

20 SEP 1997

Haze-companies

BE ACCOUNTABLE, MALAYSIAN COMPANIES IN INDONESIA TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 20 (Bernama) -- All 18 Malaysian companies, including those owned by state governments, which were involved in open burning for land clearing in Indonesia must help put out the fires.

Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said today they must abide by the directive issued by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to help organise efforts to fight the fires with the cooperation of the locals there.

Mohamed said Dr Mahathir had directed that the investors, either directly or indirectly involved in the opening of plantations in Kalimantan and Sumatra in Indonesia to take up the responsibility.

"Indonesia has informed us of the 43 Malaysian companies which have opened plantations there, with 18 directly involved. And they act as if they don't know anything," Mohamed told a news conference at the National Operations Room at the Prime Minister's Department here today.

Mohamed, who is also the National Disaster Relief Management Committee chairman, said after chairing a meeting of the committee that the government wanted them to come forward with action plans towards helping to contain the fires, which are resulting in the worst case of haze pollution in the history of the country.

"If they find it difficult to get to the fires because of the inavailability of flights, the government is willing to ask the Royal Malaysian Air Force to help send them to their plantations to organise fire-fighting efforts," he said.

He said if the companies still refused to do so voluntarily, the government would make public their names.

Mohamed added that 400 firemen would be sent to Kalimantan and Sumatra.

Twenty-one teams, with 10 men to a team, will be sent to Pontianak by land while the rest will be sent to Riau by boat.

--BERNAMA

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