

Back DAP's motion on Rajang disaster, MoCS urges BN reps
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KUCHING – An appeal has gone out to Sarawak Barisan Nasional state legislators to support a forthcoming motion by DAP's Wong Ho Leng to set up an independent committee to probe the recent Rajang logjam disaster.

Movement For Change, Sarawak (MoCS) leader Francis Paul Siah said here today that there should be all-round support for such a motion as the ecological havoc was a people's issue and it is the duty of all elected representatives, irrespective of their political affiliation, to help resolve the problem.

"In as far as people's issues are concerned, politics should take a back seat. The logjam disaster on the Rajang River has affected the livelihood of thousands, many of whom were innocent riverine folks. This is one issue where all state legislators can readily agree to work together for the common interest of the people they had pledged to serve," he said.

Siah said that MoCS has submitted a formal request to Wong, the DAP state assemblyman for Bukit Assek, that he moves a motion for the State Legislative Assembly to appoint a Special Select Committee to carry out an independent probe into the logjam disaster.

And Wong, also the Sarawak DAP chairman, has consented to do that, he added. The next sitting of the State Assembly will begin Monday.

The MoCS leader had earlier proposed that Land Development Minister Dr James Masing chaired the independent committee.

"Today, I'm proposing that Wong Ho Leng be appointed the deputy chairman of the committee," he said.

Masing has voiced his support to set up an independent body to probe the logjam disaster, saying that every effort must be made to find out the causes and that those responsible must be punished.

Siah also expressed disappointment that Wong's recent motion on the Rajang logjam was disallowed by the Speaker of Parliament.
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Wong who is also the Bandar Sibu MP had written in his blog that "the Speaker rejected my motion on the Rejang logjam on the ground that it is within the jurisdiction of the state of Sarawak."

Siah said Parliament does not seem interested to discuss Sarawak issues and it is now up to the Sarawak Legislative Assembly to take it up.

On the Sarawak Forestry Corporation's report that the logjam was a natural disaster caused by heavy downpour and not by overlogging or impoundment of the Bakun Dam, Siah reasoned that it could be a mix of 'natural' and 'man-made'.

Continuous heavy rainfall is one factor but man's haphazard felling of trees and indiscriminate plunder and rape of the forests could be the main culprit, he said.

Siah also noted that the rituals conducted by the Ibans in Balleh to appease the gods and calm the local people. Still steeped in their beliefs and traditions, the Ibans have expressed fear that the logjam was caused by the wrath of the gods as a punishment for man's greed and destruction of the forests.

"To them, what is quite clear here is that the gods must be angry. Perhaps it is also prudent for the probe committee to find out why the gods were offended.

"I'm quite sure that the committee will be able to uncover pretty obvious reasons in no time. And there's no need to consult a bomoh to find out why," Siah added.

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