

Haze returns as hotspots detected near Sarawak

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GEORGE TOWN: The haze is back as Indonesian farmers have reportedly started their traditional slash-and-burn rituals.

About 40 hotspots were detected as of Monday in Kalimantan, most of them close to the Sarawak border on the western end.

The Asean Specialised Meteorological Centre's Regional Haze Situation data catalogue shows no hotspots in Sumatra, but wind currents were strong enough to send some of the smoke to Peninsular Malaysia.

Seberang Jaya's Air Pollution Index (API) was 50 since 8am yesterday, lending a cloying stuffiness to the air.

A reading of 50 is the last value of good air, and when it hits 51, it will be classified as moderate by the Department of Environment.

The other three API gauges in Penang were giving readings from 36 to 43 yesterday.

Ipoh was already 52 while Cheras in Kuala Lumpur was 54.

Far from Kalimantan, Langkawi's API was a pleasant 20.

But Sarawak is suffering, with Kuching at a miserable 71, Samarahan at 62 and Sibu at 59.

Sabah is spared, with API read-



Hazy days are back: Penang Hill is partially shrouded in haze as the state's API climbs to 50.

ings ranging from 16 to 20.

Penang Environment Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh said that he has been briefed on the situation.

"When hot air from the fires rises

high up, the smoke can travel thousands of kilometres before it cools and descends as haze.

"That is how northern Malaysia gets higher API readings than places closer to Kalimantan such as

Melaka or Johor," he said.

"My office has a vast number of face masks in stock for public distribution if the haze hits unhealthy levels and I advise Penangites to get ready for hazy days."