ASEAN Food Security Information System

Wildfire Incidents and Intensifying Haze in Myanmar, Thailand, and Lao PDR

Wildfire during March-April, 2026

As mainland Southeast Asia enters the summer season, during late March to April is the hottest period of the year that several hotspots have been detected across Myanmar, Thailand, Lao PDR, and Vietnam. These hotspots indicate the occurrences of wildfires, which have recently increased in frequency and intensity.

Wildfire incidents have been recorded by the Global Disaster Awareness and Coordination System (GDACS) and identified as forest fires by the Global Wildfire Information System (GWIS). Reports indicate that the situation is currently classified at approximately GDACS alert level 1.5 or green level, suggesting that multiple wildfire events have affected areas of at least 5,000 hectares. Most of the affected areas are located within forest and national conservations, with some locations exceeding 10,000 hectares in damage.

Damage and losses

Impact on the affected area

The agency reveals that over 80% of hotspots occur in the national forest zones and forest conservation areas. The Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (GISTDA) recorded 1,488 hotspots in Thailand on March 23. In northern Thailand, hotspots were widely distributed across provinces including Chiang Mai, Lampang, and Chiang Rai, while neighboring countries such as Lao PDR and Myanmar have been reported over 5,000 hotspots of each. It shows the contributing to the boundary haze. In the middle of areas between Myanmar and Lao PDR, Chiang Rai strongly affected by drifting smoke plumes, which meaning that even wildfires are already distinguished, the air remains thick with passed smog.

The most intense concentration was observed in Myanmar, particularly in regions such as Kayah State, Kayin State, and Bago Region. It indicates large-scale burning activity likely driven by a combination of forest fires and land clearing practices. However, there are no effect from the wildfire disaster to the agricultural crops due to no crop cultivations during the period of this disaster situation, which is a post-harvest season in Myanmar country.

Although less dense than in Myanmar, the widespread distribution suggests numerous small to medium-scale fires contributing cumulatively to the haze problem. These incidents strongly affect to Lao PDR which rising of the Laos pollution crisis that contributing to the burning season. As the fire activity is rising in burning activity across the country. The crisis links to the impact of the air pollution which can detect from the satellite monitoring and ground reports. The hotspots detected over 16,395 hotspots in three months in 2026 with peaks in April. Additionally, the reason behind these incidents of this country also come from the agricultural burning that remains a major driver, with many communities relying on traditional practices. It also comes from roadside burning and unmanaged waste fires.

Moreover, the Meteorological Department of Thailand has forecasted that the summer storms that can wash the dust out of the atmosphere, the strong winds preceding the rain can blow small embers into massive crown fires which moving faster than ground crews can react. The combination of dry weather, high temperatures, and human activities such as agricultural burning continues to fuel the crisis.

Agricultural devastation

Agricultural land: No damages on agricultural crops.

Affected crops: No damages on agricultural crops.

Government responses and countermeasures

On April 14, the Thai Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Suchart Chomklin, stated that the ministry is implementing measures in line with Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul's policy to intensify wildfire prevention and haze control, with the primary suppressions at early stages. The Royal Forest Department and the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation have been instructed to temporarily close reserved forests and protected areas in high-risk zones across the country. Additionally, the Government of Thailand has adopted a "Zero Tolerance" policy, which recognizes the severity of the crisis and strengthening its response through two main approaches, including prevention and rapid suppression through forest closures, emergency declarations by provincial governors, and aerial operations such as helicopter water drops in inaccessible mountainous areas, conducted by the Royal Thai Air Force and the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM).

Moreover, specialized forest fire suppression units, also known as the fire tigers, have been deployed in mountainous regions, working together with officers and local volunteers to contain fires in difficult terrain. Meanwhile, GISTDA has encouraged the public to monitor real-time hotspot data and wildfire risk forecasts through its disaster monitoring platform.

Sources:

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