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Thais affected by heavy industries are calling for closer monitoring of polluters

BANGKOK / PRAGUE – Pollution of air, soil, and the food chain has reached extreme levels in Thailand, as shown by the long-term measurements conducted by the environmental organizations Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand (EARTH) and Arnika (1). NGOs and the communities that are affected are now asking the authorities to introduce a mandatory system to monitor emissions of harmful substances from industrial plants and factories. Data should be reported in a Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR), an effective mechanism of public control that has proved its worth in reducing pollution in European countries and has contributed to the safety of communities.

According to several expert analyses from the NGOs EARTH (2) and Arnika (3) focusing on different toxic hotspots in Thailand (4), people living near industrial sites do not have any official data on pollutants in emissions, they do not know to what extent the local industry can negatively affect their land, water, air, and the sources of their food, and they cannot defend themselves effectively against the damage to their health and valuable resources. Thai fishermen are noticing an increasing number of dying fish, the main source of food and communities' livelihood. Very dangerous organic pollutants are unfortunately ubiquitous in the Thai environment. Pollution is caused mainly by industrial activity.

“What we in Thailand actually need is an effective Pollutant Release and Transfer Register – to identify specific polluters and chemicals, to establish strict norms, and to collect the data regularly. This needs to be fully accessible for everyone so that we would all have free access to important environmental data affecting our health. It would also help lawsuits to be solved faster, not like the [cases of the Wax Garbage Recycling Centre](#) or [Win Process Company](#), which took decades of complaints and petitions from local communities. We are well aware of the importance of capacitating and empowering communities affected by industrial pollution and their role in implementing a PRTR and we definitely want to support that,” explained **Penchom Saetang**, director of EARTH.

Ronarong Thuamcharoen, from Banlaeng Community, Rayong Province, who lives very close to petrochemical factories, said: *“The Government has allowed our air to be destroyed by industries for a very long time and it should not do so any more. I would like to see a PRTR system, with a standard similar to those being applied in many countries like the EU, U.S.A., and Japan, put into place in my country. The air we breathe in every day should be clean and safe, like in other industrialized countries.”*



With the goal of establishing a PRTR law in Thailand, EARTH introduced the PRTR draft legislation to the Thai Parliament in December 2020 with the support of 20 members of the House of Representatives. EARTH's director said we would hear about the reaction of the Thai Government and consideration of the Thai Parliament about the draft PRTR law when the next general assembly starts again later this year.

The need for a PRTR in practice (video)

"As shown by the cases we witness within our project, monitoring and inspection is the only actual tool to achieve, for example, the compliance of a harmful factory and in the most extreme cases the shutting down of operations that cause pollution. That is why we continuously demand that such a register and system be set up to monitor the polluters and to get necessary information, and also why we have prepared and are releasing a [video providing information about why a PRTR is crucial](#) for Thai people and their health as well as the environment," adds **Miroslava Jopkova** from Arnika, the coordinator of the project.

The initiatives and activities described above are taking place in the context of the "Public Participation through Citizen Science and EIA System Enhancement" project, which is funded by the European Union and Transition Promotion Program of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. More information about the project can be found at <http://www.earththailand.org/en/> and <https://english.arnika.org/thailand>.

Footnotes:

(1) The joint project of EARTH and Arnika aims to enable Thai communities affected by industrial pollution to generate scientific evidence, to broaden awareness about emerging environmental and health damage from industrial pollution, to promote corporate accountability and, last but not least, to promote Thai citizens' right to know and raise awareness of good practices of right-to-know legislation from the European Union, the Czech Republic in particular, as a participatory mechanism for the reduction and prevention of pollution.

(2) Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand (EARTH) is an independent non-governmental organization striving for social and environmental sustainability and justice in Thai society. EARTH serves as a watchdog monitoring the Thai government's industrialization policy, industrial pollution, and unsustainable consumption patterns. It also promotes climate justice, good governance, and the accountability of governmental and international agencies. The main focus of EARTH's interest is on the impacts of hazardous substances on ecosystems, local communities, and workers' health. <http://www.earththailand.org/en>

(3) The Czech non-governmental organization Arnika focuses on nature conservation, toxics and waste management, and public participation in decision making on environmental issues. During its existence, Arnika has become a valued European NGO in terms of fighting against toxic substances and chemicals or unsafe contamination of the environment and enhancing spreading the right to have information about chemical pollution. The organization cooperates with a number of partners around the globe (e.g. in Ukraine, Armenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) to provide a better and healthier future for as many as possible, regardless of the geographical location. <https://english.arnika.org>

(4) Arnika, together with EARTH, jointly prepared a series of reports published in a book "Toxic Hot Spots in Thailand" based on the results of analyses of sediments, fish, eggs, and air in the vicinity of several industrial complexes in Thailand – e.g. Samut Sakhon, Map Ta Phut, Khon Kaen, Loei,



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Rayong, etc. This series of reports demonstrates some emerging problems of pollution by POPs, VOCs, and heavy metals in relation to the growing industry in Thailand. Some sites with a large concentration of industrial facilities create a broad and exhaustive picture of pollution with POPs and heavy metals. The publication is available online: <https://english.arnika.org/publications/toxic-hot-spots-in-thailand>