

Meeting addresses challenges in overcoming transboundary haze

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BRUNEI Darussalam is highly committed in addressing challenges relating to haze, and this is reflected in the continued participation in issues pertaining to the matter. It is the aspiration of the Government of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam to

have a clean and healthy environment.

This was lauded by the Acting Director of Environment, Parks and Recreation (JASTRe), Dyg Hjh Zaiaini binti Hj Noorkhan, in her speech as Vice-Chairperson of the 13th Meeting of the Technical Working Group on Transboundary Haze Pollution.

"His Majesty's Government has always been

very supportive towards the very efforts that have been made throughout this year in order to face the challenges. By putting our strength together, we will be able to overcome the challenges," she said.

The acting director added, "We hope to produce a positive outcome from this important meeting. In 1997, the regional haze action plan was adopted in our effort to control the haze situation in preventing and mitigating the damages from the recurrence of fire and haze because of the damaging effects of haze pollution to the environment and social aspect of some Asean countries."

"The Asean Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution was signed in June 2002, which signified the culmination of concerted regional efforts over the years to address transboundary haze pollution. Much of what have been achieved today lies in the success of working together through the strength of Asean's spirit of cooperation and solidarity in prevention, monitoring and coordination," she said.

Through the strengths, Dyg Hjh Zaiaini expressed confidence that they can continue to push further for Asean progress and development to help overcome the situation.

Meanwhile, the chairperson of the meeting, Mr Tan Kok Kiong, Chief Executive Officer of the National Environment Agency, Singapore, in his welcoming remarks said, "Last year, we were fortunate that we were spared from any severe haze thanks to the La Nina. But it has become a tradition for the Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC) to anticipate any transboundary haze outbreak. (Thus), today's meeting is significant in tackling the situation and identifying the measures needed to prevent the recurrence of transboundary haze."

Even with the best efforts, there might still be some haze, he said, adding that "they need to demonstrate and show that they can respond quickly especially in the context where public opinion is particularly sensitive on environmental occurrences that could affect their health".

"It's the same everywhere throughout the Asean region, where the governments have to demonstrate that they can respond and deal with any incidents that affect public health," the chairperson said.

"It is important for us to sustain the momentum of creating a haze-free Asean for all our citizens to live, work and play. Our efforts will contribute significantly in enhancing the good reputation and vibrancy of our region in playing host to regional and international events."

He also disclosed yesterday that the 2nd MSC Forum would be held in Brunei today and tomorrow. This is one of the recommendations derived from the MSC strategic review conducted early last year, and members have agreed that the MSC Forum should continue as it complements the MSC process and Asean in reaching out to potential stakeholders. The meeting yesterday gave updates on the fire and haze situations in all member states including the Mekong Sub-Regions. The meeting also discussed the progress of operationalisation of Indonesia's comprehensive plans of actions in dealing with transboundary haze which included the discussion on the collaboration between Singapore and Indonesia in Jambi province and the collaboration between Malaysia and Indonesia, in Riau Province.

The meeting then discussed the follow-up action of the recommendations from the Strategic Review of Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC) programmes and activities to enhance the haze control management, bilateral collaboration and replication of bilateral projects as well as on training activities by the Regional Haze Training Network and on the progress report on cooperation projects with international partners.

Among the projects being discussed were the Asean-IFAD/GEF project on Rehabilitation and Sustainable Use of Peatland Forest in Southeast Asia and also the project on Sustainable Management of Peatland Forest in Southeast Asia.

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Bandar Seri Begawan
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM



Acting Director of Environment, Parks and Recreation (JASTRe), Dyg Hjh Zaiaini with Mr Tan Kok Kiong, CEO of National Environment Agency, Singapore



Delegates from the Asean Secretariat

PHOTOS: JAMES KON