

We will not pressure Indonesia over air pollution, says Zahid
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Malaysia will not put any form of pressure on Indonesia to tackle the cross-border smog menace originating from the republic.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said such a move would be unfair to Indonesia which was earnestly undertaking efforts to put out the fires on its peat land.

"It's unfair to put any pressure on Indonesia. President Joko Widodo has shown strong commitment to solving the problem in the long term," he told reporters after opening the first Putrajaya International Security Dialogue, in Kuala Lumpur, today.

Zahid, who is also Home Minister, urged all parties affected by the smog problem to stop pointing the finger at each other.

Instead, he said, all Asean countries should be cooperating to assist Indonesia find long-term solutions to the smog problem caused by forest fires in Sumatera and Kalimantan.

"We should also sympathise with Indonesia in overcoming this problem. Don't just criticise them.

"At the same time, I hope there are no parties blaming Malaysian investors opening up land for oil palm plantations there for the fires," he added.

Zahid said Malaysia was prepared to share its best practice in oil palm cultivation with Indonesia in its effort to reduce the fires and in overcoming the problem in future.

"Personally, I have proposed to the Indonesia president, the best plantation practices by Malaysian operators," he said.

Citing the system used by TH Plantation in Riau, he explained that in between each two rows of oil palms, a drain had been built to channel water to the plants and to prevent any fire from spreading if it happened.

However, he said, it was up to the Indonesian government to introduce the best oil palm cultivation system as it would incur a high cost, besides requiring the cooperation of plantations and smallholders.

According to the Department of Environment, 97% of peat soil fires were caused by smallholders who were still using the traditional slash-and-burn method in cultivating oil palm. – Bernama, October 22, 2015.

Source:

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