

HOT AND HAZY

# UNHEALTHY AIR QUALITY IN 4 AREAS

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Kota Baru and Tanah Merah in Kelantan, Cheras in Kuala Lumpur and Segamat in Johor recorded API readings above 100

## KUALA LUMPUR

**U**NHEALTHY air quality readings were recorded in four areas yesterday, an increase from the previous day's three areas.

The areas were Kota Baru and Tanah Merah in Kelantan, Cheras in Kuala Lumpur and Segamat in Johor.

According to the Malaysian Air Pollutant Index Management System (APIMS), Segamat recorded an API reading of 153 — the worst among the four.

The API reading for Kota Baru increased to 107 from 103 earlier in the afternoon, and Tanah Merah's reading remained at 104.

Meanwhile, Cheras here experienced a slight decrease in API reading to 106.

However, things could get worse in some areas that recorded moderate readings.

The air in Kuala Terengganu is on the cusp of being unhealthy, at 100, and Seberang Jaya in Penang is just below it at 99. The federal administrative capital of Putrajaya was at 95.

An API reading of between zero and 50 is categorised as good, 51 to 100 is moderate, 101 to 200 is unhealthy, 201 to 300 is very unhealthy and 300 and above is hazardous.

On Saturday, Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad said the haze in the peninsula was caused by peat fires and open burning during the current spell of hot weather.

He said the weather, along with the resumption of economic activities post-Covid-19, contributed to haze.

"The hot weather has caused fires in forested areas and properties. The haze is happening not only in Malaysia but also in countries in the Asean region."



The peninsula is experiencing hot weather, which, along with the resumption of economic activities post-Covid-19, contributes to haze.

PIC BY AIZUDDIN SAAD

The situation is especially bad in Kelantan as there have been peat fires at Kampung Beoh in the Beris Lalang subdistrict of Bachok since March 27.

Initially, only 5ha of peat fields were on fire, but the blaze soon spread to an area of between 20ha and 50ha.

The Malaysian Meteorological Department said earlier on Saturday that the heatwave was severely affecting Jeli, with temperatures reaching 40°C three days in a row.

It said 15 other areas in the peninsula also saw high temperatures.

Bernama reported that Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa uploaded a video on TikTok yesterday showing the haze condition in Sekijang, a town in Segamat, where the buildings are almost covered by smog and visibility is less than 200m.

"For the past few days, we have heard the news that the country has been affected by the haze in a few areas and one of the areas that have been badly affected is my constituency, Sekijang," she said.

The area, she added, recorded an unhealthy API reading of between 145 and 150 on Saturday and advised people to be cautious when engaging in outdoor activities.

The Sekijang member of parliament said the smoke and dust particles of the haze posed a health risk.

"Haze is not good for health and can cause eye inflammation, itchy nose, sore throat, cough, flu and itchy skin," she said, citing cardiovascular diseases as one of the long-term effects.

Dr Zaliha reminded the people to stay home during the haze, especially children with asthma.

## SDMC to meet over weather concerns in Sarawak

**KUCHING:** The Sarawak Disaster Management Committee (SDMC) is set to convene soon to discuss measures to prevent the occurrence of haze in light of the hot and dry weather in the state.

Sarawak Deputy Premier Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas, who chairs the SDMC, emphasised the need for all divisional disaster management committees to remain vigilant in monitoring hotspots and potential fire outbreaks.

"Since last week, we have been experiencing hot and dry weather, and the 'landas' (monsoon) season is over for us now.

"Therefore, we want to alert all divisional disaster management committees to keep a close watch on all hotspots and potential ones in their respective divisions."

Uggah stressed the need for constant vigilance and preparation in dealing with fire outbreaks and other related problems, and urged people and those in the plantation industry not to conduct any open burning.

"Always extinguish any fire that you have started in your garden, farm or before you leave.

"The longer the dry season, the wood and vegetation debris will be more combustible, so the danger is a small fire can turn into a big one, especially in peat soil areas." **Bernama**