

**KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN
TARIKH: 6 APRIL 2016 (RABU)**

Bil	Tajuk	Akhbar
1.	MetMalaysia, RMAF on standby for cloud seeding in Sabah	Astro Awani
2.	Batu Embun catat suhu melebihi 37 darjah celcius	BERNAMA
3.	Wan Junaidi 'lejuk" with Indonesia over haze MoU	Malay Mail
4.	MOSTI peruntuk dana RM10 juta untuk projek komuniti bioteknologi	BERNAMA
5.	Perluaskan projek ekonomi dalam bioteknologi	Utusan Malaysia
6.	Ministry ready to do cloud seeding	New Straits Times
7.	El Nino dijangka berakhir Jun ini	Utusan Malaysia
8.	200 hektar kawasan hutan simpan Binsuluk masih terbakar	BERNAMA
9.	Jangan lakukan pembakaran terbuka	BERNAMA
10.	Villages facing drought to get water supply	New Straits Times
11.	Dua gempa sederhana landa Indonesia petang tadi	BERNAMA
12.	Southeast Asia's nuclear dreams	Malay Mail
13.	'Succeed by embracing knowledge'	New Straits Times



MetMalaysia, RMAF on standby for cloud seeding in Sabah

PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia) and Malaysian Royal Air Force (RMAF) have been put on standby to do cloud seeding exercise following the haze situation in Sabah, said **Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti) Minister Datuk Seri Madius Tangau**.

He, however, said the cloud seeding exercise was subjected to suitable clouds.

"Malaysian Meteorological Department has been instructed to go ahead with cloud seeding even if it means Mosti have to bear the expenses," he said in a statement today.

Madius said Mosti was aware of the situation and conducting round the clock monitoring on the haze which is currently blanketing areas in the west coast of Sabah.

Sabah Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Musa Aman had been informed on the status of haze in the state which would be monitored closely by the department, he added.

Several areas in Sabah's west coast have recorded air pollution index reading of more than 200 lately.

On Sunday, 77 schools in three districts, namely Kuala Penyu, Papar and Beaufort, were announced to be closed today due to poor air quality.

Six more primary and secondary schools in three districts of Sabah are closed today and tomorrow due to the haze.



Batu Embun Catat Suhu Melebihi 37 Darjah Celsius

KUALA LUMPUR, 5 April (Bernama) -- Kawasan Batu Embun, Pahang hari ini mencatatkan bacaan suhu melebihi 37 darjah Celsius selama tiga hari berturut-turut berikutan cuaca panas melampau yang melanda negara ketika ini.

Menteri Sains, Teknologi dan Inovasi Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau berkata Batu Embun mencatatkan suhu maksimum tertinggi iaitu 37.6 darjah Celsius diikuti Chuping, Perlis dengan suhu 37.2 darjah Celsius.

"Hanya satu kawasan yang masih mencatatkan bilangan hari tanpa hujan melebihi 30 hari sehingga semalam iaitu di Seberang Perai, Pulau Pinang (36 hari)," katanya dalam satu kenyataan di sini hari ini.

-- BERNAMA

Wan Junaidi 'lejuk' with Indonesia over haze MoU

By Anith Adilah
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SERDANG — Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar is one irate minister when it comes to the delay in signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Indonesia to combat the annual haze problem.

"The Sarawakian word to describe how I am feeling is 'lejuk', or loosely translated ... fed up. I cannot find any word in Malay or English which could explain it better," he told reporters after attending his Natural Resources and Environment Ministry's Excellence Service Awards yesterday.

"To be honest, I have had enough of trying. It is exhausting."

The MoU was proposed after Asean ratified the Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution last July.

Since then, there has been little progress in getting it signed.

Wan Junaidi was scheduled to ink the

MoU with his Indonesian counterpart before the end of last year but meetings were repeatedly postponed.

It contains four steps to overcome haze — law enforcement, better peat soil management, zero burning practice for the Indonesians, and collaboration between both countries when fires break out.

After a state of haze emergency was declared in Sarawak in 1997 due to forest and plantation fires in Southern Sumatra, Kalimantan, Malaysia has been trying to work out a joint effort with Indonesia to solve the haze problem.

In August 2005, Malaysia declared another state of emergency in Port Klang and Kuala Selangor after the air pollutant index exceeded 500, indicating a dangerous level.

An MoU was signed in June 2008 during the tenure of then-minister Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas, between Malaysia and Riau which saw farmers from Rokan Hilir in Riau attending workshops on zero-burning technique at the Selangor

Agriculture Department.

The MoU also saw Malaysia contributing RM2 million to provide support services on rehabilitation of burnt peat soil and the installation of a haze early warning system.

Talk of the Malaysia-Indonesia MoU started again after haze struck Malaysia badly last year, which saw school closing in several states including Malacca, Negri Sembilan, Kuala Lumpur and Sarawak when the API breached 200 — the "very unhealthy" mark.

Separately, Wan Junaidi said the ministry planned to increase the number of check dams and tube wells in the country as they were effective in preventing and controlling peatland fires.

This was reflected in the cases of peatland fires at Beris Lalang, Kampung Gondang and Kual in Bachok, Kelantan, last month.

"The fires did not spread and there was no localised haze due to the presence of a check dam. The dam retains water which was soaked by the peat soil and then wet itself, subsequently putting the fire out."

Wan Junaidi said tube wells were also effective in curbing peat fires from getting out of control as the mechanisms allowed them to pump water from underground to the surface to maintain its moisture and lower the risks of catching fire.

The ministry built 236 check dams and 59 tube wells across the country with plans to build several more dams and five wells in Terengganu, Sarawak and Kelantan.

He said the ministry was also having internal discussions before acquiring external expertise from other government bodies including the **Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry** to ensure dam levels stay above 50 per cent.

