

Environmental talk on haze issue

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BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN

NON-GOVERNMENT organisations (NGOs) focusing on environment in Brunei Darussalam are invited to participate in the next roundtable meeting to discuss on transboundary haze and ways to reduce the air-borne pollution in Singapore, next year.

It would be the second roundtable meeting for NGOs working at countries affected with yearly transboundary air pollution caused by mass land clearings in Sumatra Island and parts of Borneo. The meeting is expected to be held in June 2014.

Meanwhile, the first meeting was held earlier this month, attended by representatives of 30 NGOs and academic institutions from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore who are in their own ways actively trying to lessen the effect of trans-boundary haze.

Called the NGO Roundtable of Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change, the one-day dialogue was organised by Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA), a think tank and also a non-profit organisation in Singapore.

According to an SIIA press statement, the meeting was the first to gather representatives from three affected countries to discuss on ways to stop the worsening haze from blanketing the air every year.



File photo dated September 28, 2011, shows a slight haze condition at the Brunei Darussalam International Airport.

Picture: BT file

The trans-boundary haze which blew from Sumatra Island last June recorded the highest hazardous air pollution index reading since 1997.

Thick particles blanketed almost the whole Singapore state-city while in Muar, Johor in southern Peninsular Malaysia was declared state of emergency after

the air pollutant index (API) spiked to 746.

Although not as serious as the other three countries, Brunei Darussalam was not excluded from the air pollution that was brought by Northwest wind causing the PSI soared to nearly 100 in most districts in Brunei.

SIIA chairman, Simon Tay said

the organisation has been involved in organising haze dialogues since the worst fires in 1997 and 1988.

“While significant progress by governments and NGOs on the ground have been made through the years, the problem is still here and we need to have the sense to do more to make it better,” he said.

“The SIIA will be taking up the call for a multi-sector dialogue on sustainable resources from ASEAN,” he said.

Meanwhile, SIIA deputy director and fellow for Environment and Resources, Chua Chin Wei said, “While the meeting was restricted to 30 NGO representatives from the three countries, they included a broad cross-section of those doing advocacy work as well as those making community-based efforts on the grounds.”

It was reported all 10 ASEAN countries leaders at the two days ASEAN Summit held in Brunei, had agreed to adopt a system to jointly monitor haze by sharing satellite data to help the respective authorities to locate fires and determine the location of the fires such as occurring on land owned by plantation companies.

At the meeting, it was also decided that the three haze affected countries to form cross-border coalitions to raise public awareness and influence policy making decisions in the long run.

NGOs from Brunei Darussalam who are interested to participate in the dialogue can write to Singapore Institute of International Affairs at 60A Orchard Road, #04-03 Tower 1, The Atrium@Orchard, International Involvement Hub, Singapore, 238890 or visit www.siiainline.org.

The Brunei Times



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Duration: 4 days




Trainer: Gonzague Patinier

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