

HAZE

Rain clears the air

KUALA LUMPUR: Rain provided a temporary respite from the choking haze that has blanketed parts of the country since early last month.

Malaysian Meteorological Department director-general Jallan Simon said the rain helped, but as long as the source of the smoke remained, the haze would return.

"Of course, it helps. However, it is only temporary. As long as the source of the smoke is there, when the wind blows, the haze will come back.

"In Sarawak, after it rained two days ago (on Thursday), the Air Pollutant Index (API) dropped to below 100, but today (yesterday), Kuching and Samarahan were back to the 'very unhealthy' level," he told the *New Sunday Times* yesterday.

MetMalaysia conducted a cloud-seeding operation in western Sarawak on Thursday, which involved Kuching, Samarahan, Sri Aman and Betong.

Heavy rains occurred in the ar-

reas after the operation and Air quality reportedly improved following the downpour.

On cloud-seeding operations in the peninsula, Jallan said the plan had been put on hold as atmospheric conditions were not conducive.

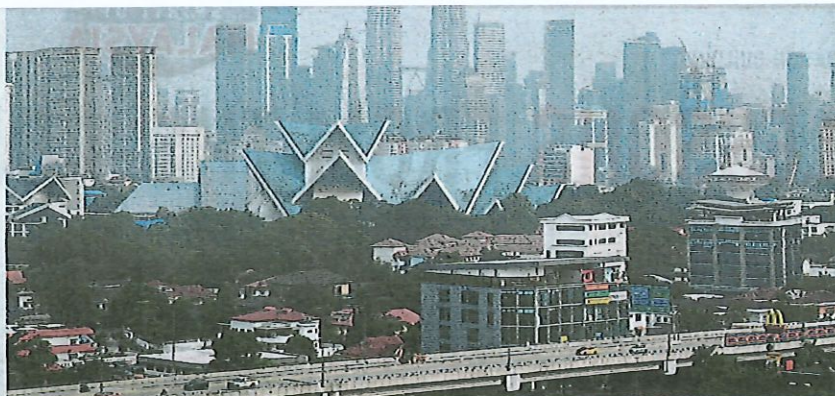
"We are not doing it today (yesterday) because it already rained. Conditions are also not favourable for cloud seeding.

"We hope the rain will continue so that it can bring some relief to hard-hit areas such as Johan Setia in Klang and Tangkak in Johor."

He said the cloud-seeding operation would most likely take place on Monday, but it would depend on atmospheric conditions and the availability of Royal Malaysian Air Force aircraft.

Up to 5pm yesterday, three locations recorded very unhealthy and 32 areas had unhealthy API readings.

Very unhealthy areas were Kuching (225) Samarahan (202) and Tangkak (207).



Kuala Lumpur records better air quality following a downpour yesterday. BERNAMA PIC

Although air quality in most of the Klang Valley remained unhealthy, API readings showed a downtrend, thanks to the rain.

In **Selangor**, the reading in Kuala Selangor was 129, Petaling Jaya (157), Shah Alam (152), Klang (148), Banting (167) and Johan Setia (186).

In the **Federal Territories**, readings were unhealthy in Batu Muda at 166, Cheras (155) and Putrajaya (161).

In **Perak**, Tasek Ipoh and Taman Pegoh Ipoh had unhealthy readings at 126 and 112 respectively.

In **Negri Sembilan**, unhealthy air shrouded Nilai (171), Seremban (144) and Port Dickson (181).

In **Melaka**, unhealthy readings were recorded in Alor Gajah at 164, Bukit Rambai (161) and Bandaraya Melaka (153).

In **Johor**, Segamat recorded an API of 145 followed by Kluang (135), Batu Pahat (119) and Larkin (103).

The haze led to the closure of 220 schools and higher learning institutions in Tangkak and Muar yesterday as readings remained above 200.

Haze also spread to other parts

of Pahang. Besides Rompin (108), which has been affected by haze for the past few days, unhealthy air shrouded Temerloh (156) and Jerantut (129), as well as Indera Mahkota (125) and Balok Baru (120) in Kuantan.

The Asean Specialised Meteorological Centre reported that hazy conditions in some parts of the region would continue.

It said the weather was generally dry in many parts of the southern Asean region, except for isolated showers in northern Sumatra, Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah.