

# Haze at record levels in Singapore

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Picture: CreativeCommons



via davidwjford on Flickr.com

Pollution levels in Singapore caused by forest fires in Indonesia are continuing to reach new record highs. The Pollutant Standards Index (PSI) hit 401 on Friday, the highest ever

recorded in Singapore. The previous high was in 1997 when the PSI reached 226. A PSI of 150 is deemed to be "unhealthy", while anything above 300 is defined as "hazardous". Singapore's government said a reading above 400 sustained for 24 hours "may be life-threatening to ill and elderly persons". It has advised all of its citizens to stay indoors and to wear face masks if they have to go outside. Authorities will distribute one million masks free to the poorest 200,000 households starting from Sunday.

The haze has strained relations between Singapore and Indonesia over who is responsible for the choking smog. Singapore has accused Indonesia of recklessness and irresponsibility in letting fires get so out of control. Indonesia responded by calling Singapore hypocritical, as many of its companies own plantations where fires are being set to clear forests for cultivation. Indonesia's Foreign Ministry would not apologise for the haze crisis, but insisted that everything was being done to tackle the problem. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said "all the country's resources" would be mobilised to extinguish the fires. Singapore's Prime Minister warned that the haze could last until the end of the dry season in October.

Sources: BBC / Straits Times

## Writing

*Countries need to put the environment ahead of profits and start being serious about tackling pollution. Discuss.*

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*pollution / forest fires / record highs / hazardous / life-threatening / face masks / strained relations / choking smog / recklessness / hypocritical / cultivation / dry season*

## True / False

- Fires in Singapore have resulted in record levels of pollution. T / F
- Pollution levels are over twice those considered to be unhealthy. T / F
- Singapore's government has told people to wear face masks indoors. T / F
- Singapore's government will soon hand out 200,000 face masks. T / F
- Singapore has shared blame for the fires with Indonesia. T / F
- Indonesia said Singapore was being hypocritical. T / F
- Indonesia said it would not say sorry to Singapore for the fires. T / F
- The pollution could be a problem until October. T / F

## Synonym Match

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. previous     | a. put out      |
| 2. deemed       | b. carelessness |
| 3. sustained    | c. hand out     |
| 4. citizens     | d. prior        |
| 5. distribute   | e. considered   |
| 6. strained     | f. insincere    |
| 7. recklessness | g. continued    |
| 8. hypocritical | h. nationals    |
| 9. tackle       | i. awkward      |
| 10. extinguish  | j. deal with    |

## Discussion – Student A

- What do you know about the Singapore haze?
- How would you feel about your city being polluted by another country?
- Who is at fault – Indonesia or Singaporean plantation owners?
- What can Singaporeans do to live normally?
- Could this be the future of the Earth?
- Do governments and big companies really care about ordinary people?
- Would you stay indoors?
- Would you consider moving away from Singapore if you lived there?

## Phrase Match

- |                                       |                              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. continuing to                      | a. defined as "hazardous"    |
| 2. The previous                       | b. to tackle the problem     |
| 3. anything above 300 is              | c. one million masks         |
| 4. It has advised all of its citizens | d. out of control            |
| 5. Authorities will distribute        | e. reach new record highs    |
| 6. strained                           | f. the end of the dry season |
| 7. letting fires get so               | g. relations                 |
| 8. fires are being set to clear       | h. to stay indoors           |
| 9. everything was being done          | i. forests for cultivation   |
| 10. the haze could last until         | j. high was in 1997          |

## Discussion – Student B

- What's the worst pollution you've experienced?
- Should the world ban the produce the forests are being burnt for?
- Why are all governments so incapable of helping people?
- How hypocritical is Singapore?
- What is your answer to this crisis?
- Should Singaporeans get compensation for this?
- What damage will the haze do?
- What questions would you like to ask Singapore's Prime Minister?

## Spelling

- totPnual Standards Index
- the riepsvuo high
- defined as "dzhauraso"
- life-gienthnaert to ill and elderly persons
- Authorities will eudsiribtt one million masks
- the poorest 200,000 ohlhsudoes
- siantdre relations
- Singapore has cecsuad Indonesia
- recklessness and yiinslbrpeoriist
- set to clear forests for lcvonatitui
- iesidtsn that everything was being done
- xigetihns the fires

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. e	3. g	4. h	5. c
6. i	7. b	8. f	9. j	10. a

## Role Play

### Role A – Singapore leader

You are furious with Indonesia for the haze. Tell the others three reasons why. You want the Indonesian government to extinguish all fires immediately. You also want promises that there will be no more fires in the future. You will call for a global ban on Indonesian goods if nothing happens.

### Role B – Indonesian leader

You are very angry with Singapore for overreacting to the haze. Tell the others three reasons why. Many of the plantations that started the fires are owned by Singaporean companies. You are doing your best to limit the haze. Singapore should be more patient and not make threats.

### Role C – Plantation owner

You have no time for the governments of Singapore or Indonesia. Tell the others three reasons why. You have employees with mouths to feed. You must burn the forests or you and your workers will have no money. Tell both leaders that they are hypocrites.

### Role D – Singaporean

You are fed up with your government and Indonesia's leader. Tell the others three reasons why. Ask your leader why he can't guarantee breathable air. Ask Indonesia's leader why he thinks it's OK to let such pollution affect other countries. Ask if they care that people's health is suffering.

## Speaking – Record levels

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the worst at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| • pollution   | • rain         |
| • crime       | • unemployment |
| • traffic     | • influenza    |
| • e-mail spam | • inflation    |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.