

DAP Sarawak: Who's blowing smoke?
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"Contradictory" responses from state and federal environment agencies have left an opposition parliamentarian bemused over whether or not a cement premix plant in Kuching is causing air pollution.

DAP Bandar Kuching MP Chong Chieng Jen, also the Kota Sentosa state assemblyperson, wants to know which of the two agencies is telling the truth in relation to a plant operated by CMS Premix Sdn Bhd.

The company is a subsidiary of the public-listed CMS Bhd, a widely-diversified business group with close links to Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud's family business interests.

Residents in Kota Sentosa have been complaining about air pollution due to black smoke emitted from the plant.

At a press conference today, Chong said he had written to state agency Natural Resources Environment Board (NREB) in January and received a reply signed by officer Dania GA Goyog early the following month.

Citing the letter, Chong said NREB "has taken initiative to investigate the complaint" although curbs on stack emission are strictly under the jurisdiction of the federal Department of Environment (DOE).

"Investigations carried out by the NREB's enforcement officers on Jan 26 revealed that CMS Premix Sdn Bhd has engaged a consultant to monitor the stack emission four times a year," the officer said in the letter.

Monitoring reports have revealed that the emission meets the standard prescribed by the DOE, the letter added.

'Action taken'

Chong said he had raised the matter in Parliament and was told by Natural Resources and Environment Minister Azmi Khalid Noordin last week that the DOE had issued six compound notices and a warning to the company to control the emission.

The department is said to have also assessed the capacity and the environmental control equipment on site.

According to Chong, the minister (photo) further said the DOE is holding talks with the Padawan Municipal Council to re-locate the premix plant.

Enforcement measures involving the various agencies, including NREB, the council and the Land and Survey Department, should be carried out in industrial premises in the area to ensure they comply with regulations.

Chong said the reports from the two agencies were clearly contradictory, with the NREB

saying it had carried out tests and found that the emission was within an acceptable level.

"I'm going to raise the issue in next month's sitting of the state legislative assembly because there is a serious contradiction," Chong said.

He pointed out that the plant has been emitting black smoke for many years and that the situation has affected residents and even a kindergarten in the surrounding area.

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