

WEATHER: Jakarta can solve the haze problem in the spirit of Asean cooperation, writes Professor Dr J. Shamshuddin

THE haze is making a comeback to wreak havoc among the public in the south of Peninsular Malaysia. Singaporean newspapers on Saturday reported that the air pollutant index (API) in the republic had reached an unprecedented unhealthy level.

The worst is yet to come as there is usually less rainfall in September.

What has gone wrong with the transboundary agreement with Indonesia on controlling forest fires in Sumatra?

I guess this is for the Malaysian government to deal with but Indonesia has to walk the talk.

Haze is related to open burning which, in turn, results in the emission of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, making it hotter.

We have more than 400 parts per million of the gas in the atmosphere, almost double the amount before the Industrial Revolution.

The worldwide increase in the temperature on Earth's surface is about 2°C, which helps accelerate global warming.

In geological term, we have global cooling (glacial age) and global warming (interglacial) throughout the history of the earth.

Thus, global warming is a natural phenomenon, occurring intermittently for a certain period. However, human activities hasten the process.

The late Professor Emeritus Tjia Hong Tjin of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, a Malaysian geologist, had



Kuala Lumpur shrouded in haze on Monday. Pic by Hafiz Sohaimi

said in a seminar that the last main glacial age occurred 20,000 years ago.

Due to dubious reasons, Earth's temperature increased, and melting ice in the polar region resulted in a global rise of sea levels, which were felt in Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia.

According to geological and soil records, certain parts of Malaysia about 4,300 years ago had the highest sea level of 3 to 5m above the present level.

As a recent study states, the overall rise in sea level due to current temperature increases have reached the critical level of close to 1m.

I cannot imagine what our lives would be like if there is a further increase in temperatures globally.

The present temperature increase in Southeast Asia is partly related to open burning, especially in Sumatra and Kalimantan, Indonesia.

This is of concern to Malaysia and Singapore, which receive the brunt of the haze.

Sea level rise of another meter can flood lowlands in Southeast Asia. Not only that, global warming deteriorates weather patterns throughout the year.

Nowadays, we experience stronger typhoons, more violent storms and heavier rainfall than before, and serious flooding is common during the monsoon months of November to January.

The most affected countries are the Philippines and China, not to mention Taiwan and Japan.

Can Malaysia escape this wrath of nature?

If what the natural resource and environment minister had said in Parliament was anything to go by, we will not be spared.

According to a prediction made by a government agency, in some

coastal areas of Malaysia, the sea level could rise as much as 0.5 to 1m.

The minister said about 18 per cent of Malaysia would be flooded due to a rise in sea level in 2100. What does this mean to those living near the sea? Your guess is as good as mine.

As for the haze, we have to get Indonesia to get its act together to solve the problem in the spirit of Asean cooperation.

The burning of peat forests in its backyard has to be stopped immediately.

It is time to send a message to our neighbour that its inability to stop peat burning is hurting not only Malaysians and Singaporeans, but also Indonesians.

A good neighbourly atmosphere must be upheld at all time.

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