

PM urged to declare climate change emergency by Malaysia Day

KUALA LUMPUR: An environmental coalition wants the government declare a climate change emergency by Malaysia Day.

The coalition, Gabungan Darurat Iklim Malaysia, will send a memorandum on the matter and other demands to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob next week.

Among the coalition's 12 demands are for Putrajaya to declare 55 per cent or more of the country's land area as terrestrial forest reserve and 30 per cent or more of forests as totally protected.

It also urged the government to declare 30 per cent of the country's maritime areas as parks and uphold indigenous peoples and local communities' rights to own and manage protected areas according to their customs under the framework of native customary land rights.

Coalition committee member Ili Nadiah Dzulfakar said if Putrajaya did not declare an emergency by Sept 16, it would explore putting more public pressure on the government through its campaigns.

Nadiah, who is also Klima Action Malaysia chair, said the coalition was formed in April last year to address Malaysia's response to the global climate emergency.

"We demand that the government and all sectors declare a climate emergency to keep global warming to well below 2°C and contain it within 1.5°C."

"With the 15th General Election (GE15) around the corner, we are demanding for strong political will to tackle the climate emergency urgently.

"We must also quickly come up with legally binding actions to adapt to as well as address climate change," she said at the

launch of the memorandum here yesterday.

Nadiah is referring to the Climate Change Bill being drafted by the Environment and Water Ministry, which is expected to be tabled only in 2025.

Nadiah said the coalition was ready to engage with all political groups and would likely support candidates who were open to discussions on climate change in the coming polls.

The launch was also attended by former Pertubuhan Pelindung Khazanah Alam Malaysia (Peka) president Puan Seri Shariffa Sabrina Syed Akil.

Shariffa Sabrina, who is a committee member of the coalition, called on the government to study and follow up on the demands at once.

"I say immediately because the government should have done this years ago because our lives depend on it."

Shariffa Sabrina said the country was hurtling towards a "point of no return due to lack of political will to address global warming challenges".

She said Malaysians were not equipped to survive climate catastrophes, especially the poor and vulnerable communities.

"Malaysia is now registering climate change deaths and refugees, and these numbers will only increase in years to come," she said, citing the recent floods in Selangor and Pahang.

The floods late last year mostly affected poor and middle-class communities. Fifty-four people died in the disaster that displaced 67,000 people.

Shariffa Sabrina said the government had been projecting an environmental image internationally but its policies were centred on profit-based goals.

She said states in turn were banking on natural resources

such as timber, metal and sand, to generate income.

"This is further fuelled by abuse of power, cronyism, bribery and a greed to enrich themselves with little or no regard for nature's wrath that lies ahead.

"The current generation's voice of eco-activism is the only way to force the government to ... declare such an emergency."

Shariffa Sabrina said she hoped that youths and the Undil8 movement would be a game-changer for climate change during GE15.

Also present were former DAP senator Adrian Lasimbang and Orang Asli Rights activist Shereen Ajani from Projek Mahasiswa Orang Asli.

Malaysians are urged to show their support for the 46-page memorandum at gdimyorg.org.wixsite.com/gdimyorg/climateemergencyletter.