uses a vertically designed hydroponics structure integrated with solar energy and Internet of Things (IoT).

It was first adopted at the Jasa Apartment in Mutiara Rini, Johor Baru in 2023, said project leader Associate Professor Dr Dalila Mat Said.

She said the vertical structure could accommodate up to 1,008 plants at a time, allowing for efficient use of limited space.

"Among the vegetables grown are mustard greens, local spinach, *kailan*, *siew pak choy* and *kangkung*."

"At the Jasa Apartment, each system has six levels and can accommodate 336 planting holes, depending on pipe configuration and crop type," she told *StarMetro*.

She added that the system was equipped with an IoT technology-based app that enabled remote nutrient mixing and farm monitoring via smartphones and laptops.

"Most of the crops take between 30 and 35 days to mature," she said.

"The process begins with seed germination for up to five days, followed by six to 14 days in the nursery."

"The plants are then transferred to the main grow house and can be harvested in 30 days."

Dalila added that the project was currently being introduced on a smaller scale at SMK Mutiara Rini, where teachers and students had begun learning it.

"This exposes students to modern, soilless farming techniques, preparing them for future opportunities in sustainable agriculture," she said.

"At the Jasa Apartment, the hydroponic unit is operated

Smart hydroponic farming to expand

Varsity to train more communities to adopt sustainable agricultural system in Johor



SMK Mutiara Rini principal Siti Zanariah M. Yasin (left) with Assoc Prof Dalila (centre) harvesting 'siew pak choy' at the school compound.



Jasa Apartment residents carrying out maintenance of the hydroponic system.

by local residents including housewives, youths and community members who earn supplemental income by selling the harvested vegetables."

Assoc Prof Dalila said the project had strong potential to be developed as an urban farming model because the system was compact, clean, community-friendly and easy to maintain.

"It is suitable for flats, schools, villages and urban areas with limited space," she said, adding that several communities had expressed interest in adopting the model.

Solar system project head Dr Siti Maherah Hussin said six solar photovoltaic (solar PV) were installed to power the water pumps used in the

hydroponic setup at Jasa Apartment.

"We installed solar PV with a total capacity of 1kW to help reduce electricity costs, as solar provides a clean and sustainable energy source," she said.

"The hydroponic house is located in an open area with strong sunlight, making it an ideal site for solar installation."

Although she was not involved with the hydroponic project at SMK Mutiara Rini, Siti Maherah said various solar initiatives had been carried out at schools and Orang Asli

communities through community service programmes applied research and industry collaboration.

"These efforts include small scale PV installations, green energy demonstration modules and training in the operation and maintenance of solar systems."

"This initiative demonstrates our commitment to expanding renewable energy technology to various community groups to enhance long-term well-being and sustainability," Siti Maherah said.

Hot and dry weather spell good news for farmers

Padi and Harumanis mango thrive under such conditions

By IMRAN HILMY
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ALOR SETAR: The north-east monsoon is usually linked to heavy rain, but in the northern states of Penang, Kedah and Perlis, the later months bring weeks of hot and dry weather which is welcomed by padi and Harumanis mango farmers.

While other states may still experience rainy weather, these three states are now facing dry and hot conditions that farmers welcome.

Harumanis entrepreneur Rosedi Hamid, 58, said the fruits thrive under the current conditions, requiring an optimal temperature of around 32°C to develop their distinctive aroma and sweetness.

"The hot, dry weather helps the Harumanis ripen evenly and enhances its fragrance," he added.

The former teacher said some trees have started flowering, while many others are yet to bloom.

"The current heat is ideal for flowering, allowing the buds to develop properly."

Rosedi said that if the hot and dry conditions persist, fruiting could begin as early as February next year, with the possibility of

an early harvest by March.

Padi farmer Abdul Kadir Ismail, 68, from Kuala Nerang, said most farmers in his area have already begun their second planting season, with the harvest expected in middle or late January.

While the dry weather was good, it also posed other challenges.

"The dry season often brings increased threats to our crops, with rats, rice pests and various diseases becoming particularly problematic."

He added that this would force farmers to use more pesticides, a practice that raised the risk of "padi kesusung" (stunted padi growth).

"Our expectation is to harvest in January, but if the dry season drags on, it can be difficult for us."

