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Our Air Quality is Better Than in Paris, Mayor of Smog-Hit Siberian City Tells Protesters

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Nail Fattakhov / TASS

The mayor of the Urals city of Chelyabinsk has said that the air quality in his city was better than in Paris, during a protest organized by environmentalists against rising smog levels.

The Chelyabinsk region ranked second to last in the environmental rating of Russian regions published by the environmental Green Patrol organization. Earlier this month, officials in Chelyabinsk warned residents of unfavorable meteorological conditions in the atmosphere after smog hit the city. On Wednesday, four factories in the city were told to stop all emissions by Russia's federal natural resources service in an attempt to clear up the smog.

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“Have you been to Paris lately? Do you have any idea what the ecology is like there?” Chelyabinsk’s mayor Vladimir Elistratov asked angry protesters who organized a visit to the mayor’s office Friday.

"I’m asking because our situation isn’t the worst in the world," he was cited as saying by the Govorit Moskva radio station.

Commenting on Elistratov words, Chelyabink’s Ecology Minister Sergei Likhachev told the ratio outlet that he knows “many cities with worse ecology than Paris,” citing Beijing as an example.

Likhachev, however, stressed that “this does not mean anything [as] we live in Chelyabinsk,” adding that local authorities were striving to ensure clean air for the city.

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