



PRESS Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Pollution Control Department

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Patcharawat visited the area to supervise, follow up, prepare, and mobilize all forces to deal with forest fires and transboundary haze pollution in the northern region in advance, emphasizing all agencies to operate with "accuracy, speed, timeliness, and efficiency."

On November 8, 2023, Pol. Gen. Patcharawat Wongsuwan, Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment: MONRE), visited Chiang Mai Province to inspect, provide policy, and follow up on preparations for dealing with forest fires, transboundary haze pollution, and particle pollution. He ordered relevant agencies, including central agencies, regional agencies, local agencies, private sector, civil society, and 17 provincial governors, to expedite the implementation of measures to reduce PM_{2.5} throughout the system to achieve concrete results. He emphasized all agencies to operate with “accuracy, speed, timeliness, and efficiency”.

Pol. Gen. Patcharawat said that in 2023, the amount of PM_{2.5} and hot spots were higher than last year, and it is expected that the El Niño phenomenon will make the forest fires, transboundary haze pollution, and particle pollution more severe in 2024. The government was concerned about the impact of this situation on the people. Therefore, the government has set up a committee to manage air pollution problems for sustainability with the Deputy Prime Minister (Pol. Gen. Patcharawat Wongsuwan) and the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment as chairman, Mr. Kittirat Na Ranong, the Prime Minister's Advisory Chairman, as the first vice-chairman, and the Minister of Interior as the second vice-chairman. Moreover, the government has hastened to establish area operations centers to prevent and solve the problems of forest fires, open burning, transboundary haze pollution, and PM_{2.5}.

MONRE has prepared in advance to deal with the situation and mobilized cooperation from relevant agencies, including central agencies, regional agencies, local agencies, private sector, civil society, and 17 provincial governors, to implement measures to prevent and reduce PM_{2.5} to deal with the situation of PM_{2.5} promptly, which is expected to be severe.

Pol. Gen. Patcharawat said that the guidelines for operations emphasized communication at all levels of the government sector, especially operators who must understand the guidelines to control and reduce burning in agricultural areas and repeated burning. As for forest areas, the focus is on protected forests and national reserved forests where there is a severe forest fire situation, especially in the 17 northern provinces. Forest fire prevention measures focus on measures to “fix areas by having surveillance points for high-risk areas of forest fires in every forest area, organize the collection of forest products by allowing only people in the area who have registered individually in the area, and close forests only in high-risk areas.” Before the forest fire season, fuel is managed promptly and watchpoints are set up to distribute personnel to watch the forest, especially in protected forest areas. There must be checkpoints and deterrent points to prevent illegal forest burning. During the forest fire season, there must be 1) incident commanders at the local level, 2) personnel, and 3) tools ready to extinguish forest fires so that personnel can be switched to help extinguish forest fires promptly through the war room at the area level. In addition, forest fire extinguishing network villages (Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Volunteer: DNP Volunteer) are brought in to join in extinguishing forest fires. The goal is to reduce the area burned by 50% from 2023.

In addition, one of the causes of PM_{2.5} levels reaching critical levels is transboundary haze pollution. Pol. Gen. Patcharawat ordered MONRE, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Commerce to coordinate and negotiate for cooperation from neighboring countries at both the ASEAN and multilateral levels to prevent and solve the problem of transboundary haze pollution. Thorough and timely notification of the PM_{2.5} situation is necessary to provide the public with timely and accurate information.

Pol. Gen. Patcharawat inspected the readiness of all operational units and thanked and encouraged the personnel and networks in all sectors for working together to solve the problems of forest fires and PM_{2.5}, which the government has set as a national agenda. He also expressed his admiration for all the sacrifices of heart and soul for the country and the people, emphasizing that the government was ready to fully support the mission to prevent and solve the problems of forest fires and PM_{2.5}.