Abdul Rahman Musa, 71, foresees a manageable season.

But if the weather turns unfavourable, delaying the next planting season may be the best option, of which the farmer says he is considering.

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) atmospheric physicist Associate Prof Dr Yusri Yusup said the north-east monsoon brings in strong winds with minimal rainfall, a pattern expected to contin-



Blue skies and everything nice: A farmer preparing his padi farms for the new season near the Penang-Kedah border padi region in Tikam Batu, Kedah. — ZHAFFARAN NASIB/The Star

ue until early January 2026.

He said there would be some rain, but not as heavy, with the second phase of the monsoon, and that the timing of the dry and wet phases could vary by about two weeks.

"Unlike last year, we are not expecting extreme heat, as persistent cloud cover is likely to remain over the region until mid-January."

Yusri added that rainfall would help lower temperatures temporarily, but heat is expected to build up again during the final phase of the north-east monsoon and the spring equinox, when the region typically receives little rain and experiences strong solar radiation.

Penang Water Supply Corporation (PBAPP) chief executive officer Datuk K. Pathmanathan said Penang's current dam reserves and regular

operational management could sustain water supply until April 2026.

He said the projection was based on steady river flow from Sungai Muda, normal drawdown rates without sudden surges in consumption and the absence of prolonged zero-rainfall periods.

Currently, the Air Itam Dam has an effective storage of 1,955 million litres (ML), with about 89 days of supply remaining until early March 2026.

Although the dam alone cannot support demand until April 2026, it is typically operated alongside Sungai Muda through transfer and balancing.

Pathmanathan said the Teluk Bahang Dam has about 297 days of supply available, sufficient to last until October 2026. Its effective storage stands at 17,720 ML.

He added another main reservoir, the Mengkuang Dam, will

have 132 days of supply that started from Dec 6, and the reserve is projected to last until mid-April 2026, meeting the April target but with limited buffer.

Pathmanathan added that PBAPP has activated a series of contingency measures to safeguard Penang's water security amid prolonged dry conditions.

Under its raw water optimisation plan, PBAPP will maximise abstraction from Sungai Muda at the Lahar Tiang intake as long as river levels remain above alert thresholds.

He said a controlled drawdown strategy will also be enforced, involving staggered releases from the Air Itam, Teluk Bahang and Mengkuang dams to maximise overall yield.

"During extended dry spells, the higher-capacity Teluk Bahang and Mengkuang reservoirs will be prioritised."

Usahawan Jeli angkat herba Orang Asli



Nur Azlyni Abdullah dan ayahnya, Abdullah Md Nor (tengah) menunjukkan sebahagian daripada akar kayu yang sedang diproses untuk dipasarkan.

Moksulynie Herbs buktikan kejayaan adalah bagi yang berani mencuba, sanggup belajar dan tidak takut gagal

Di sebuah kampung di Teluk Bayu, Belahat, Jeli terselit sebuah perjalanan luar biasa seorang usahawan muda bernama Nur Azlyni Abdullah, anak bongsu daripada 10 beradik.

Bermula hanya dengan beberapa ketulan herba yang dibawa Orang Asli Kampung Sungai Rual enam tahun lalu, beliau kini muncul sebagai pengasas Moksulynie Herbs, satu jenama akar kayu popular di TikTok, serta pemilik satu homestay dan empat roomstay di Kampung Berdang, Jeli.

Perjalanan beliau bukan sekadar kisah berniaga, tetapi sebuah kisah kesungguhan, keberanian dan bagaimana seorang wanita kampung berjaya membina peluang ekonomi bukan hanya untuk keluarga malah untuk komuniti Orang Asli di kawasan itu.

Segalanya bermula apabila Orang Asli membawa Raja Satong Sarang Semut, herba yang dipercayai membantu mengurangkan simptom barah dan penyakit kronik, kepada ayahnya, Abdullah Md Nor, 68 tahun.

Herba itu dijual secara kecil-kecilan, ke-

mulian dipromosikan melalui Facebook dan sambutan yang diterima amat luar biasa. Azlyni mengimbas kembali bagaimana pelanggan dari seluruh Kelantan meminta penghantaran secara 'cash on delivery' (COD) sehingga keretanya penuh dengan pesanan setiap hari, di mana urusan penghantaran dibuat oleh beliau bersama ayahnya kerana suaminya, Mohd Hamirul Hassan, pada waktu itu bekerja di Seremban.

Daripada satu produk, pelanggan mula meminta akar kayu lain seperti Haji Samad dan pelbagai jenis teras kayu. Azlyni tidak menunggu lama untuk mendalami bidang tersebut dan belajar sendiri mengenai manfaat setiap tumbuhan melalui internet.

Apabila permintaan meningkat, beliau mula menghasilkan pek kecil yang dijual pada harga RM20 sebelum mengembangkan perniagaan kepada pembuatan gelang teras kayu seperti kemuning hitam, gemugar kampung,

gemugar bukit, ibor, raja kayu damar minyak, kemuning emas, kenauang dan celagi.

Kesemua produk itu akhirnya dipasarkan lebih meluas melalui TikTok dan sehingga kini, beliau telah membuka lebih 20 akaun akibat sensitiviti platform tersebut terhadap jualan herba.

Ayahnya, Abdullah berkata, beliau telah mengenali dan bergaul rapat dengan masyarakat Orang Asli sejak lebih 40 tahun ketika datang membuka tanah di Jeli dari Kampung Gong Kala, Pasir Puteh. Hubungan erat itu kini berkembang menjadi rantaian ekonomi yang memberi manfaat kepada semua.

Salah seorang pembekal, Salim, yang berusia 66 tahun, menceritakan bagaimana beliau biasanya akan berjalan beberapa kilometer di dalam bukit sambil membawa mesin untuk mencari akar kayu sebelum dibekalkan kepada Moksulynie Herbs. Salim menyatakan rasa syukur kerana urusan jual beli berjalan dengan baik, bayaran diberikan tepat pada masanya dan kebajikan mereka sentiasa dijaga.

Strategi bisnes

Hubungan pemiagaan ini turut menarik perhatian tokoh besar seperti Datuk Seri Mustapha Mohamed, mantan Ahli Parlimen Jeli dan mantan Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri, yang sering datang melawat kerana kagum melihat bagaimana Moksulynie Herbs berjaya membantu meningkatkan pendapatan masyarakat Orang Asli tatkala beberapa projek kerajaan membabitkan masyarakat di situ sebelum ini tidak begitu berjaya.

Hasil jualan herba yang memberangsangkan membolehkan Azlyni menyimpan modal untuk menceburi bidang baharu. Idea mendirikan homestay dan roomstay pula datang daripada suaminya yang melihat peluang besar berdasarkan tiga faktor penting.

Pertama, SUKMA Kelantan yang dijadualkan berlangsung pada tahun 2028 bakal menarik ribuan atlet, pegawai dan pengunjung ke Jeli kerana kerajaan negeri kini sedang membina tujuh fasiliti sukan utama termasuk Kompleks Sukan Bandar Jeli yang merangkumi velodrom, padang bola, padang tenis, trek olahraga dan dewan tertutup.

Kedua, Jeli sering mengalami kekurangan penginapan setiap kali musim pendaftaran dan konvokesyen Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) Kampus Jeli serta Sekolah Menengah Sains Jeli. Ketiga, kawasan strategik di Berdang yang berhawa sejuk serta mempunyai kemudahan kolam renang dan wifi menjadikan adanya permintaan terhadap homestay.

Penginapan itu mula dibuka pada 20 September dan kadar yang ditawarkan ialah RM250 untuk satu malam homestay dan RM150 untuk roomstay.

Sehingga kini, beliau telah membuka lebih 20 akaun akibat sensitiviti platform tersebut terhadap jualan herba."

TARIKH	MEDIA	RUANGAN	MUKA SURAT
10/12/2025	NEW STRAITS TIMES	NEWS	2

NORTHEAST MONSOON

RAINS WREAK HAVOC ON CAMERONS' FARMS

Prices of greens soar threefold as waterlogged soil disrupts harvests across highlands

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PRICES of vegetables have surged up to threefold as the northeast monsoon disrupts harvests here.

Continuous rain over the past two weeks have damaged leafy crops and slowed regrowth across highland farms, Cameron Highlands Vegetable Growers Association chairman Chai Kok Lim told the *New Straits Times*.

