

DAP: Palanivel sleeping on the job as Muar chokes

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Muar's haze situation has deteriorated again after getting a breather yesterday, today hitting 373 at 11am's Air Pollutant Index (API) reading after opening the day at 276.

On Thursday Muar (below) and Pasir Gudang were struck with levels of the smog in the 'dangerous' bracket (readings about 301) causing schools to close.

NONEThe haze has been blamed on forest fires in hotspots in Sumatra, brought in by the south-west monsoon winds.

Yesterday, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng said the party supports new laws to impose sanctions against local Malaysian and foreign companies that contribute to the haze.

In a statement this morning, Sime Darby Plantation declared that their operations in Indonesia were not involved in any fires.

"(We) would like to stress that there are no fires in any of our operating areas in Indonesia.

"The company strictly follows its zero burning policy throughout its operations.

"Current reports of hot spots in Riau included an area within PT Tunggal Mitra Plantation's (PT TMP) concession area," said Sime Darby Berhad's Group Communications & Corporate Affairs department.

Overall, the national readings show that only six percent of the country is experiencing good air quality, with 74 percent experiencing moderate haze, and 19 percent reading 'very unhealthy' levels.

'Palanivel sleeping'

Meanwhile Gelang Patah MP Lim Kit Siang slammed Environment Minister G Palanivel for "sleeping on his job when Malaysians particularly in Johore are suffering from haze hazards".

NONELim in a statement today lamented the slow response time from the DOE in

posting the API readings, in contrast to its Singapore counterpart's hourly updates.

"I am both impressed and dejected - impressed by the professionalism of the Singapore National Environment Agency (NEA) ... dejected by the contrasting failure and lack of professionalism of the DOE to provide prompt readings on its website..." said Lim.

He said while he understood the DOE had to work with 52 monitoring stations, he noted that the 11am readings were apparently only published at 1pm.

Lim said getting timely updates was important, as in Muar for example the situation today deteriorated to dangerous levels in just four hours.

He added that the ministry could have stepped up its efforts to increase the monitoring stations, in light of the severity of the haze situation this week.

"It is regrettable that despite the haze emergency in Johor, the DOE has failed to set up more APIM locations in the state to monitor the air pollution readings - such as Kulai, Pontian, Batu Pahat, Kluang, Segamat etc.

"This is another example of Pananivel sleeping on his job as environment minister," said the DAP veteran leader.

DOE: Improved situation today

Earlier, Bernama reported an overall improvement in the API reading throughout the country at 7am today, with Bukit Rambai, Kota Tinggi and Port Dickson being excluded from the 'very unhealthy' category.

According to the Department of Environment (DOE) website, Bukit Rambai in Malacca which had earlier recorded a very unhealthy API level of 257, recorded a reading of 189, which is still within the unhealthy level.

NONEThe API reading in Kota Tinggi, Johor dropped from 226 to 191 while Port Dickson, in Negri Sembilan, recorded an API of 156 compared to 205 previously.

However, the situation in Muar and Pasir Gudang showed little change this morning with the level remaining within the unhealthy range, where the API in Muar rose slightly from 273 to 276 and in Pasir Gudang, the API reading went up from 189 to 192.

Nine areas recorded unhealthy API readings, 38 areas reported moderate levels

while three areas reported good reading.

An API reading of between 0 and 50 is categorised as 'good', 51 to 100 (moderate), 101 to 200 (unhealthy), 201 to 300 (very unhealthy) while a reading of 300 and above is categorised as very dangerous.

The Malaysian Meteorological Services Department did not forecast any rain today in the three states affected by the haze, namely Malacca, Johor and Negri Sembilan.

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