

KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN
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Govt grants for cottage industries

MALACCA: The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation plays a pivotal role in encouraging Malaysians to embark in cottage industries which will accentuate their monthly family income.

Its Deputy Minister Datuk Dr Abu Bakar

Mohamad Diah (pix) said the ministry is willing to help families who are interested to venture into such businesses.

"BiotechCorp, under the ministry, is responsible for executing the objectives of the National Biotechnology Policy (NBP) and acts to identify value propositions in research and development and commerce and support these ventures via financial assistance and developmental services.

He said BiotechCorp's key mandates are to:

- ▶ act as a one-stop-centre;
- ▶ nurture and accelerate growth of companies in the industry;
- ▶ actively promote foreign direct investments in biotechnology; and
- ▶ create a conducive environment for the field.

Abu Bakar said an initiative by BiotechCorp supports the needs of Malaysia's life sciences industry for high-end research facilities, infrastructure and capabilities.

"Those interested to venture into the crayfish business or any other businesses must apply for the BioNexus status by getting in touch with BioTechCorp. Once they have discussed their proposed biotechnology businesses and activities, they will be informed of the BioNexus eligibility criteria as well as associated benefits and incentives," he said, adding that those interested can complete details via the online BioNexus pre-application form.

Abu Bakar said once the application is processed and approved, a matching grant will be given.

He said some RM100 million has been allocated to be given away to those interested in cottage industry businesses such as fish and prawn products.



Hazy Raya with big rise in hotspots



Blurry structure: The Prime Minister's office in Putrajaya as seen at 11.45am yesterday.

Many areas recording unhealthy API readings

By YUEN MEIKENG and P. ARUNA
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PETALING JAYA: Hari Raya turned out to be a hazy one nationwide with many areas recording unhealthy Air Pollutant Index (API) readings.

There has been a 40% increase in patients with haze-related respiratory and skin problems at clinics and hospitals checked.

At 5pm yesterday, the worst hit area was Sibul with a reading of 145, followed by Batu Muda at 132 and Port Klang and Cheras, both at 117.

Other areas with unhealthy readings were Samarahan, Sri Aman, Banting, Petaling Jaya and Putrajaya.

The poor air quality in Sibul was due to a forest fire that broke out in the Bukit Lima Forest Park.

Visibility in Petaling Jaya dropped to less than one kilometre due to the thick smog while in Subang, it dropped to less than five kilometres.

While several people complained bitterly on social media about how

the haze was ruining their health and had restricted their Hari Raya celebrations, others decided to take advantage of the public holiday and set out with their families to the zoo to see the pandas in their air-conditioned enclosures or for picnics.

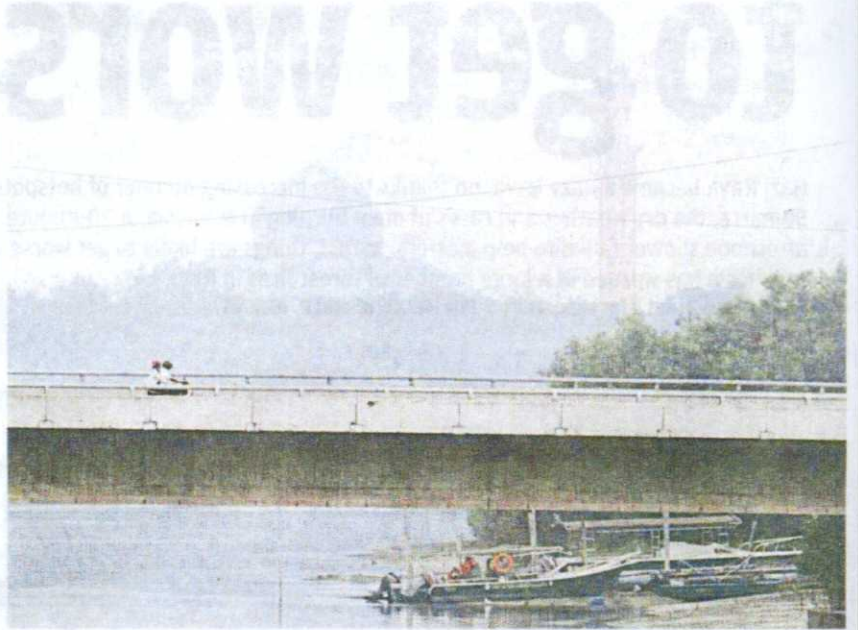
While the haze is expected to last until September, Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel warned Malaysians that they would have to endure the current thick smog for at least another day.

Malaysian Meteorological Department (MMD) spokesman Dr Hisham Mohd Anip said the current weak winds, which were blowing at less than 10kph, would not blow the haze away.

