

[« Return to article](#)[Print this](#)**The Straits Times**

www.straitstimes.com

Published on Mar 07, 2014

Civil groups air their views on proposed transboundary haze law

By Grace Chua

Civil society experts and leaders of non-government organisations met on Friday afternoon to share their perspectives and recommendations on the proposed Transboundary Haze Pollution Bill.

The new Bill, which is up for public consultation till March 19, would hold companies and other entities liable for fires on their land outside Singapore which caused transboundary haze in Singapore, and provides for both criminal and civil liability.

The new law is being proposed after Singapore's worst-ever bout of haze last June, and just as dry weather has led to hazier conditions. On Friday evening, the 3-hour Pollutant Standards Index reached 71, in the 'moderate' range.

At the session, organised by the Singapore Institute of International Affairs think-tank at its Dhoby Ghaut premises, the 11 participants from think-tanks, universities, and NGOs like BirdLife International discussed the practical challenges of the new law. For one thing, serving notice to those based overseas may be challenging, they said.

And if businesses moved overseas in response, Singapore would have even less sway over them.

They also discussed whether the proposed fines were high enough, and were divided on whether there ought to be incentives and protections for whistleblowers.

For instance, one expert suggested that the fine should be a function of how much land area is burned, so companies are not encouraged to simply burn large swathes at one go.

SIIA chairman Simon Tay said feedback from the two-hour session would be compiled and submitted to the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

"Singapore's reputation is about enforcing the laws that it talks about, and this proposed bill shows that Singapore is willing to do its part to help solve the haze. But the question now is how this bill is going to be enforced justly," he said.

Copyright © 2014 Singapore Press Holdings. All rights reserved.