

Indonesia Claims Success in Reducing Fire Hotspots

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Jakarta. The National Disaster Mitigation Agency, or BNPB, said Indonesia has managed to reduce the number of fire hotspots in the country this year by more than 30 percent, with the peak of the dry season having already passed. The overall number of land and forest fires has also declined.

Air pollution index in the country stays at normal to healthy. Visibility is normal and no flights have been canceled due to air pollution, BNPB Head Sutopo Nugroho said.

"In 2016, the number of fire hotspots according to the NOAA [US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] was 3,568. In 2017 so far, there have been 2,400," he said.

The number of land and forest fires was also down almost 47 percent to 1,927 spots in 2017 according to Terra-Aqua satellite surveillance, Sutopo said.

Only 124,983 hectares of land and forest were affected by fire this year compared to 438,360 hectares in 2016 and 2.61 million hectares in 2015.

"In previous years, the areas affected by fire are mostly in Sumatra and Kalimantan. In 2017, fires are found in East Nusa Tenggara, West Nusa Tenggara and Papua," Sutopo said.

A shorter than usual dry season, which had already peaked in September, is responsible for the low number of fire hotspots this year.

The BNPB has also conducted more fire prevention efforts this year, including establishing 300 monitoring posts for 1,203 fire-prone areas, improving coordination between communities and officials — including the police and the military, and deploying 26 helicopters and three airplanes for water bombing, Sutopo said.

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