"The wind strength has been weak since yesterday (Monday). As a result, the thick haze might stay at least until tomorrow (Wednesday)," he said yesterday.

He added that the situation was made worse by the forecast of little rain until the end of next week.

In peninsula Malaysia, seven



Grey shroud: The hazy skyline in Port Klang at 4.15pm yesterday.



hotspots were detected on Monday while in Borneo, nine hotspots were found.

The rapidly increasing number of forest fires on Sumatra also indicates that the haze situation here is unlikely to clear up any time soon.

Indonesia's disaster agency had warned last month that Malaysia and Singapore could be badly hit by haze again after a large number of forest fires in Riau province, which was at the centre of an air

pollution crisis last year.

On Monday, there were 133 hotspots detected on the island based on satellite images from the Meteorological Service Singapore website.

In a statement yesterday, Palanivel said there had been 4,408 cases of open burning locally from January until July 28.

Of this, there were 1,436 cases on agricultural land, 897 in forested areas and 1,011 bush fires.

"There have been 818 cases of small open burning incidents, 137 in construction areas, 75 at dumpsites and 34 in industrial areas," he added.

Palanivel said 45 investigation papers were opened and compound notices had been sent to those involved in 315 open burning cases, adding that warning letters were sent for 101 other cases.

Under Section 29(A) of the Environmental Quality Act 1974, those convicted of open burning can be fined up to RM500,000 or sentenced to a jail term of up to five years or both.

They also face a maximum compound of RM2,000 for each offence.

Sweet news for hot Chuping

New growth centre in land of sugarcane and tasty mangoes

KANGAR: Besides being known as the "sweetest place in the country" with its thousands of hectares of sugarcane plantations, Chuping in north Perlis is also the hottest.

Chuping recorded a temperature of 40.1 degrees Celsius in 1998.

Based on this, the Meteorological Department marked Chuping as "the hottest place in Malaysia". A landmark was even put up at the Felda Chuping roundabout to commemorate that record-breaking temperature.

Its residents put up with the heat of this area because of the sweet bounty the land brings them.

While some 450 families of Felda Chuping depend on the 3,500ha of sugar plantations — which are increasingly being replaced by rubber trees — for their livelihood, Chuping is also well known for its delicious *harumanis* and Perlis Sunshine mangoes.

However, development in the town will "hot up" soon, especially through the Chuping Valley project.

Chuping state assemblyman Asmaiza Ahmad said it could change the state's economic profile as well as bring about an increase in the town's population, currently at some 13,000 people.

Among the developments outlined under the project are public and private institutions of higher learning, a resettlement area, housing and commercial buildings, government institutions and theme parks.

Chuping Valley, expected to become the new economic growth centre in northern Perlis, will be developed on a sugar plantation.

Chuping is also expected to become the country's main poultry supplier with a large-scale breeding project — a joint effort between the



Sweet bounty: A sugar cane plantation fronting a factory producing sugar at Chuping which is earmarked to become Perlis' new economic growth centre.

state government and Terramark Sdn Bhd. The project, to start by the end of the year, is expected to be completed in five years.

Asmaiza said under the project, which was set to generate 700 jobs for locals, some 20 million chicken would be farmed annually.

"The project involves the setting up of a modern, air-conditioned farm

using green technology on a site leased from the state government for 60 years," she said.

Another new development is the RM600mil Putra Heights in Kampung Kok Klang, which will see the construction of commercial buildings, hotels, recreational centres and around 2,500 housing units.

Chuping is also known for eques-

trian sports, particularly the Malaysia-Thailand Endurance Challenge Trophy which draw some 14 teams from Singapore, Australia, Indonesia, South Africa and Thailand.

It is also the site for the annual Malaysian Rally Championship, which sees participation from renowned local and international drivers. — Bernama

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Amaran Angin Kencang, Laut Bergelora Sehingga Selasa

KUALA LUMPUR, 30 Julai (Bernama) -- Keadaan angin kencang barat daya dan laut bergelora di perairan Perlis, Kedah dan Sabah (Kudat dan pantai barat) dijangka berterusan sehingga Selasa ini.

Menurut kenyataan **Jabatan Meteorologi Malaysia**, angin dengan kelajuan 40 hingga 50 kilometer sejam (kmsj) dan ombak mencapai ketinggian 3.5 meter itu adalah berbahaya kepada bot kecil, rekreasi dan sukan laut.

Bagi perkapalan, keadaan angin kencang dan laut bergelora turut diramal melanda perairan Phuket, Condore, Reef North, Layang-layang dan Palawan sehingga Selasa dengan kelajuan angin dari 40 hingga 50 kmsj dan ombak setinggi 3.5 meter.

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