

DAP moots sanctions against haze-causing companies

MalaysiaKini.com

June 21, 2013

DAP is for new laws to impose sanctions against Malaysian companies and foreign companies in Malaysia that contribute to the haze.

dap special meeting 110313 lim guan engIts secretary-general Lim Guan Eng (left) said Kulai MP Teo Nie Ching has been directed to propose amendments to the Environmental Quality Act via an urgent motion in parliament next week, and urged MPs to back to proposal.

“Such proposed laws must be the immediate task of the new group of MPs.

“(It) will allow Malaysia to take action against any Malaysian companies and foreign companies operating in Malaysia that contributed... directly or indirectly in the transboundary fires in Indonesia that caused pollution to harmful levels, adverse health effects and economic losses across the region,” he said in a statement today.

He said this in response to Indonesian minister Agung Laksono, whom he quoted saying that palm oil companies, including Malaysian companies, may be responsible for the forest fires in Indonesia by setting it ablaze to open up new palm oil plantations.

Lim said Indonesian authorities should prosecute such companies and hold them accountable for the damage caused.

'Indonesia must ratify Seatha' to check forest fires

NONEAt the same time, he chastised Indonesia, saying it must “accept full responsibility” for not ratifying the Southeast Asian Transboundary Haze Agreement (Seatha).

“Indonesia is the only Asean member not to have ratified the 2002 Seatha agreement that will allow the 10 (Asean) countries to cooperate to prevent haze caused by forest fires.

“The annual event has repeated for more than 20 years and the problem has not yet been solved,” he said, pointing out that the September 1997 haze was so severe that it paralysed economic activity in Southeast Asia and caused almost US\$9 billion in losses.

Lim, who is also the Bagan MP, urged the Malaysian government to pressure Indonesia to ratify Seatha in Asean summits, and attempt to control the haze by seeding clouds to bring rain in Johor and Melaka.

NONEIn addition, he urged the Department of Environment (DOE) to enforce a ban on open burning.

Meanwhile, DAP political education director and Kluang MP Liew Chin Tong (right) issued a separate statement today echoing the call to pressure Indonesia into ratifying Seatha.

He said if ratified, Indonesia would have to enforce a zero-burning policy, but would also have access to funds to help pay for fire-fighting and cloud seeding.

"We risk endangering our citizens' lives for the sake of being a 'good neighbour'," he said.

What ministry doing?

Liew also took Natural Resources and Environment Minister G Palanivel to task, urging him to disclose what has been done to tackle the haze.

NONEAmong other issues, he complained that DOE only has four Air Pollutant Index Management System (APIMS) remote sensors in Johor, namely in Larkin Lama, Muar, Pasir Gudang, and Kota Tinggi.

He said this leaves many other areas such as Kluang in the dark about local air quality.

"Palanivel (left) must make public the content and action plan of the Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze, so that the public can hold the ministry accountable for its implementation.

"Millions of ringgit have been spent on monitoring, managing and mitigation efforts to tackle the transboundary haze," Liew said, adding the people deserve to know what's being done.

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