

Yudhoyono Apologises To Malaysia And Singapore On Haze Problem
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JAKARTA, June 25 (Bernama) -- Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has apologised to Malaysia and Singapore over the haze emanating from forest and peatland fires in Sumatra, which has affected air quality in the two countries.

"As the president, I apologise for what has happened and hope for understanding from our friends in Singapore and Malaysia," he told a news conference at the president's office here Monday evening.

"For sure, what has taken place is not on purpose," he said.

Yudhoyono said at the moment, the areas affected by fires in Jambi, Bengkulu, and Riau had been declared as districts under disaster emergency and the central government had deployed maximum manpower to fight the calamity.

He said Indonesia was fully responsible for overcoming the problem and was confident that this would be done soon.

Yudhoyono pledged that Indonesia would put out every spot of fire burning in Indonesian forests by carrying cloud seeding apart from mobilising fire-fighting personnel on land including from the armed forces.

At the news conference, the Indonesian President also ticked off several government officials of the republic for mentioning the names of plantation companies believed to have started the fires which he said should not have been divulged.

"From what I monitor daily, there were statements made by some officials which according to me should not have been delivered as such," he said.

He said the companies concerned involved had not been determined and government officials should refrain from issuing such statements.

"Even if the companies were negligent, it is not necessary to name them. Or the fact that they are owned by our neighbouring countries.

"What is more important now is to focus on overcoming the fire disaster that has dragged on for a week," he said.

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