



MEDIA RELEASE

**YB DATUK SERI DR HAJI WAN JUNAIDI BIN TUANKU JAAFAR
MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT**

**NO IMPACT OF MOUNT SINABUNG VOLCANIC ERUPTION
ON AIR QUALITY IN MALAYSIA**

21 FEBRUARY 2018

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) has taken note of several allegations and rumours that the Mount Sinabung eruptions since 19th February 2018 in Sumatra, Indonesia have affected the air quality in Malaysia and have also brought the flu virus into the country.

The Ministry has been monitoring the air quality data through the Department of Environment (DOE) since 19 February 2018 to date and we are pleased to announce that the air quality level has been ranging from good to moderate most of the time. The Air Pollutant Index (API) readings can be referred to at <http://apims.doe.gov.my/>. There has thus been **absolutely nothing to substantiate the rumours and allegations that the Sinabung volcanic eruption has caused the deterioration of air quality in this country.**

According to data dated 19th February 2018 (Monday) at 1700 GMT (1 am) from the Malaysian Meteorological Department (MET), the volcanic ash was at an altitude of 10,000 feet and it moved eastwards. Based on the air trajectory and dispersion or deposition of atmospheric pollutants,

the MET has been running analyses using the Hybrid Single Particle Lagrangian Integrated Trajectory Model (HYSPLIT) which is a computer model that is used to compute air parcel trajectories and dispersion or deposition of atmospheric pollutants. The HYSPLIT modelling shows that the volcanic ashes from the eruption of the volcano will move northwestward from Mount Sinabung in Sumatra. It is as depicted in the attached figure for the days of the 21st, 22nd and 23rd of February 2018.

The latest report from the Volcanic Ash Advisory Centre (VAAC) in Darwin states that there are no indications of an ongoing or a new eruption either. Since Malaysia is still in the Northeasterly monsoon with northeasterly winds predominantly blowing towards Sumatra, it is unlikely that the volcanic ashes will reach Malaysia.

The allegations that volcanic ashes caused the spread of flu here is mischievous and wholly unfounded. The Ministry of Health has confirmed that the flu is caused by the influenza virus and the virus cannot survive in hot volcanic lava and ash. The uncertain weather conditions prevailing in Malaysia right now have been causing many of our fellow countrymen to fall sick and this has been the situation even before the eruption of the volcano.

The Ministry would therefore like to categorically state that **the eruption of Mount Sinabung in Indonesia has not and will not affect the air quality in Malaysia nor has it brought any sort of viruses to our shores.** We would therefore like to advise all Malaysians to take the necessary precautions such as drinking more water during this dry spell, exercising, taking supplements and getting the required rest in order to stave off the flu that is making the rounds of our shores. Malaysians can

also rest easy that we will not be affected in any way, shape or form by the eruption of the volcano across the Straits of Malacca either.

Thank you.

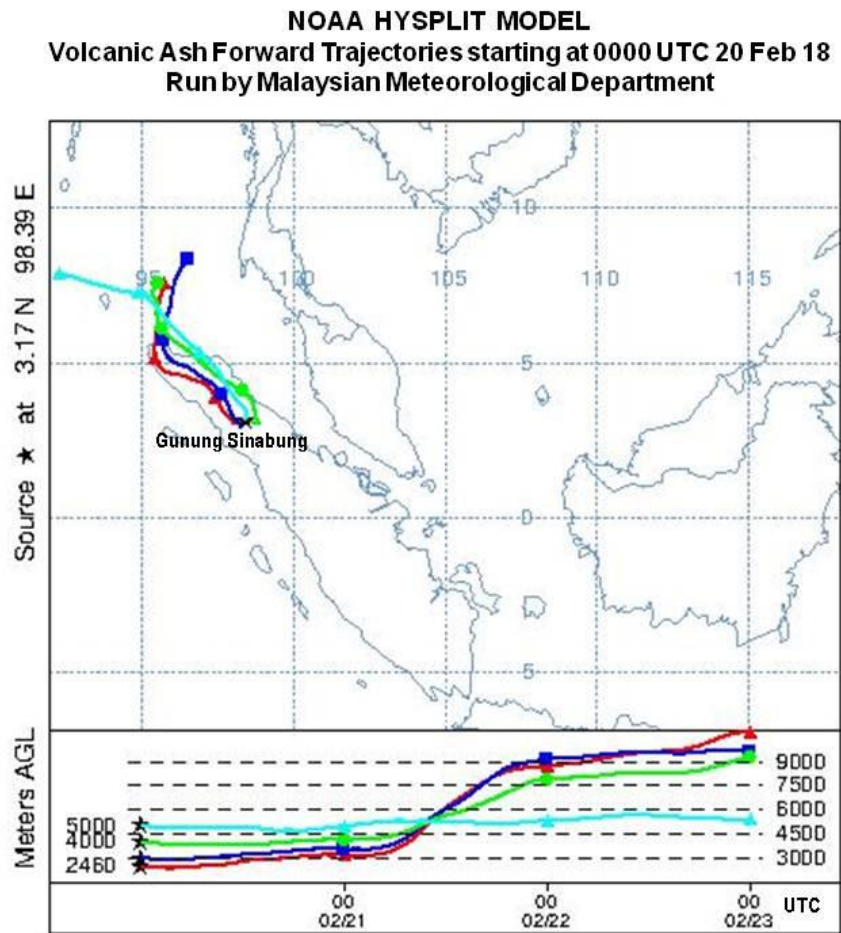


Figure: Volcanic ash forward trajectory HYSPLIT model
Source: Malaysian Meteorological Department, Malaysia