

SINGAPORE'S OFFER OF HAZE ASSISTANCE PACKAGES TO INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA

Singapore has offered assistance to Indonesia and Malaysia to combat possible land and forest fires in the run-up to the traditional dry season, to prevent another episode of severe transboundary haze from affecting the region.

2 Transboundary smoke haze from land and forest fires during the traditional dry season from June to October has been a perennial problem in the southern ASEAN region in the past decades. Illegal land clearing and 'slash and burn' agricultural practices in Indonesia, particularly Sumatra and Kalimantan, have been identified as the main cause of the fire that results in transboundary haze pollution in the region. Singapore saw its worst haze episode in 2013 when the 24-hour Pollutant Standards Index (PSI) hit an unprecedented high of 246 on 20 June 2013, far exceeding the levels in 1997 (138) and 2006 (128). Given that there is a possibility of the El Nino weather phenomenon affecting our region this year, smoke haze pollution in the region could reach worse levels this year if fires are not promptly stemmed at source.

Assistance to Indonesia

3 In past years, Singapore has consistently offered assistance packages to Indonesia to help suppress fires. In the run up to the upcoming dry season, the Singapore Government has offered the Indonesian Government assistance to help combat possible land and forest fires. We hope this will help to prevent another episode of severe haze in the region.

4 The assistance package offered by Singapore this year is same as that offered in previous years, and comprises:

- (i) One C-130 aircraft for cloud seeding operations;
- (ii) Up to two C-130 aircraft to ferry fire-fighting assistance teams from Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF);
- (iii) A team from SCDF to provide assessment and planning assistance to our Indonesian counterparts in their fire-fighting efforts; and
- (iv) High-resolution satellite pictures and hotspot coordinates.

Assistance to Malaysia

5 Earlier this year, Singapore was also affected by haze from Peninsular Malaysia. In March 2014, the 24-hour PSI entered the Moderate range and reached high of 75 on 12 March 2014. The Singapore Government has also offered assistance to the Malaysian Government to help combat land and forest fires should such a need arise.

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