



KERATAN AKHBAR

SURAT KHABAR	: NEW SUNDAY TIMES		
TARIKH	: 24/11/2019	MUKA SURAT	: 16
JABATAN	: UMUM		
KLASIFIKASI	: PERHATIAN		

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Handle pollution issues, EU's palm oil ban prudently

LET'S recap. We had two Pasir Gudang pollution incidents followed by a few river pollution cases that caused water treatment plants to shut down.

And recently, there was the haze too.

These issues have striking similarities. Once the incident is over, we tend to forget about it until the incident occurs again. Except for lip service from responsible parties, no concrete solutions will come of it.

The haze has been happening for more than two decades. In the 2020 Budget, RM27 million was allocated to manage anti-palm oil campaigns and another RM30 million to the Department of Environment and Department of Chemistry to deal with pollution issues.

Will we get value for money spent? What happened to the "full report" on Sg Kim Kim and the Pasir Gudang pollution?

Just look at how the haze situation makes Malaysia a loser.

It will start with denial followed by statements of regret. When pressure builds up in Malaysia, we get a reply that it's only few months but it (Indonesia) gives clean air to breathe for the rest of the months.

If further pressure is applied, Indonesia will name a few Malaysian companies and then there is a short brouhaha.

Finally, that forgetful attitude kicks in again — until the same scenario repeats the following year. This is a simplified version on how the haze is dealt with in Malaysia. Can transboundary

haze laws help? Frankly, the minister in charge of environment should look at the bigger picture and not merely follow Singapore to enact a law on transboundary haze.

Malaysia should include haze as one of the provisions. A legal agreement of cooperation between our neighbours should follow suit.

Use such a collaboration to further get Asean to adopt the Transboundary Pollution Cooperation Agreement to cover all types of pollution.

Just look at the Pasir Gudang situation.

It is very simple to connect the dots and link them to potential companies behind the pollution. But no action was taken. What will we do if hazardous

chemicals cross national boundaries to pollute a neighbouring country?

So, Asean needs to provide better protection for its people.

On the other hand, the anti-palm oil campaign can be handled professionally and swiftly. Once Malaysia and Asean weed out the bad companies, there will be improved standing for the industry itself.

If the palm oil industry is wrongfully accused, get the facts straightened out in a court case and use judicial review or other due processes to overturn the European Union ban on use of palm oil for biofuel.

If EU is defeated, this court verdict will become a free advertisement globally and the industry can clear its name.

Why use taxpayers' money? In Malaysia, we use palm oil in almost everything, so why carry out a campaign here? The industry should fund any activity to protect its interest.

The Association of Water and Energy Research Malaysia never expected the environment and safeguarding of people's welfare to drop to such levels due to poor execution. It is even more heartbreaking to see the focus put on cheap publicity stunts.

So before any of the allocations are wasted, can the ministers in charge of palm oil and environment carry out the suggestions by the end of this year?

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