

ENVIRONMENT

Residents not sweet on new sugar factory

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A community in Phetchabun's Muang district yesterday voiced strong opposition to a new sugar mill project, the third in the province, citing concerns over health and the environment.

Their objections were raised at a local panel hosted by the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) set up to gather complaints across the country.

Led by Muang Phetchabun mayor Seksan Niyompeng, the residents cited environmental damage endured by communities in the districts of Bung Sam Phan and Si Thep where sugar factories are already located.

A particular concern was so-called "black snow" — an ashy rainfall caused by the burnoff of waste products.

Mr Seksan also argued that sugar cane was not part of the province's cash crops which included sweet tamarind and tobacco. Moreover, Phetchabun is also a leading tourist destination and the new sugar mill could threaten the tourism industry.

Meanwhile, local people in Udon Thani's Muang district were stepping up their call for authorities to force two rubber processing factories to comply with regulations after they claimed emissions had been affecting locals' health.

The call was made as provincial authorities yesterday inspected the factories located in tambon Nong Nakham following complaints that the foul-smelling gasses had returned.

Provincial authorities suspended the operations of the factories ordering them to improve their odour emission and deodorisation systems.

Deputy provincial governor Somwang Phuangbangpho said the factories might have to find alternative solutions if the upgraded deodorisation systems failed to resolve the problems.