Haze: Where Is ASEAN Solidarity When It Comes To Haze?
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SINGAPORE, Oct 4 (Bernama) -- Finding a permanent solution to combat haze from recurring should be a regional priority, according to an economist here.

AMP Capital, Investment Strategy head and chief economist Shane Oliver told Bernama, the longer the haze continued the more its measured economic impact would become noticeable.

The recently concluded South East Asia National Human Rights Institutions Forum (SEANF) meeting in Kuala Lumpur also recommended ASEAN member states to give due consideration to the perennial haze dilemma in the region.

ASEAN leaders have always stressed on strong unity and solidarity among the grouping.

But the question here is where is solidarity in ASEAN when it comes to haze?

Singapore for one, has made numerous offers to assist its ASEAN neighbour Indonesia in tackling the haze, but was repeatedly rejected.

The latest was on Thursday where Indonesia clarified at a meeting between officials of both countries that it had sufficient resources of its own to tackle the issue.

As such, it said, there was no need to call on the assistance offered by Singapore at this time.

Minister for Home Affairs & Minister for Law, K.Shanmugam as then Minister for Foreign Affairs had reportedly underlined the Singapore government's seriousness in resolving the problem.

"We stand ready to assist Indonesia in combating the fires. Last year, we introduced a legislation to allow us to prosecute companies found to be causing or contributing to the haze.

"And we will not hesitate to take such actions against those errant companies," he had said.

So what now? Where is solidarity in ASEAN on this matter? It is for the reader to analyse, but hopefully these neighbouring countries would cooperate, in the spirit of ASEAN, to find a permanent solution to the haze.

Talking about cooperation, it had been different in cases like the missing MH370 and the AirAsia flight QZ8501 crash, where these member countries were seen to work hand in hand.

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