

Hot spots up in Riau, but 'still under control'

The number of hot spots in Riau reportedly increased by almost fifty percent, from 39 on Monday to 75 on Tuesday.

Despite having forced the closure of Pinang Kampai Airport in Dumai, the haze from burning forests was not categorized as hazardous, according to forest fire control center head Mambang Mit.

"The hot spots tend to increase but the extensity is still within our control. Otherwise, we would call for central government aid," he said.

While people's slash-and-burn land clearing is to blame for the fires, hot spots can also be found at company-owned concessions.

Mambang said the local administration had asked the Forestry Ministry to review concession permits for companies that were found to resort to burning to expand their operational areas.

"Harsh penalties must be imposed against illicit companies in order to provide a deterrent effect," he said.

Meanwhile, the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) announced that the increasing number of hot spots had been spurred by extremely hot weather, which reached up to a record 35 degrees Celsius. — JP