

Thai government pledges action as Bangkok pollution spikes

October 20 2023



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Thai officials on Friday promised action to address a spike in air pollution that came before the normal peak of seasonal haze, but environmental activists accused authorities of hot air.

Bangkok ranked as the world's 10th most polluted city on Friday, according to the air quality monitoring firm IQAir.

Government officials said the sudden spike was largely due to [atmospheric conditions](#), with fine particulate accumulating due to colder air, high air pressure and dry weather.

The jump in PM2.5—particles that are so fine they can enter the bloodstream—prompted the government to warn vulnerable groups.

"Air quality and safety... is an important priority," a government statement insisted.

Officials promised to "ramp up PM2.5 [prevention methods](#), such as limiting the area where people can burn crops, setting up regulations between the public and private sectors, increasing monitoring spots, and negotiating with relevant sectors about the transnational pollution."

However, environmental groups accused the government of ignoring a key contributor to the problem: industry.

"We have to put the band-aid where the wound is," Alliya Moun-ob, [air pollution](#) campaigner for Greenpeace Thailand, told AFP.

"Several [research papers](#) show [industrial activity](#) causes a large percentage of PM 2.5, but we have little data about it."

Thailand's government says the industrial sector accounts for just four percent of the suffocating haze that regularly blankets parts of the country during the cooler winter months.

It instead blames factors like seasonal burning by farmers, including in neighbouring countries.

But the recent spike in pollution, even before the peak of the burning season, shows the industrial sector's impact is likely much higher, said

Panchom Saetang, the director of Ecological Alert and Recovery-Thailand.

She has researched air quality issues for over a decade and believes industry contributes closer to a third of the particulate that causes haze in the capital.

"I appreciate the government is trying to fix the PM 2.5 problem, but what they should do is to look at the [industrial sector](#) seriously," she said.

Environmentalists are lobbying for the implementation of a law that would force factories to release emissions data.

"We still don't have enough data to know what the real cause is. The data is inaccessible," Panchom said.

The government is "only focusing on farmers' activities."

Alliya said the spike in pollution so early in the season should be a wake-up call about the need to tackle the issue transparently.

"It's the start of the PM 2.5 season, we have to properly tackle this by identifying the root cause of the problem," she said.

Thai cities, including Chiang Mai in the north, have regularly topped global rankings for poor air quality this year.

And over two million people sought medical treatment this year for problems linked to poor air quality, the country's health ministry said.

© 2023 AFP

Citation: Thai government pledges action as Bangkok pollution spikes (2023, October 20)

retrieved 30 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2023-10-thai-pledges-action-bangkok-pollution.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.