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LONG-TERM SOLUTION

YEO: CABINET OKAY NEEDED FOR LAW ON HAZE

Under the Transboundary Haze Act, Malaysian-owned plantations that cause fires overseas can be tried in Malaysia

PETALING JAYA

THE Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Ministry is waiting for the green light from the cabinet to draft the Transboundary Haze Act.

Minister Yeo Bee Yin said the matter had been discussed at a cabinet meeting on Wednesday and if the cabinet agreed, the ministry would immediately proceed to enact the act as a long-term resolution to the haze problem.

"It (the act) is to take action against Malaysian companies that have caused haze not only in Indonesia, but elsewhere abroad.

She said this after a briefing on cloud-seeding operations by the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) at its Subang base here yesterday.

According to Bernama, Yeo said among the act's provisions would be the power to try Malaysian-owned plantations that cause fires overseas in Malaysian courts.

"I will seek advice from the attorney-general on how we can draft this act and what we can do

to make it effective in addressing the haze problem."

However, Yeo said, even if laws were enacted, regional and international cooperation were still needed to resolve the transboundary haze issue.

She said communication between Asean countries was important, adding that she would seek a telecommunication session with the Asean secretary-general to express Malaysia's views for an effective mechanism at the Asean level and to seek long-term solutions.

Yeo said a cloud-seeding operation would be carried out in Sarawak if cloud conditions were favourable today.

"The RMAF and Meteorological Department are always ready to conduct cloud-seeding operations, depending on cloud conditions," she said, adding that cloud seeding was among the most feasible solutions in addition to the government's commitment to finding long-term solutions to the haze issue.

Cloud seeding was carried out



in Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Malacca on Wednesday. As a result, rain was reported in Cheras, Bangsar, Petaling, Kuala Selangor, Hulu Langat, Klang, Gombak, Seremban, Tampin, Jelebu, Alor Gajah and Jasin.

At 9pm yesterday, five areas in Sarawak recorded "very unhealthy" Air Pollutant Index (API) readings.

Kuching recorded a reading of 264, followed by Sibu (243), Sarikei (241), Samarahan (221) and Sri Aman (209).

"Unhealthy" readings were recorded in 26 areas.

They were Minden (118) and Balik Pulau (130) in Penang; and Tasek Ipoh (146) and Pegoh Ipoh (111) in Perak.

In Kuala Lumpur, Batu Muda recorded 164 and Cheras (159),

while Putrajaya recorded 142.

In Selangor, Kuala Selangor recorded 112, followed by Petaling Jaya (160), Shah Alam (120), Klang (130), Banting (134) and Johar Setia (164).

In Negri Sembilan, Nilai recorded 153, Seremban (122) and Port Dickson (154).

In Melaka, Alor Gajah recorded 118, Bukit Rambai (121) and Bandaraya Melaka (113).

In Johor, Segamat recorded 130, Larkin (112) and Tangkak (111).

In Terengganu, Kuala Terengganu recorded 130.

In Sarawak, Samalaju recorded 129 and Bintulu (139).

Readings between 0 and 50 are good, 51 to 100 (moderate), 101 to 200 (unhealthy), 201 to 300 (very unhealthy) and 300 and above (hazardous).

United States-based website World's Air Pollution: Real-time Air Quality Index ranked Malaysia No. 4 in the list of Top 10 Countries with the Worst Pollution Index at 5pm.

Topping the list was France, Iran and Indonesia.

The worsening haze forced 2,459 schools to close for two days, starting yesterday, involving 1.7 million students.

The National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) yesterday said the cloud-seeding operation in Sri Aman, Sarawak, was postponed due to poor visibility and unreliable water sources.

The government, through Nadma, had distributed 500,000 face masks to students in Sarawak and another 1,500,000 to states and districts affected by haze.

PM: Govt doing everything it can to control haze

PUTRAJAYA: The government is doing all it can to bring the haze under control as well as improve the air quality in the country.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in a tongue-in-cheek manner, said the government would also pray for rain as the haze situation continued to

worsen in the country.

"We will pray for rain," he quipped when asked about measures the government had taken to control the haze.

"Of course, other things that we have done include cloud seeding, advising people to wear masks and now using drones to create

artificial rain."

He said this after the 10th Special Cabinet Committee on Anti-Corruption here yesterday.

On the cost incurred by the government to carry out cloud seeding, Dr Mahathir said he did not have any information on it yet.

"However, we are now suggest-

ing the use of drones to form artificial rain. We can use several of them, particularly in Putrajaya."

Dr Mahathir said the government had offered to help the Indonesian government put out forest fires, but the republic had yet to request for assistance.

"We offer help all the time. We

have airplanes that are special, which sprays water. I think they can be used.

"I don't know why Indonesia is not accepting our help. I would also like to ask (President Joko Widodo) why the government doesn't want our help, but I have not done that yet."