



กรมควบคุมมลพิษ  
POLLUTION CONTROL DEPARTMENT

ข่าวสิ่งแวดล้อม ประจำ วันพฤหัสบดีที่ 15 กุมภาพันธ์ พ.ศ. 2561

หนังสือพิมพ์ The Nation ปีที่ 42 ฉบับที่ 55410 หน้า 1A

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# Traffic blamed for air quality

AUTHORITIES PLAN TO CHANGE FUEL AND  
LAUNCH THE ODD-EVEN SCHEME BY 2029

**PRATCH RUJIVANAROM**  
THE NATION

THAI AUTHORITIES blamed heavy traffic for the severe air pollution, which has touched levels unsafe for people in the capital, while they vowed to kick off long-term measures to tackle the problem.

Among the measures being considered are a change of car fuel in 2023 and odd-even rationing in 2029.

At a press conference on the problem of dangerous particulate matter smaller than 2.5 microns (PM2.5) in Bangkok, held by the Public Health Ministry, the Pollution Control Department (PCD), and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) yesterday, it was reported that there were still no signs of a sharp rise in respiratory diseases or air pollution-related deaths in Bangkok. The authorities, however, have come out with a long-term plan to monitor and control the problem.

According to air pollution reports from both the PCD and an international air-quality monitoring website, people in Bangkok continued to suffer from unsafe PM2.5 levels due to the cold weather in the capital this week that was conducive for air pollution, and too arid to create artificial rains.

Bangkok's hourly real-time Air

Quality Index (AQI), which is based on the United States Environmental Protection Agency standard, reported on aqicn.org that the PM2.5 level in Bangkok had reached 165 as of yesterday evening, which was unhealthy for everyone, especially vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and sick people.

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment permanent secretary Wijarn Simachaya revealed that air pollution in Bangkok was mainly caused by cars and the transportation sector. Auto registration data showed that there were up to 9.778 million vehicles on Bangkok's roads.

As PM2.5 level at every air-quality monitoring station in Bangkok was considered unsafe since January, according to PCD records disclosed by Wijarn, he said the authorities have a plan to switch from Euro IV standard petrol to Euro V standard in 2023, which has a lower level of sulphur and is hence more environmentally friendly. He said the average PM2.5 records in Bangkok from 2016-18 were well above levels considered safe.

"The reason we have to wait that long to implement the fuel switching is because we have to provide enough time for the industrial sector to adapt to the new policy, but if the air pollution problem is still at a critical level, we will discuss again whether this

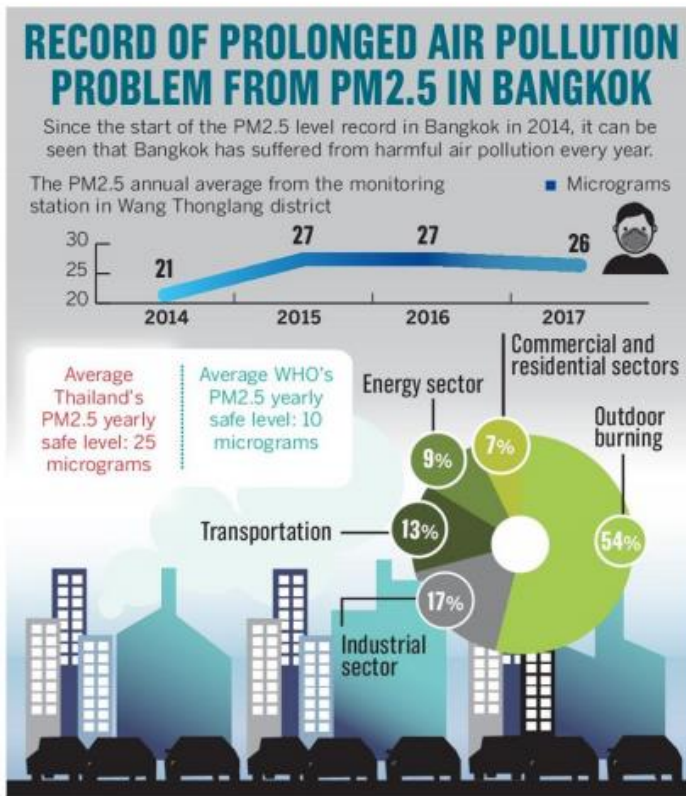


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measure can be implemented sooner," he said.

BMA deputy permanent secretary Suwanna Junggruengstated that as there were nearly 10 million cars

in Bangkok, four times higher than Bangkok's road capacity, and some 500,000 new cars were registered every year, the city not only has a severe traffic problem but also the

high traffic volume emitted a large amount of PM2.5 into the air.

"Since Bangkok's public transport system will be completed within the next 11 years, the BMA may come out with the odd-even road rationing similar to other major cities like Paris, which can cut air pollution in the city by half," Suwanna said.

Explaining the air pollution in Bangkok, Kamon Phromsakha, a representative from the Meteorological Department, said in recent weeks the air mass had ensured the pollution in the city did not rise beyond three kilometres from the ground, hence the pollution could not drift away.

The department warned that the cold air from the high-pressure area in the North of Thailand, which aggravated air pollution in Bangkok, would last at least until this Saturday.

The cold snap also disrupted the short-term air-pollution relief measure of making artificial rains to wash away PM2.5 from the air. Central Region Royal Rainmaking Operation Centre's Rattakorn Warunsukhasiri revealed that the rainmaking operation, which began on Monday, failed due to the unfavourable weather condition.

"The cold air from the North has been stronger this week, reducing moisture in the air to only 30 to 40 per cent and it is impossible to make rain in such weather conditions," Rattakorn said.

"We have to wait until next week until the cold snap weakens before we can try a rainmaking mission again."