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Sri Aman hits hazardous API level as haze worsens

KUALA LUMPUR: The haze, which has served as an inconvenience for Malaysians over the past month, took a definite turn into dangerous territory yesterday.

Sri Aman in Sarawak became the first district to have its air quality recorded as "hazardous".

It first passed the hazardous threshold when it recorded an Air Pollutant Index reading of 311.

The threshold of API reading for the category (reading above 301) was first surpassed at 3am.

Fourteen hours later at 5pm, its air quality continued to deteriorate at 407.

However, the API of Malaysia website later revised Sri Aman's 5pm reading to 379. It subsequently climbed to 392 at 7pm.

This marked the first time that the API, measured hourly, recorded a reading above 301 since the country was hit by haze earlier this month.

Kuching was the next worst-hit area in the state, with consistent "very unhealthy" API readings of more than 200.

The National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) said a haze emergency would only be declared when API readings exceeded 500.

Such a situation was declared in Kuching on Sept 19, 1997 when the API reading there was 650; on Aug 1, 2005 in Kuala Selangor and Port Klang, Selangor, and on June 3, 2013 in Muar and Ledang in Johor when API readings exceeded 500.

The Department of Environment attributed the hazardous air quality in Sri Aman to its prox-

imity to the Sarawak-Kalimantan border.

Nadma said cloud seeding operations in Sarawak could only be carried out tomorrow or Friday due to atmospheric, weather and cloud conditions.

At 5pm yesterday, five areas recorded "very unhealthy" readings, while 29 others recorded "unhealthy" readings.

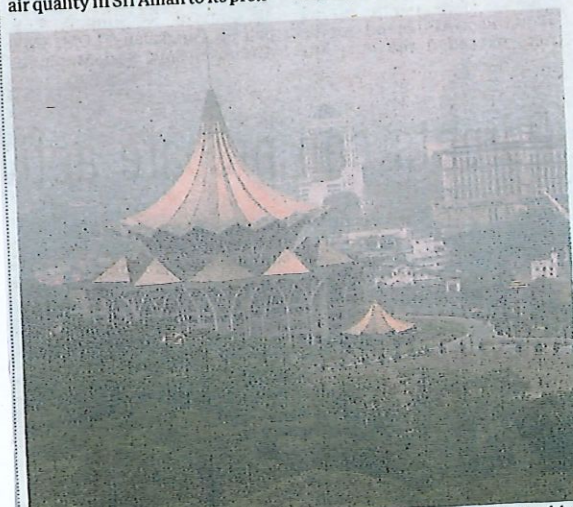
The five areas with "very unhealthy" air quality were Johan Setia (230) in Selangor, Kuching (214) in Sarawak, Seri Manjung (229) in Perak, Nilai (205) and Port Dickson (203) in Negri Sembilan.

Areas with "unhealthy" air quality were Taiping (113), Tasek Ipoh (109) and Pegoh Ipoh (107) in Perak; Batu Muda (156) and Cheras (149) in Kuala Lumpur; Putrajaya (181), Kuala Selangor (167), Petaling Jaya (165), Shah Alam (169), Klang (188) and Banting (182) in Selangor.

Also in the list were Seremban (177) in Negri Sembilan, Alor Gajah (172), Bukit Rambai (183) and Bandaraya Melaka (157) in Melaka; Segamat (151), Batu Pahat (106), Larkin (102) and Tangkak (123) in Johor; and Temeloh (133), Jerantut (110) and Indera Mahkota (115) in Pahang.

In Sarawak, "unhealthy" readings were recorded in Miri (122), Samalaju (103), Bintulu (125), Mukah (127), Sibul (173), Sarikei (155) and Samarahan (158).

The API categorises a reading of between 0 and 50 as good, 51-100 (moderate), 101-200 (unhealthy), 201-300 (very unhealthy), and 301 and above (hazardous).



An Air Pollutant Index reading of 218 was recorded in Kuching yesterday. PIC BY HAZREEN MOHAMAD