"Leafy crops deteriorate quickly when waterlogged.

"We need better infrastructure so heavy rain does not disrupt growth," said Chai, 61, who has been farming for 40 years.

"This is the highest surge in vegetable prices we've seen so far during the northeast monsoon."

Another farmer, Parveen Ku-

PRICES AT SELAYANG WHOLESALE MARKET BEFORE MONSOON SEASON

Vegetables	Nov 13 (RM/kg)	Current (RM/kg)	Absolute increase (RM)
Spinach	2-3	8-9	+6
Bok Choy	3-4	6	+2-3
Okra	4-5	8-9	+4
Edamame	6-7	14-15	+8
Long Beans	3-4	8-9	+5
String Beans	6-7	15-16	+9
Tomato	2-3	5-6	+3
Cucumber	8-10	14-15	+5
Red Chillili	7-8	14-15	+7

INFOGRAPHIC NST

mar Mohan said floods in Thailand and Indonesia have disrupted regional supply chains, worsening shortages.

"Shortage of greens has caused french beans to hit RM14 per kilo-

gramme now, up from RM2.50 last month. Prices of greens are likely to stay high until next year," he said.

Cameron Highlands, the country's vegetable-growing hub, turns into a sea of mud with each monsoon as heavy rain causes landslips on hillside farms.

About 80 per cent of Cameron Highlands' vegetable harvest is for the domestic market and the rest is exported to Singapore.

Choy sum, cucumber, salad greens and iceberg lettuce were previously priced between RM1 to RM3 per kg but are now sold for between RM5 to RM10 per kg.

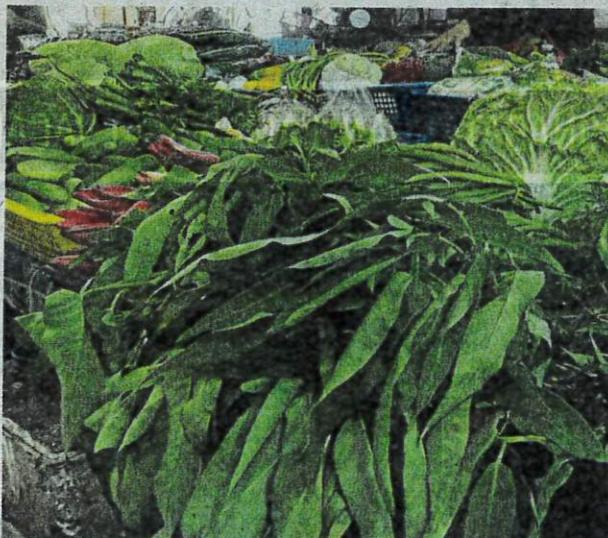
Prices of cabbage, mustard greens, tomatoes and chillies have also risen sharply.

At the Selayang wholesale market in Kuala Lumpur, a major distribution hub of produce, steep price increases were observed.

Spinach now sells for RM8-RM9 per kg, up from the usual RM2-RM3 and okra has almost doubled to RM8-RM9. Edamame, long beans, string beans, tomatoes, cucumbers and red chillies have also recorded steep gains.

Nationwide, traders and farmers' associations report vegetable price surges of 50 to 80 per cent.

Transport disruptions caused by waterlogged roads have further disrupted supply to markets.



A vegetable stall at the Tasik Raja market in Pasir Mas, Kelantan, yesterday. Checks at the market also saw an increase in the price of greens. NSTP.PIC BY NIK ABDULLAH NIK OMAR

TARIKH	MEDIA	SUANGAN	MUKA SURAT
10/12/2025	NEW STRAITS TIMES	NATION	3

PRODUCER-CONSUMER INTERMEDIARY

'STRENGTHEN FAMA TO STABILISE PRICES'

Malaysia's food supply chain vulnerable to disruption, says Fomca

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THE government must strengthen the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (Fama) as the key intermediary between producers and consumers to stabilise food prices amid a surge in vegetable costs, said a consumer group yesterday.

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) chief operating officer Nur

Asyikin Aminuddin said the sharp increase in vegetable prices was not just a weather-related issue but reflected Malaysia's continued lack of preparedness for a food security crisis.

