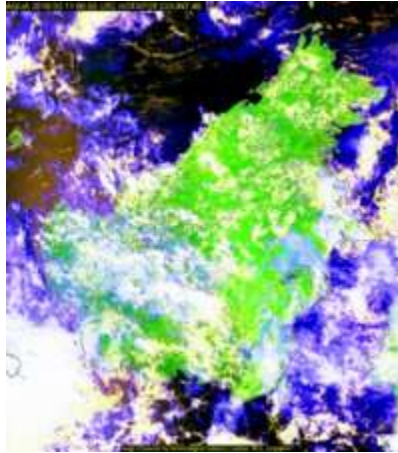


Authorities issue open burning warning



Satellite image spotted 46 hot spots on Borneo. Picture:
Meteorological Services Division, NEA, Singapore

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BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

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THE Department of Environment, Parks and Recreation (DEPR) at the Ministry of Development, along with other relevant authorities, are stepping up their patrols to counter open burning, which is being rated as the number one cause of forest and bush fires in the country for the past month.

The move comes in conjunction with a DEPR statement issued yesterday, warning that any person found conducting any open burning activities may be fined up to \$100,000. The stiff penalty was introduced following a ban on open burning brought into effect on August 4, 2009.

Under the Chapter 22 Penal Code Section 277A, open burning activities causing pollution to the atmosphere or endangering human life or property will be given an unlimited amount of fine and/or imprisonment of up to five years, the statement said.

Brunei is currently experiencing a dry weather period with slightly hazy conditions, a factor exacerbated by a total of 46 "hotspots" on Borneo being detected by satellite imagery captured by the Asean Specialised Meteorological Centre on Thursday.

The hotspots are mostly scattered in the northern and eastern parts of Borneo near Sabah, Sarawak and East Kalimantan.

The Pollutant Standard Index (PSI) readings of the air quality in Brunei as of yesterday have been higher than normal.

The Belait District had the highest PSI reading in the country with a rating of 36. The reading for Brunei-Muara was 35, Tutong 31 and Temburong 26.

The DEPR assured that the air quality in Brunei was still generally "good" as any PSI readings below 50 were still considered "good", while those between 50 and 100 are considered "moderate".

The department is encouraging the public to call their hotlines (8999900, 8837751, 8837741) at any time to file complaints or to report any open burning activities discovered. For information on air quality, contact the department at 2383222 ext 514. The PSI readings can be obtained online at www.env.gov.bn.

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