



กรมควบคุมมลพิษ  
POLLUTION CONTROL DEPARTMENT

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## POLLUTION

# PM eyes rain 'relief' from dust menace

### POST REPORTERS

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has assured Bangkok residents the government is trying to offset harmful dust levels over the city by calling on the help of artificial rain.

Bangkokians have been suffering as a result of ultra-fine dust since early this month when the Pollution Control Department issued warnings that levels had soared to 94 microgrammes per cubic metre of air in some areas, way above the safety limit of 50 µcg.

"I don't want people to panick," Gen Prayut said yesterday, adding it is not only Thailand that faces the problem because other countries are also struggling to deal with it.

One immediate measure the government is carrying out is using artificial rain to bring down dust levels, he said.

That should bring some relief at least in the short term, the prime minister said.

The Department of Royal Rainmaking

and Agriculture Aviation started studying weather conditions to make artificial rain early this week, but such factors as humidity and cloud do not help, department chief Surasi Kittimonthon said.

The latest inspection was conducted yesterday morning when a plane flew over areas in Nakhon Nayok's Ongkharak district, northeast of Bangkok. Officials plan to make rain there and let winds carry rain clouds over the capital.

However, humidity was below 60% and cloud conditions were unsatisfactory. "The cool weather also added to air pressure, which causes problems," Mr Surasi said.

The department will continue to check the weather every day and will make rain as soon as possible, he said.

Haze warnings in Bangkok are rare when compared with the number of warnings in the northern region where field burning and bushfires are often reported. But alarm bells ring in the city during cool periods.

Fumes from vehicles on crowded streets and construction sites and factories in provinces adjacent to Bangkok are also believed to cause clouds of smog that contain dust known as particulate matter (PM2.5).

Its size of less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter allows it to easily enter the lungs if people have no adequate protection.

It is a good idea to wear face masks, the city's Health Department chief Chawin Sirinak recommended.

His department also suggested people avoid doing exercise in areas where high levels of dust are reported.