

## **Haze In Southern Thai Worsens**

**Bernama**

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**By Minggu Simon Lhasa**

HAT YAI, Oct 22 (Bernama) -- The haze in the southern Thailand provinces today has been the worst so far, with people wearing masks everywhere as the Air Pollutant Index (API) hit a 'very unhealthy' level of 373.

"It feels like the air is full of smoke. Actually, we have been facing this serious situation for three days now, but I think today is the worst so far," Kesarin Sirigun, a 30-year-old office worker in Hat Yai, told Bernama.

"When we look at the sun, it's like we're looking at the moon as the sun is so red because of the haze. Visibility is also very poor, for instance, I could not see clearly the tall buildings more than 500 metres away," she said.

Hat Yai, a district in Songkha province is enveloped by smoky air from Indonesia, and it had exceeded the safe level of 120 microgrammes per cubic metre of air, according to the Pollution Control Department this afternoon.

Other provinces hit by unhealthy air quality levels are Surat Thani, with an API reading of 187 and Satun at 276.

The other southern provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat are also affected by the haze, at unhealthy levels of 211, 169 and 125, respectively.

The provinces of Phang Nga and Phuket recorded moderate air quality, with the API readings at 87 and 110 respectively, according to the Pollution Control Department.

To lessen the effects of the haze, the Thai authorities are trying to make artificial rain in Songkhla province.

Southern Thailand is predicted to be enveloped by haze for two or three more days if there is no rain.

Seven flights from Bangkok were delayed for one and a half hours to two hours and rescheduled to a number of airports in southern Thailand early this morning.

The Department of Environment director in Songkhla, Halem Chemarican, said the worsening haze would pose a health risk to the residents, especially children, the elderly and those with respiratory problems.

Bernama observed that the haze had changed the daily lives of Hai Yat residents as the Jiranakorn Sports Arena was quiet this morning unlike previously, where it was always full of people doing their daily exercise.

The school authorities, meanwhile, have advised parents and guardians to ensure that the children wear face masks to school or when outdoors to protect themselves against the haze.

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