She said weather-driven price hikes highlighted a fragile supply chain with no mitigation plan for extreme weather events, which were occurring more frequently and could no longer be regarded as unusual.

"Although weather conditions are the main short-term factor, this situation actually exposes a

much bigger problem: Malaysia is not prepared for a food security crisis.

"This is not a new issue as every time there is extreme weather, geopolitical tension, a pandemic, or logistics disruption, the price of fresh food surges sharply, burdening the people, especially those in the lower-income

groups," she told the *New Straits Times*.

Nur Asyikin said an estimated 20 to 40 per cent of Malaysia's agricultural output was lost due to weaknesses in post-harvest handling.

"When supply is damaged and quantity drops, prices rise.

"If the government is serious

about addressing rising food prices, investment in post-harvest systems must be a priority.

"Fama should be strengthened as an intermediary," she said.

Nur Asyikin said food security should be a national agenda, and that rising vegetable prices were not only a cost-of-living issue but it also affected public health and household well-being.

"As climate change, global conflicts and pandemics increasingly disrupt global food supply chains, Malaysia must invest in post-harvest systems, modernise food logistics and strengthen Fama as the intermediary between producers and consumers to stabilise fresh food prices," she said.



TARIKH	MEDIA	RUANGAN	MUKA SURAT
10/12/2025	NEW STRAITS TIMES	NATION	4

SUPPLY SHORTAGES

CUTTING BACK ON VEGGIES AS FLOODS SEE PRICES SOAR

Housewives, food business operators forced to buy less, find cheaper options as costs spike

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CONSUMERS are reducing their vegetable purchases following a sharp increase in prices after the recent floods.

Housewife Saleha Mohamad, 45, said she had no choice but to limit the quantity of vegetables she bought for her family of five.

"Prices have gone up a lot, especially after the floods. I simply cannot afford to buy more."

Self-employed Siti Aishah Rahim, 38, said she normally spent about RM10 a day on cabbage and sawi for her family, but the price had more than doubled.

"I spend nearly RM25 a day now just for two types of vegetables."

Trader Nurul Naiesha Azhan said the price increase was due to supply shortages from farms affected by floods in several states, adding that traders were also fac-

ing higher transportation costs. She said wholesalers had told traders that supplies were expected to remain scarce until the flood season ends.

Pauline De Costa, 63, a restaurateur from Subang Jaya, said although prices had gone up, she did not have a choice because her business needed vegetables.

"What I do is shop at cheaper markets, where they usually offer better bargains."

"Vegetable prices, especially local ones, have definitely increased. But what can we do? If I'm not happy with the price, then I'll look for alternatives."

"Prices are still manageable. Hopefully, retailers can control the prices because that will really help consumers."

Caterer Nor Anizah Hussain, 55, from Kuala Lumpur, said she noticed the steep increase in prices as she bought vegetables every two days.

"We have to spend more than usual. Before the price hike, we spent about RM500 on vegetables, but now it's almost RM1,000."

"Local vegetables like water spinach have become the most expensive recently."

"Besides catering, I also run a food stall. When prices go up, I cut certain items from the menu. If customers request those dishes, I tell them to choose another menu item because of the cost."



Trader Azman Hassan showing the chilli and cucumber that he sells at his stall in Kota Baru yesterday. NSTP PIC BY SHARIFAH MAHSINAH ABDULLAH

"The prices are not reasonable, but it's expected during this kind of situation."

"I understand that retailers can't do much to keep costs stable because bad weather affects supply, but they also shouldn't set unreasonably high prices."

Sharifah Laila Hana Syed Mansur, 38, a farmstay manager in Lenggeng, Negri Sembilan, said all vegetables had become more expensive.

She said some supermarkets sold some vegetables at lower prices, but sold others at

higher prices.

"I don't cook a lot. When I go to the supermarket, I usually look for vegetables that are on sale."

"If something is too expensive, I won't buy it and will look for alternatives."

"Some people who have space grow their own vegetables. That's another way to deal with this."

"For me, it's about adjusting, finding alternatives, looking for what's cheaper or choosing items that can be used for multiple dishes. That's how we manage."



Pauline De Costa



Nor Anizah Hussain