

01 OCT 1997

Haze-Law

MALAYSIANS WANT INDONESIA TO DO MORE TO END HAZE

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 1 (Bernama) -- Malaysians, like their neighbouring Singaporeans, want to see more actions taken by Indonesia to end the haze, caused by the forest fires in Kalimantan and Sumatra, which is currently enveloping the country and other parts in the region.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said the feelings and frustrations felt by Malaysians for the lack of action on the Indonesian side were conveyed to the Cabinet at its weekly meeting today.

"We have reflected to the government that the people in general wants to see more action. We also reflect the feeling of the people...because from the feedback we know," he told reporters here after attending the meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in the absence of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is on official visit overseas.

Law said the government was aware of the people's feelings in the matter and "we also know that patience is wearing thin. People get frustrated, their economic activities affected and so is their social and normal life."

Yesterday, Singapore daily Straits Times' editorial in a rare hit on Jakarta said that the patience of Singaporeans and Malaysians was wearing thin, and that more should be done by Indonesian officials in combatting the fires that have raged for weeks.

Asked on the Cabinet's reaction, Law said: "The Cabinet takes note...all the time Malaysia has been playing very active role. In fact, we want Indonesia to play similar role or cooperation."

He said Malaysia had sent letters to the Environment Ministers of Asean countries regarding their roles and ways of helping Indonesia fight the fire.

"I have sent the letters a week ago, urging them to exercise the Asean's spirit," he said.

Law also said President Suharto had recently given a reply to the letter sent by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last month.

However, he refused to disclose its contents.

Dr Mahathir in a letter on the haze problems had among others suggested the names of Malaysian companies involved in the forest burning activities in Sumatra be made public.

Law said the government had done its part in dealing with the haze and also in helping Indonesia put out the fire.

He said although the readings of the Air Pollutant Index (API) had shown improvement and that the country was now free from the haze, the government would continue to monitor the readings and satellite pictures on existing hot spots in the Indonesian territories.

Responding to criticism by Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang yesterday, Law said the ministry had done all what were necessary to deal with the situation.

Lim had described the Science, Technology and Environment Ministry as "unimportant ministry" which explained why he said its proposals were not given serious consideration by the government.

--BERNAMA

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