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'Devolution to benefit Sabah and Sarawak'

KOTA KINABALU: The devolution of greater power to Sabah and Sarawak is bound to have teething problems, but its implementation will be for the greater good.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Madius Tangau said the decision announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak was appropriate as it would benefit the two states.

Madius, who is also United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation acting president, said there would be issues that needed to be ironed out, and setting a mechanism on how to go about empowering the states.

He said things needed to be planned out accordingly, and this was where the joint federal, Sabah and Sarawak committee that was looking into the devolution process would play its role.

"Take for instance the policy of allowing the State Education Department to approve infrastructure projects up to RM5 million. The director is not able to form a technical committee because there are no clear directives on where the engineers should come from.

"On the move to fill up to 90 per cent of the teaching force with locals from Sabah and Sarawak, the state education departments should be given the power to decide on the candidates to be admitted into

teacher trainee colleges."

Meanwhile Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili said the policy commitment to fill teaching posts with more locals would motivate more youths to take up teaching as a vocation in the two states.

Ongkili, who is also Parti Bersatu Sabah deputy president, said the party had long voiced out the issue along with the need to have more locals participate in government projects and fill senior posts in the federal service and government link corporations.

He said this when opening a new longhouse at Kg Mompilis in the sub-district of Matunggong here.

Ongkili, however, said there was justification to maintain some percentage, in this case at least 10 per cent, of teachers from other states to be posted to Sabah and Sarawak.

"This is because we believe in integration, and having postings in the peninsula for Sabahan teachers and vice versa would be good for integration. It will also encourage cultural exchange and understanding."

Of the 42,242 teachers in Sabah as of August this year, 77 per cent of them are Sabah-born while the rest are from Sarawak (2.3 per cent) or other states in the peninsula (20.7 per cent). In Sarawak there are 41,935 teachers of whom 31,268 or 76 per cent are locals.



**Datuk
Madius
Tangau**

Air quality improves in Sarawak

RESPIRE: Morning rain brings API reading down to 122 in Kuching

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HEAVY rain has improved the situation in Sarawak which was blanketed by haze with the Air Pollutant Index (API) reading exceeding 200 on Thursday.

Heavy showers at Sam here washed away the haze and brought the API reading down to 122 at 7am.

The reading improved to 74 as of 4pm, giving city folk moderate air quality.

In Samarahan, unhealthy air quality was recorded in the morning at 133. Air quality improved to 85 in the afternoon.

Other divisions, such as Bintulu, Miri, Kapit, Sarikei, Sibul and Sri Aman, had moderate air quality.

Two days ago, Kuching and Samarahan were among the worst hit divisions when API readings exceeded 200, the highest in the past two weeks. It forced 463 schools to be closed, affecting more than 180,000 students.

Although the haze situation in the state has improved, schools remain closed until further notice.

Welfare, Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah said despite the improvement in air quality and visibility, people were advised to stay indoors and, if they were outdoors, to use face masks as the situation could be temporary.

"The situation has improved and

is more comfortable compared with yesterday (Thursday). But, as long as the forest fires in Indonesia do not stop, the haze is expected to return. So, we advise the public, especially children and the elderly to stay at home," she said yesterday.

Kuching International Airport senior manager Mohd Nadzim Hashim said most of the flights departed and arrived on schedule.

Cloud-seeding operations carried out on Thursday afternoon in Sarawak have successfully produced rain in the affected areas.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau said cloud-seeding operations were carried out in Santubong, Kuching, Simunjan, Tebekang, Samarahan and Batang Lupar in Sri Aman.

"We hope this will help control the haze situation in Sarawak and improve the air quality," he said yesterday.

He said although the cloud-seeding operations were scheduled to continue until Sept 25, it might be stopped sooner, depending on the atmospheric condition of the clouds and visibility.

"As for Peninsular Malaysia, the operations have been stopped as the air quality is showing improvement."

Meanwhile, Bernama reported that the overall haze situation in the



Most of the flights departed and arrived on schedule at Kuching International Airport yesterday with the improving haze situation. Pic by Radzi Bujang

country had improved yesterday as only eight areas nationwide had recorded unhealthy API readings, with Seberang Jaya 2 in Perai, Penang, recording the highest reading at 124.

The Department of Environment (DOE) website said as of 3pm, unhealthy air quality was recorded at

Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang (117), Bakar Arang in Sungai Petani (113), as well as Seri Manjung and Langkawi (both 112).

Unhealthy API readings were also recorded in Taiping (106), Perai (104) and Sri Aman (103).

Bernama also quoted Malaysia Airport Holdings Bhd Corporate

Communications Department as saying that operations at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and klia2 were normal with no flight delays or changes due to the haze.

The public can refer to the DOE website at <http://apims.doe.gov.my/v2/> for the latest API readings.



Operasi Pembentukan Awan Di Sarawak Berhasil - Madius

KUALA LUMPUR, 18 Sept (Bernama) -- Operasi pembentukan awan (OPA) di Sarawak hari ini berjaya menghasilkan hujan di beberapa tempat di Bahagian Sri Aman dan daerah Serian di Bahagian Samarahan, kata **Menteri Sains, Teknologi Dan Inovasi Datuk Madius Tangau**.

Beliau berkata operasi itu, yang bermula pada 11.35 pagi dan berakhir pada 12.42 tengah hari, dijalankan di kawasan Santubong di Bahagian Kuching, Simunjan dan Tebekang di Bahagian Samarahan serta Batang Lupar di Bahagian Sri Aman.

"Kejayaan OPA ini diharap dapat mengurangkan tahap jerebu yang dihadapi oleh penduduk di Sarawak," katanya dalam kenyataan di sini, Jumaat.

Beliau berkata operasi itu akan diteruskan sehingga 25 Sept ini di Sarawak namun, ia bergantung kepada kesesuaian awan dan jarak penglihatan yang dibenarkan.

Sementara itu, Madius berkata OPA di Semenanjung Malaysia ditamatkan memandangkan keadaan cuaca dan bacaan Indeks Pencemaran Udara (IPU) yang semakin baik.

Sehingga 7 malam tadi, hanya tujuh kawasan di Semenanjung menunjukkan bacaan IPU tidak sihat iaitu Bakar Arang, Sungai Petani (118) dan Langkawi di Kedah (122); Kampung Air Putih, Taiping (107) dan Seri Manjung di Perak (105); serta Perai (105), Seberang Jaya (122) dan Universiti Sains Malaysia (116) di Pulau Pinang.

Bacaan IPU di Sarawak pula menunjukkan tahap sederhana di semua kawasan di negeri itu.

-- BERNAMA

