

Penang covered in haze for over a week due to fire in Kedah

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GEORGE TOWN: The smouldering landfill fire at Bedong, Kedah, is still affecting Penang's air quality even though firefighters have been battling the fire for well over a week.

Penang state environment committee chairman Phee Boon Poh said although the surface fire has been brought under control, it later developed into a peat fire, causing haze accompanied by the smell of burning plastic.

"Penang has been covered in haze with burnt smell since Jan 24. This is due to the Semeling dumpsite fire in Bedong that started about 3.30pm on Jan 20," he said in a statement.

Phee said the authorities in Kedah have been working very hard to douse the fire by using helicopters in the water bombing operations.

He said the last Air Pollutant Index reading on Jan 27 was at 189 (PM2.5) in the locality and added that the wind blowing from the

northeast to southwest was affecting the state's air quality.

"We understand that Kedah is facing water and equipment limitation, and so currently, our volunteer firefighting squads have been assisting in their operations by supplying water," he said.

Phee said Penang was monitoring the situation and is ready to mobilise the Seberang Prai City Council crisis management unit to assist Kedah.

On Tuesday, Kedah local government committee chairman Tan Kok

Yew said 60% of the Semeling landfill fire had been put out since it went ablaze.

Tan was reported saying that the fire that broke out on Jan 20 was totally doused by firefighters but subsequently, there were recurring fires that are now being contained by firefighters.

The fire gutted the landfill where thousands of tonnes of plastic waste were said to be buried.

The fire grew from a mere 55sq m to a whopping 12,000sq m the following day, or twice the size of a

football field.

A check on the Department of Environment website showed the API at all four stations hovering at the "moderate" mark yesterday.

The API in Seberang Jaya was 56, Seberang Prai (53), Minden (53) and Balik Pulau (53), while the reading at Sungai Petani at 4pm yesterday was 59.

An API of between 0 and 50 is good, 51 to 100 is moderate, 101 to 200 is unhealthy, 201 to 300 is very unhealthy, and anything at 301 or more is hazardous.