



Children playing in a pool of water in a parched padi field in Kampung Sangkir, Kota Belud yesterday. PIX BY KHAIRULL AZRY BIDIN

DROUGHT

FARMERS HIT HARD BY DRY WEATHER

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Rice fields have cracked from lack of water for almost one month

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THE prolonged dry weather in Sabah is affecting farmers in the district.

Checks at Kampung Tempasuk 2 and Kampung Sangkir here revealed that rice fields had cracked from lack of water due to the scorching heat for nearly a month now.

Several farmers have expressed fears that if the hot weather persisted, it would do more damage to their rice fields and affect rice yields.

Stephanie Tiapa, 41, from Kam-



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pung Ring, Tempasuk 2, said she started planting for the new season last month and was facing the prospects of poor yields.

The mother of three children, who worked a rice field of about one hectare, said it was a challenge to get enough water, espe-



Rohaya Sabri

cially during the dry season.

"I hope the hot weather does not continue, so that it won't affect farmers like me," she said.

Another farmer, Rohaya Sabri, 28, said the drought could cause the surface of rice fields to crack.

"If it is damaged, it will be hard-

er to replant. However, our problems in this area are not just during the dry seasons, but also on ordinary days (including when it rains)."

Kota Belud Integrated Agricultural Development Area director Salmah Labulla said the hot weather was affecting the farmers, which was made worse by receding river water because there was no rain.

"If the hot weather persists until next month, my advice to farmers is to delay padi replanting in the area until normal weather returns.

"This includes irrigating the rice fields using mobile pumps, especially in areas where new planting has started," she added.

Salmah said usually during hot weather, farmers were advised to do other work, such as cleaning and doing repair work while waiting for better weather conditions.