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USM SETS UP THREE TASK FORCES TO DEAL WITH THE HAZE

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PENANG, October 2015 – Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) has set up three special task forces to deal with the haze problem which has reached the northern region, specifically in Penang especially within the vicinity of the Main Campus, Bertam Campus and USM Engineering Campus at Nibong Tebal, as seen from the increasing Air Pollution Index (API/IPU), indicating a very unhealthy air quality.

The Vice-Chancellor of USM, Professor Dato' Dr. Omar Osman commented on this when chairing a special meeting to deal with the haze here recently.

Earlier, the Registrar of USM Siti Zubaidah A. Hamid had released a statement on the postponement of lectures and tutorials as well as other activities at the USM Main Campus in Penang, Advanced Medical and Dental Institute Campus in Bertam and the Engineering Campus in Nibong Tebal.

Also postponed was the 25th USM-Penang International Netball Competition which had been planned for this weekend, although initially an announcement was made earlier by the Director of USM Sports and Recreation Centre Muhamad Mohd Hanif on the change in the venue of the competition, to be held indoors at the newly-completed Azman Hashim Sports Complex at USM here.

"By looking at the current situation, we have decided to postpone all lectures and cancel outdoor activities such as co-curricular, research and other light, outdoor programmes involving the students and staff.

"In fact, students are advised to remain indoors, especially in the dorms and hostels and not to utilise the excess time as the result of postponement of lectures for other outdoor activities, as it would be detrimental to their health," said Omar.

He added that, students should utilise the free time for revisions or online communications with their lecturers, as the university encourages such learning activities to be done and continued in the best manner possible.

The three task forces set up were the Technical Task Force whose role is to advice the Vice-Chancellor and USM on short and long-tem decisions when the need arises by considering the various aspects of combined expertise to monitor the current haze conditions.

The second task force was the Special Task Force which scrutinised the preparations of detailed administrative guidelines in deciding for cancellation or postponement of lectures or other academic concerns while the Academic Task Force looked into matters in relation to academic activities and making observations and suggestions related to lectures and tutorials, including the process of replacing lectures and tutorials, semester holidays and examination process, to ensure students are not affected by the situation.

“We will take the necessary steps in dealing with this problem from time to time and assist the lecturers to have extra classes, including those at night when the conditions are suitable; to have a series of education on maintaining health during the haze by experts especially with the assistance of the USM Student Representatives’ Council as well as other measures which are deemed necessary based on the health needs of the whole USM community whether they are students, academicians, administrators and the support staff,” said Omar.

The Vice-Chancellor of USM has requested for all those concerned for their fullest commitment in facing the current situation and to put their best effort in dealing with it, including by wearing the specified anti-pollution mask provided for free to the students of USM.

Meanwhile, the Director of Pusat Sejahtera (Health and Dental) USM Dr. Normala Abdul Wahid also reminded the USM community to care for their health in facing the current situation.

“With the current API/IPU readings indicating a very unhealthy air quality, they are advised to obtain the necessary treatment, ensuring there is sufficient supply of medicine, drink enough water especially fruit juices to prevent dehydration and to use the prescribed anti-pollution mask, not to mention to remain indoors or in a vehicle with air-conditioning and to avoid open-air areas,” said Normala.

Pusat Sejahtera USM which also has a USM Haze Operations Room, operates from 8.30 am until 7.00 pm, similarly at the Bertam Campus and Engineering Campus.

The USM community is also advised to continuously keep up with the latest developments through the Pusat Sejahtera USM website, the USM website (www.usm.my (<http://www.usm.my/>)) and the official social media of USM (facebook: Universiti Sains Malaysia Official).

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