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Kit Siang wants Taib to give `full account' of his absence

OPPOSITION leader Lim Kit Siang called on Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Taib Mahmud to be present at the Dewan Rakyat today to give a full account for his absence from the State during the "haze emergency".

He said if the Chief Minister failed to do so he should immediately resign because he "disappeared" when the people were faced with the worst crisis ever.

Lim claimed that the people of Sarawak were angry with the Chief Minister for leaving the State with his family, adding they were even more angry with the reasons given by Taib for his trip to the United States.

"Taib was in Sarawak when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the state of emergency as the Air Pollutant Index reached the hazardous level.

"He must tell this House whether he had sought the approval of Dr Mahathir or his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim," he said during the debate on the motion on haze tabled by Anwar.

Lim said Taib must give details about the experts he had met in the US and the members of his family who accompanied him.

He said during such a crisis it was most irresponsible for the Chief Minister to leave the State.

Taib on Sunday explained that he left for the US to look for assistance from health and haze experts.

Lim also hoped the Government would be firm in seeking compensation from Indonesia who had claimed responsibility for the forest fires that contributed to the haze in neighbouring countries.

He said the haze problem was nothing new and had become an annual event in the countries since the 1980s.

Lim quoted a New Straits Times editorial which stated "Dry throats, running noses, sore eyes, asthma seizures. Poor visibility, flights cancelled, collisions. That sombre greyish haze again, this time the worst in 10 years with visibility reduced to 600 metres in Subang... And an embarrassment for the rest of the nation. This is a country that has exciting plans to achieve industrial maturity by 2020 and yet it is already suffering from the effects of environmental pollution".

Lim said the NST editorial was published on Oct 3, 1991.

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