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### Schools re-open after Emergency is lifted

BACK TO SCHOOL ... Pupils of Sekolah Rendah Kerajaan Combined were among the thousands who went back to school in Sarawak yesterday after more than a week of "forced" holidays due to the haze which prompted the Government to declare a state of emergency there.

Headmaster Muhammad Ahmad Mentali (left) is seen taking down the attendance assisted by teacher Rapayah Kassim.

"We have 623 pupils but only 65 per cent showed up today," said Muhammad.

"We think the reason is the heavy rain this morning, but there is also the possibility that some parents may not know that the emergency has been lifted."

The state of emergency was declared by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Sept 19 after the Air Pollutant Index in Kuching breached the 600 mark, far surpassing the hazardous level of 301 to 500.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced the lifting of the emergency in Kuching on Sunday when the API dropped drastically. The API reading at 5pm on Sunday was 83.

The air quality in the city continued to show significant improvement yesterday, thanks to a pre-dawn and noon shower. At 2pm, the API was only 36 and visibility was 8,000m.

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