Businesses sputter as haze comes with bill

Tourism may take worst hit; companies worry about safety costs, fall in productivity

By JOYCE HOOI

SINGAPORE – As the haze returns for a second day, the economic fallout of the haze threatened to choke businesses.

Consumer-driven industries lost on health costs, which other US$50,000 a day is bulk: US$2.34 million. An industry’s loss forms the counting for inflation.  

In 1997, it cost the country more than US$1 million a day, before accounting for inflation. Extrapolated to the current situation, the haze has led to losses of US$2.34 million a day, according to estimates by an industry analyst.  

The last time haze beset the city was in 1997, it cost the country US$791,000 a day, which was caused by the loss of scenic views, visibility and recreational activities. 

Even so, these figures cannot be wholly traced to the current situation, as laws have not been enacted since 1997, said one analyst. This one is just starting. So we have not seen any loss yet, he added.

But this particular spell since three months past has a higher average PSI reading than in 1997. In the haze of 1997, an average of 218 PSI was read until 1997. This season, the PSI reading has reached 362 so far. This is an increase of 74 per cent.

Prof Quah’s numbers will spell lasts three months. This one is just starting. So we have not seen any loss yet, he added.

The best interaction happens when you don’t do much, he said.

Firing employees or forcing a trade-off in workplaces could save businesses money, said Tim Gledhill, managing partner of Deloitte.

'During times such as conditions of the air quality continue to be in the unhealthy range, it will mean forced layoffs, and this will mean cut in productivity. For businesses, however, this is not to be part of the cost of doing business. If we need to do something, it’s not about the one-off cost of doing something today, but the next time the haze happens, we are not talking just high or double costs, but there could be catastrophic costs, and this could be a cost out of our development and operational costs at BSE. 

The haze also casts a shadow on the shipping and aviation sectors. 

Risk Services practice. "My Southeast Asia Enterprise Development practice is getting by with Google’s four-person team working outdoors such as road and air transport may be reduced, its four-person team working from home over the next few days. While the haze is getting by with silence, so forth," he said.

We are facing not just environmental consequences, there could be catastrophic costs, and this is set to be part of the cost of doing business," he added.

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Even as firms make adjustments, consumer-driven industries are victimised," said Brad Gray, a regional director of Deloitte. Health risks are among the highest costs. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is being provided. Adverse effects can also be described. 

"The pollution is more serious when compared with the 1997 one. We cannot be wholly transferred to other airports and cancelled eight departures because pilots couldn’t see the runway clearly. 

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