

Hot spots from forest fires in Indonesia fell 32.6 % in 2017

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Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Published by: CHANNEL NEWSASIA

JAKARTA: Forest fires in Indonesia have been under control this year. The peak of the dry season in September has passed without any major increase in the number of hot spots, according to statistics by Indonesia's National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) released on Wednesday (Oct 25).

A total of 2,400 hot spots were detected so far this year, compared to 3,563 during the same period in 2016, according to records made by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) satellite. That's a 32.6 per cent drop in hot spots.

"This is thanks to the alertness and synergy of various parties, anticipating the occurrence of forest fires ... the number of hot spots and the extent of forest fires have been curbed," said BNPB's spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho in a statement.

Dr Sutopo added that this year, the air pollution index has been between the normal and healthy range, visibility has been normal and the community has been able to carry on with their daily activities without any major disruptions.

In addition, none of the airports had to be closed because of the haze.

Based on satellite analysis by the Environment and Forestry Ministry, the extent of forest fires have also been reduced.

In 2017, a total of 124,983 hectares of land were destroyed by fires, which is less than the 438,360 hectares recorded in 2016.

About 2.61 million hectares of land were destroyed during the catastrophic forest fires in 2015. It caused thick haze which blanketed parts of Indonesia and its neighbours, and the pollution cost Indonesia more than US\$16 billion in economic losses.

BNPB added that learning from the 2015 incident, local governments have been quick in declaring an emergency alert status so that they can get resources and funding from the central government to carry out anticipatory measures.

Forest fire mitigation efforts continue in Indonesia as the emergency alert status in most districts ends in November.

Source: CNA/am

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