

Malaysia proposes fund to fight haze

NST- 13/10/2006

■ **By Ibrahim, Ranjeetha Pakiam and Sharanjit Singh**
news@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: A special haze fund will be proposed by Malaysia at an emergency regional ministerial meeting today to assist affected members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the fund, suggested by the Cabinet, should be jointly managed by the nations involved.

"The fund should also look into the issue of appropriate equipment and technology to treat the problem of uncontrolled burning.

"The Cabinet has noted that the El Nino phenomenon, which results in extra-dry weather, will persist for several more months."

Speaking to the Press yesterday,

Najib said playing the haze blame game was not productive.

"The Cabinet views the problem seriously because it's a yearly predicament. It won't be eliminated if we keep pointing fingers at each other. What is important is that affected countries work together to solve the problem."

Malaysia will be represented by Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid at today's meeting in Pekan Baru, Indonesia, which will also involve ministers from the host country, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei.

The meeting was originally scheduled to be held in Singapore at the invitation of its Minister of Environment and Water Resources Dr Yaacob Ibrahim.

However, Indonesia requested that it be held in Pekan Baru instead, said Azmi.

"I have been instructed by the Cabinet to table the proposal as all the countries which suffer from haze should jointly take the initiative to solve it.

"The problem has been recurring for 10 years, and we will urge Indonesia to strengthen its resolve to solve it," he said at a function in Nibong Tebal, adding that one way Indonesia would be asked to show its commitment would be that it ratifies the Asean Transboundary Haze Agreement

Signatories have to co-operate in developing and implementing measures to prevent, monitor and mitigate transboundary haze pollution, by controlling sources of land and forest fires.

On the apology Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono gave for the haze problem, Azmi said he believed it was a sincere gesture.