

Anwar slams govt over handling of haze issue

> 'Unreasonable to blame Indonesia only when M'sian firms get off scot-free'

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has hit out at the government for what he described as preferential treatment in the handling of the haze issue, with bigger firms always being allowed off the hook.

The Port Dickson MP, in debating the 2020 Budget yesterday, pointed out that while the haze usually originated in Indonesia,

Malaysian companies based there also played a major role in contributing to the problem.

"Malaysia is suffering from haze each year caused by humans. But when it involves large companies, the action taken always seems a bit slow, as though our power is limited," he said at the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

"But if these open burning were to happen in suburbs and rural areas, I'm sure immediate action will be taken against the perpetrators," he added.

Anwar, who is also PKR president, said it was unreasonable for the government to only blame Indonesia every time the haze occurs when local multinational companies based in the republic were allowed off scot-free.

"Yes, Indonesia has to be responsible when they are wrong, but our companies must also be punished. They make hundreds of millions of ringgit each year.

"For me, this is absurd, because the ones suffering are the rakyat here. Schools are forced to close, people are falling sick. I don't think this should be allowed to continue," he said.

Anwar also questioned the government's action in allowing companies to cultivate oil palm on peat soil, that he pointed was harmful to the environment.

He said while he disagreed with the campaign to ban palm oil by European countries, Malaysia should also consider the health hazard of having plantations on peat soil.

"It's a fact that carbon emissions from peat soil are among the highest. If it is so high, to the point of causing issues to the environment, why aren't there any firm decisions to ban such activities that can destroy the peat soil?" he said.