

## **Riau sets up four fire-free areas**

The Riau provincial administration has dedicated four areas in Pelalawan regency, namely Teluk Binjai, Sering, Pulau Muda and Teluk Meranti villages, as areas free from forest and peatland fires.

Pelalawan Regent H.M. Harris said the idea of creating fire-free villages emerged during a series of discussions involving 34 companies operating in the regency, to seek a permanent solution to stop forest and peatland fires in the area.

“The declaration of the four villages is a new step toward erasing the stigma attached to Pelalawan regency,” said Harris at the signing of the memorandum of understanding on the fire-free villages between the Pelalawan regency administration and PT Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper (RAPP) in Pangkalan Kerinci on Monday.

“I’m often ashamed when attending national-level meetings. When we say we are from Pelalawan, people immediately refer us as a haze contributor. Although they are only jesting, I still feel bad and am determined to seek a solution,” he added.

According to him, the main point of the declaration was to raise awareness for fire prevention.

The Pelalawan regency administration is also working with companies to provide awards and motivate residents.

“The awards are usually in the form of certificates. This time a recipient can get Rp 100 million [US\$8,700] if he or she can meet the set target in three months,” said Harris.