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Law: Haze temporary, no cause for alarm

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KUCHING, Sun. - As visibility improved slightly in the Klang Valley but worsened in some northern parts of the peninsula's west coast, Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said the haze is only temporary.

He said the haze "was no cause for alarm".

"It will be over when there is prevailing wind."

"The Department of Environment will continue to keep a watch on the situation," said Law when met at a luncheon held in conjunction with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Sarawak.

The haze, caused by forest fires in Sumatra's Riau Province and Kalimantan, was also worsened by open burning in Malaysia.

Law said as of yesterday, only three stations - Taiping, Sri Manjong and Port Klang - reported Air Pollutant Index readings slightly above 100 (unhealthy) while the rest reported either good or moderate readings.

In Kuala Lumpur, DOE director-general Rosnani Ibrahim said visibility had been restored to between 4km and 8km today in the Klang Valley. It was lowest at 1km yesterday.

However, she said there were several haze-shrouded areas in the north with visibility between 2km and 6km.

Her Press statement did not include today's API readings.

As for hotspots due to forest fires, Rosnani said there were 92 in Sumatra. Three hotspots were also detected in the peninsula.

She said the Indonesian authorities had informed her on July 14 that they were putting out the Sumatran fires and acting against the offenders.

A Meteorological Services Department officer said as at 4pm the northern areas which showed a decline since yesterday were Alor Star (1.5km), Ipoh (4km) and Setiawan (2km).

Outside the capital, three big fires at Kampung Medan, Teluk Panglima Garang in Banting, Jalan Limau Nipas in Sepang and Taman Alam Megah in Shah Alam have aggravated the hazy condition.

In Penang, State Education Department deputy director Mohamad Alias has suspended all outdoor school activities beginning tomorrow.

He said school heads should observe guidelines set by the Education Ministry based on the haze crisis in 1997.

Visibility was back to yesterday's morning level of about 2.5km in Butterworth and 4.5km in Bayan Lepas. Despite the thick haze, life went on as usual for many.

In Ipoh, a State Meteorological Department officer said the Sultan Azlan Shah Airport control room had been advised of the haze.

Haze was also apparent in the outskirts like Papan and Pusing.

A Perak Fire and Rescue Department official said 27 cases of open burning were reported yesterday.

Meanwhile, World Wide Fund for Nature Malaysia joined the chorus of protests against the ban on publicising API readings.

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