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Fund gets RM500,000 from Kualiti Alam to fight haze

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Kualiti Alam Sdn Bhd, a Malaysian company with no plantation interests in Indonesia, has contributed RM500,000 to the National Disaster Fund to alleviate the Government's financial burden in tackling the haze.

The company, a subsidiary of Renong Bhd, manages the country's first integrated scheduled waste management plant.

Besides Kualiti Alam, two plantation companies and an Umno branch have also responded to the Government's appeal for funds and handed over their contributions to National Disaster Management and Relief committee chairman Datuk Mohamed Rahmat today.

The contributors were Golden Hope Plantations Bhd (RM100,000); Perlis Plantation Bhd (RM100,000) and Umno Kayu Ara Pasong branch, Pontian, Johor (RM1,300).

Mohamed, who is also Information Minister, said some of those who contributed to the fund were not directly involved in open burning in Kalimantan and Sumatra. Only Perlis Plantation and Golden Hope have interests in Indonesia.

Tabung Haji, another company with plantation interests in Indonesia, had earlier given RM100,000.

"While Kualiti Alam is an environment-related company, Golden Hope has yet to obtain approval from Indonesian authorities to develop its plantations," he said.

Golden Hope, a plantation conglomerate and recipient of the United Nations Global 500 award at the June 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for introducing the pulverisation of old palm stands, described as an environment-friendly method, does not practice the slash-and-burn method.

Yet, the Minister added, these companies had come forward in response to the Government's plea to fill the coffers of the disaster fund.

Despite the Government's plea for assistance to alleviate the financial burden in tackling the haze, Mohamed said the majority of the Malaysian companies with economic interests in Indonesia had yet to contribute to the fund.

"They (the companies) should not be solely concerned about profits ... It's a national issue and the rakyat's interest should be of paramount concern.

"It's disheartening to note that most of these companies have yet to respond in a positive manner despite the Government's appeal," he said.

Last Friday, during a meeting with representatives of Malaysian companies with interests in Indonesia, Mohamed, who chaired the meeting, handed to them a personal appeal letter signed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

It appeared, Mohamed added, that their (the companies) corporate philosophy did not include the well-being of the rakyat.

Mohamed, who is also Information Minister, was speaking to the media after receiving contributions amounting to RM801,300 from senior executives of the companies and the Umno branch chairman at Angkasapuri this morning.

With contributions from Mohamed and his Cabinet colleague Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding amounting to RM2,000, pledges the two Ministers made when they kicked off the fund on

Sept 19, the National Disaster Fund now stands at RM803,300.

Senior executives present to hand over their companies' contributions were Thomas Lee Mun Lung (chairman of Kualiti Alam); Datuk Wahab Maskan (deputy chief executive officer, Golden Hope Plantations Bhd); Datuk Jabid Don (director of Perlis Plantation Bhd) and Kumari Sikom, Umno branch chairman.

Also present were Renong Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Halim Saad and NDMR committee secretary Datuk Jaafar Ismail, who is also National Security Council (national security division) director.

Mohamed explained that the fund would enable the Government to provide firemen with the necessary equipment to carry out their tasks in Kalimantan and Sumatra; fund a research programme to study the long-term effects of the haze on the rakyat and finance treatment for those from the lower income group suffering from effects of the haze.

The Minister also announced that Indonesian authorities had granted permission for Royal Malaysian Air Force C130s to carry out cloud seeding sorties over Kalimantan.

On the proposal to use French Super Puma helicopters, manufactured in Indonesia, to carry out water-bombing over the tracts of land still burning or smouldering, Mohamad said: "Due to poor visibility, the suggestion has been put on hold."

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