

## THE AIR WE BREATHE

Every time I fly back from my trip, the smog over Jakarta seems getting grayer and thicker as time goes by. If I stay on land, maybe I do not know the changes.

But, why bother? Is there any proof that our healthiness is less every time we breathe a low quality of air?

A long time ago, in 2000, I had a chance to visit Xian. It is a city in central China, famous for the terracota warrior, made under the order of Qin Shihuang Emperor more than 2200 years ago. Xian was also the setting for a well known Chinese Kungfu story, Sin Tiau Hiap Lu, featuring Yo Ko and the Little Dragon Lady Siaw-liong-lie.

I learned that Xian in the late fall had the worst air. When I arrived there, it was late afternoon but it seemed to be very late evening. I thought it was due to fog. The next day, the weather was the same. Foggy, gloomy, and gray. We were even advised not to go out from the hotel.

Then we got an explanation about the cause of the gloomy days. It was due to coal. People use a lot of coals for industry and household usage. Somehow the minute debris were caught in the upper atmosphere and in the fall the minute debris slowly went down, covering a vast region of Xian. The sun was invisible during the day. It was comparable to Riau during a heavy forest fires!

Xian nowadays is different. Strong effort by the local government and local people has brought Xian to its former glorious days. The air slowly got better.

We know that bad air can cause ISPA respiratory infection. We also know that a high concentration of lead can make children dumb, have a low IQ. When we are above fifty, the chance to get an ISPA is even higher.

In short, we need a good and fresh air to breathe. After all, the reason why we stick to live on Earth is because of the oxygen, don't we?

Looking through the window of Boeing 737-400, I saw the gloomy air of Jakarta. I sigh in despair. Could be because I simply do not want to admit that the environment in Jakarta is bloody awful, after buckle my keledar up and turn off my telepon bimbit, traveling back from MY.