

**KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN
TARIKH: 10 SEPTEMBER 2015 (KHAMIS)**

| Bil | Tajuk | Akhbar |
|------------|---|-------------------|
| 1 | 10 firms probed over forest fires | New Straits Times |
| 2 | IPU di Semenanjung tunjuk perubahan positif | Berita Harian |
| 3 | UMP, BiotechCorp tawar program MBA Bioekonomi | Berita Harian |

10 firms probed over forest fires

HAZE ISSUE: They will be punished if found guilty, says Indonesian minister

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INDONESIA is investigating 10 firms over worsening forest fires that have created a blanket of smog over Southeast Asia, threatening them with sanctions if they are found responsible, a minister said on Tuesday.

The thick haze from Sumatra and Kalimantan has forced the repeated cancellation of flights in the area, and pushed air quality to unhealthy levels in Singapore and Malaysia.

Indonesian Environment Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar said companies could face sanctions if found violating their permits.

"While the legal process is going on, in parallel, there has to be a decision or action taken on the company's permit," Reuters quoted her as saying.

Sanctions range from a written warning, a fine to revoking a firm's permit.

The heavy smoke from slash-and-burn clearances often comes from Sumatra and Kalimantan, where large forest concessions are used by

pulp and paper, and palm oil companies, some of which are listed in Singapore.

The companies blame smallholders for the fires, but they have been criticised by green groups for not doing enough to stop the haze or the rampant deforestation and destruction of carbon-rich peatlands in Indonesia.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar is expected to meet his Indonesian counterpart in Jakarta next Thursday in an effort to put an end to the haze problem

in the region.

Wan Junaidi's deputy, Datuk Hamim Samuri, said the meeting would seek long-term solutions to combat the problem plaguing the nation every year.

"The haze condition in certain places in the country has worsened.

"As of 8am today (yesterday), three areas recorded unhealthy Air Pollutant Index (API) readings: Malacca City (112) and Bukit Rambai (107) in Malacca, and Nilai (103) in Negri Sembilan," said Hamim.

An API reading of 101 to 200 is categorised as unhealthy.

"The haze blanketing Malaysia is due to the peat and forest fires in Sumatra.

"The United States' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has detected 38 hot spots in Sumatra and 102 in Kalimantan.

"This is becoming a perennial issue that calls for immediate attention, hence, the minister has arranged for a meeting with his counterpart in Indonesia to reach an agreement to mitigate the problem," he said after opening the 26th Meeting of the Asean Senior Officials on the Environment and Related Meet-

ings here yesterday.

Hamim said the Asean haze-free regional agenda would soon be achieved following the full ratification of the Asean Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution.

"Transboundary haze pollution remains one of the most persistent and challenging issues for Asean and its community.

"We must, therefore, find concrete solutions and maintain our momentum in tackling the issue."

Hamim also said the ministry was monitoring the situation, and if it worsened, they would discuss with the **Science, Technology, and Innovation Ministry** to carry out cloud seeding in critical areas.

Social activist Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye hoped the meeting between the ministers would lay out the immediate short-, mid- and long-term measures to resolve the issue.

"I hope the present economic problem in Indonesia will not jeopardise their efforts to set aside more funds to deal with the issue of open burning and forest fires."

Lee said with Indonesia on board — the last country to do so — the Asean Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution had been ratified by all the member states.

"What matters most is the follow-up actions by Indonesian authorities to deal with the haze."

As of 5pm yesterday, three areas in Sarawak recorded unhealthy air readings: Samarahan (113), Sri Aman (105) and Kuching (103).

A boatman plying Sungai Sarawak despite reduced visibility. Kuching recorded a moderate Air Pollutant Index reading of 84 as at 11am yesterday. Pic by Che Rani Che Din



KERATAN AKHBAR
BERITA HARIAN (NASIONAL) : MUKA SURAT 14
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IPU di Semenanjung tunjuk perubahan positif

Kuala Lumpur: Kualiti udara di Semenanjung menunjukkan perubahan positif semalam, berbanding kelmarin, apabila beberapa kawasan yang mencatatkan Indeks Pencemaran Udara (IPU) tidak sihat pada sebelah pagi, bertukar sederhana menjelang petang.

Pada sebelah pagi, IPU di Bandaraya Melaka pada 109 dan Bukit Rambai 101, manakala di Negeri Sembilan, IPU di Nilai mencatatkan 103 dan Muar 109 di Johor. Semua bacaan di kawasan itu bertukar sederhana mulai jam 12 tengah hari.

Namun, keadaan berbeza di Sarawak apabila sehingga jam 5 petang semalam, tiga kawasan mencatatkan bacaan tidak sihat iaitu Kuching (103), Samarahan (113) dan Sri Aman (105).

IPU di antara sifar hingga 50 dikategorikan baik; 51 hingga 100 (sederhana), 101 hingga 200 (tidak sihat), 201 hingga 300 (amat tidak

sihat) dan lebih 301 (berbahaya).

Jurucakap **Jabatan Meteorologi Malaysia (Met'Malaysia)** berkata, pengurangan kadar jerebu di Semenanjung berlaku disebabkan hujan kelmarin dan pagi semalam.

Bagaimanapun, katanya, ada beberapa faktor yang boleh kembali mencetuskan jerebu seperti arah angin yang masih bertiup dari arah Barat Daya, selain jumlah titik panas di Sumatera.

Hujan diramal berterusan

"Jabatan meramalkan hujan pada sebelah pagi bagi kawasan Semenanjung akan berterusan dan diharap keadaan itu akan dapat mengurangkan jerebu.

"Bagaimanapun, Sarawak tidak menerima hujan, selain masih menerima kesan titik panas yang banyak di Kalimantan, sekali gus tidak membantu mengurangkan kesan jerebu di sana," katanya. Pengarah Jabatan Bomba dan

Penyelamat Sarawak, Nor Hisyam Mohamad, berkata pihaknya kini mengambil langkah berjaga-jaga berikutan kewujudan banyak titik panas di Kalimantan, yang berpunca daripada aktiviti pembakaran terbuka bagi tujuan perladangan.

Katanya, perkembangan itu memburukkan lagi keadaan jerebu di beberapa bandar utama di Sarawak, termasuk Kuching, sejak beberapa hari lalu, walaupun pembakaran terbuka di negeri itu terkawal dan hanya dua kes kebakaran hutan berlaku sepanjang minggu lalu.

Pengarah Jabatan Meteorologi Sabah, Abdul Malek Tusin, berkata walaupun bacaan IPU di negeri itu mencatatkan tahap sederhana sehingga petang semalam, dengan sekitar Tawar mencatatkan jarak penglihatan kira-kira lima kilometer.

"Kita menjangkakan ia bertambah teruk dalam beberapa hari



Keadaan di sekitar bandaraya **Melaka mencatatkan IPU sederhana** iaitu 90 setakat jam 4 petang semalam. [FOTO KHAIRUNISAH LOKMAN/BH]

ini susulan jerebu yang semakin buruk di Sarawak, Labuan dan Brunei," katanya.

Pengarah Jabatan Alam Sekitar (JAS) Melaka, Shafe'ee Yasin, berkata jerebu sejak tiga hari lalu

pulih semalam, susulan hujan lebat selama tiga jam sehingga 12 tengah hari semalam, menyebabkan habuk terampai dalam udara berkurangan, sekali gus membantu penurunan IPU di sini.

