

BN and Pakatan parties sign TI-M's green pledge

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A coalition of NGOs led by Transparency International-Malaysia (TI-M) has launched an 'Eco-Manifesto' today calling for greater efforts to protect forests.

The manifesto urges greater consciousness on sustainability issues, recognition for the rights of indigenous peoples, public consultation, implementing global conventions, and dialogue on the issue involving political parties and NGOs.

"We want party representatives and politicians to pledge their commitment to pay more attention to environmental issues, particularly water and forest issues," said TI-M secretary-general Josie Fernandez (right) at a press conference today.

She added that presently, even the definition of 'forest' is hotly debated and there is no public participation in development issues.

Twelve politicians were present to support the nine-page manifesto. There were six representatives from PKR, two from DAP, and one each from the MIC, People's Progressive Party, and Parti Rakyat Malaysia.

Also endorsing the manifesto was civil engineer Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz, who said he intends to contest in the Kapar parliamentary seat as an independent candidate in the upcoming general election.

Home constituencies

Fernandez said TI-M had invited all parties to endorse the Eco-Manifesto, but many had returned to their home constituencies over the weekend.

Among those present were Batu MP Tian Chua on PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim's behalf, Kepong MP Tan Seng Giaw (left), Parti Rakyat Malaysia central committee member Rohana Ariffin, People's Progressive Party assistant secretary-general Simon Suresh Sabapathy, and Hulu Selangor MP P Kamalanathan's aide.

When Ampang MP Zuraida Kamarudin asked why TI-M was involving itself in environmental issues as the NGO is better known for its anti-corruption efforts, Fernandez replied, "Corruption is the root of environmental destruction.

"Illegal lobbying, deforestation, pollution... If you have a very transparent, accountable and democratic governance framework, and implement that framework, we will not be in this state."

Meanwhile, Jaringan Orang Asli Malaysia committee member Shafie Dris plead for more

alternatives to hydroelectric power, which he said is a threat to orang asli settlements and the forests they live in.

"The strange thing is, where orang asli villages are found, there must be a dam there. Find another alternative, not just keep building dams," he said.

For example in Telom, he said a dam project there is slated to submerge 7,000 hectares of forest and displace 2,000 people.

To a question from the press, Tian Chua (left) and Simon both voiced support for a parliamentary caucus on environmental issues.

Tian Chua, whose real name is Chua Tian Chang, elaborated that one of two main problems in the Malaysian Parliament is that there are not enough caucuses to hold each ministry accountable.

The other issue is that there are no parliamentary committees to debate new legislation in detail, meaning that it can only be discussed at full-chamber meetings.

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