

06 OCT 1997

Parliament-Haze

MALAYSIA CALLS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSBOUNDARY POLLUTION PLAN

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today Asean with Indonesia taking the lead should pool their resources and strength to ensure smooth implementation of the plan to handle transboundary pollution.

The plan recommended strategies to handle transboundary pollution particularly the haze problem, he said when tabling a motion on behalf of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the adjournment of proceedings to discuss the haze issue.

This was the first time proceedings had been adjourned in the House to discuss an environment issue because the haze problem this time around was the worst experienced so far with an emergency being declared in Sarawak on Sept 23.

Anwar said Malaysia had been stating its firm stand since 1990 on the need to take joint measures by Asean member nations to fight the haze menace including the need for a regional agreement on this matter.

He said the latest occasions when this firm stand was voiced was at the ASOEN (Asean Senior Official on Environment) meeting in Cebu, Philippines from Sept 8 to 10 and at the Asean Environment Ministers meeting in Jakarta from Sept 17 to 18.

On the part of Malaysia, Anwar said the government had been taking all necessary measures to ensure the smooth implementation of the plan.

"We must learn from this experience. The question of public health and the protection of the environment should be the main agenda in our country," he said.

He said Malaysia valued Indonesia's positive measures in handling the problem of forest fires in the region.

"I also value the help from all friends in putting out the fires in Indonesia and for doing everything possible to overcome the haze problem," he said.

On the dissatisfaction expressed by certain Malaysians over Indonesia's attitude in handling the forest fire problem, Anwar said Malaysia valued its good relations with Indonesia.

"Hence we have taken the initiative to invite various agencies in this country, other Asean countries as well as other nations to cooperate with the Indonesian authorities," he said.

"We should now concentrate all our attention on this haze menace and handle this problem together without creating any ill-feeling or making cooperation difficult in the quest for a settlement," he said.

Stressing the importance of preserving good relations between Malaysia and Indonesia, Anwar said there was no reason for anyone to question the Indonesian Government's earnestness in handling the problem.

Anwar said the government viewed with serious concern the haze menace which had descended on the region, affecting the people's economic, social and health problems and also disrupting air and sea transport.

"The government is aware of this haze problem on the health of the people, the huge losses suffered due to its adverse effect on the economy and our eco-system and so on."

"Data is being gathered and detailed studies had been undertaken on this matter to enable follow-up action to be taken," he said.

He said the haze problem in Malaysia came from forest and peat soil fires covering some 800,000 hectares in Kalimantan and Sumatra. The menace

had not ended because it depended on wind direction and the monsoon rains.

Anwar appealed to the people to cooperate with the government agencies and heed their advice.

"On behalf of the Government, I wish to express appreciation for members of the Malaysian Fire and Rescue Services Department for their willingness to face danger and work together with Indonesians in putting out the blaze," he said.

The department sent 1,210 fire-fighters as well as a 24-member team from the SMART agency to Indonesia to combat the forest fires.

-- BERNAMA

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