

Plants and animals under haze watch

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PRECAUTIONS: The authorities are taking preventive measures to look after the health of plants and animals

THE worsening haze is not only affecting the health of city folk but is also endangering plants and animals.

A City Hall landscape and recreation department spokesperson said there were signs of dryness on the trees and grass in Perdana Botanical Garden and around the city centre since the haze hit the nation.

"We noticed that some of the trees and grass along the divider of Jalan Mahameru are turning yellow. The plants have difficulty carrying out photosynthesis as the haze particles block their cells and respiratory systems.

"Previously, we only watered the plants once a day but now we have to water the plants more often, including at night," she said.



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The haze can cause **lung damage and eye irritation** in animals. Pic by Mim Fadlilal Rozaiman

No sign of animals falling sick

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She said the deer at the KL Deer Park were also doing fine.

"There is no sign the deer are falling sick but our officers are monitoring them closely. Furthermore, the deer are placed in a more shaded area where there are more trees as their old place is temporarily closed for upgrading," she added.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Faculty of Veterinary Medicine dean Prof Dr Mohd Hair Bejo said the thick haze had serious implications for animals' health.

Hair said the animals could suffer respiratory illnesses if precautionary measures were not taken to protect them.

"The animals' biological systems are almost the same as that of humans. The haze may cause damage to their lungs if they are exposed to the outdoors for too long," he said.

"They can experience eye-irritation, too. Pet owners, dairy farmers and animal keepers are advised to closely monitor their animals and keep them indoors."

Hair said if the animals had lung

infection they had to be quarantined for fear that the disease could be contagious.

Zoo Negara deputy director Dr Muhammad Danial Felix said no cases of acute respiratory problems were detected among the animals so far.

"As a preventive measure, we have included lots of vitamins, especially vitamin C in their daily diet," he said.

"We noticed a change in behaviour as the animals are not as active as before.

"We will monitor the effects of haze on our animals. Currently, the situation is under control," he added.

A recent study by the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) has recorded stunted growth of trees during the haze.

FRIM climate change expert Dr Elizabeth M.P. Philip said: "We have documented in Shah Alam and FRIM a reduction by 20 percent in growth rates when the Air Pollutant Index reached 150. The leaves began to start ageing prematurely."

The haze reduces the sunlight in-



Animals at Zoo Negara have become **less active** since the haze appeared.

tensity which hinders photosynthesis, and this lowers plant productivity by 30 percent.

She also added that studies from

long-term monitoring activities in the forest have shown an increased mortality rate from 1997 to 1998 due to the haze.