

Negri wants waste treatment plant relocated

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SEREMBAN: The state government wants the country's only integrated scheduled waste treatment plant located in Bukit Nanas near here to be relocated after it caught fire for the second time in four years.

State health, environment, cooperatives and consumerism committee chairman S. Veerapan said this was necessary as the Kualiti Alam plant was now located some 500m away from the nearest residential area.

"I will raise this during a meeting with Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Minister (Yeo Bee Yin) next Monday.

"Relocating the plant was also one of the pledges made by the state Pakatan Harapan before the last general election and we need to honour it," he told reporters when met at the plant.

The plant, which can store and treat more than 100,000 tonnes of all classes of hazardous waste at any one time, started operations in 1998 and is the only prescribed premises in the country to provide complete off-site scheduled waste management from the collection, transportation, analyses and treatment to the final disposal.

Veerapan said he rushed to the plant after the state exco meeting upon being told of the fire.

A thick column of black smoke could be seen from a distance away which caused some concern among residents nearby.

"I was told the plant's in-house firefighting teams were unable to put out the blaze and they had to call in firemen from the Seremban 2 station.



Ball of flame: The fire that broke out at the waste treatment plant near Seremban. — Bernama

"This is the second time a fire has broken out here with the first being in 2015," he said.

A state Fire and Rescue Department official said the fire broke out at a yard which was 120m by 120m in size and that 60% of the area was razed.

He said the containers stored at the open yard were filled with a flammable liquid and other flammable stuff.

Veerapan said the authorities had yet to establish the cause of the fire which broke out at about 1pm.

"The Hazmat (hazardous materi-

al) team will investigate the cause of the fire and in the meantime, the Department of Environment will also monitor the air quality in the area," he said, adding that there was no information if there were any victims.

He urged those living nearby to

stay indoors as it could not be immediately established if the smoke from the blaze was hazardous.

"The thick black smoke has spread and the best thing to do is to stay indoors till the authorities officially declare the area safe," he said.

When the fire last broke out in 2015, four warehouses which stored toxic waste were engulfed.

However, the authorities had then given an assurance to the public that there was no threat of toxic fumes having adverse effects on their health.

Then, a state department of environment spokesman had also dismissed postings on social media that the fire resulted in toxic fumes.

Meanwhile, Cenviro Group in a statement said the blaze occurred at its transit storage area and was brought under control at 3.45pm.

"All 258 staff (members) have been accounted for and there were no casualties or injuries," it said.

Kualiti Alam is a subsidiary of Cenviro Group.

The company said they were working closely with relevant agencies to determine the cause of the fire.

"We are also working with the authorities to undertake a detailed inspection of the facility to ensure its safety before it re-opens for operations to safeguard the wellbeing of the surrounding communities," it said.

It said their health, safety and security and environment team would also monitor the air quality of the area.

"From the readings at the site, there has been no detection of any dangerous gases released," it said.