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Zahid: Malaysia prioritises diplomacy over compensation

New Straits Times, Malaysia



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KUCHING: Malaysia prioritises long-term diplomatic cooperation and early preventive measures over seeking compensation from neighbouring countries in addressing transboundary haze, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Bernama reported that Zahid, who is also National Disaster Management Committee chairman, said a prudent and structured diplomatic approach was the most effective way to address sensitive issues among Asean members while ensuring optimal technical coordination.

"While seeking compensation does not necessarily imply definitive liability that must be

borne by any specific country, taking preventive measures early would avoid the need to address such sensitive inter-state issues.

"Diplomatic measures must be pursued alongside technical efforts involving officials from neighbouring countries and Malaysian states," he said after chairing the First National Disaster Management High-Level Committee Meeting of 2026 at Wisma Bapa Malaysia here yesterday.

He was responding to a question on whether Malaysia intended to raise the issue of losses suffered by the country, particularly to the economy, health and tourism, as a result of trans-

boundary haze, with the Indonesian government.

Zahid also said the transboundary haze issue would be raised during his visit to Jakarta from today until Sept 20 for the Halal-20 Conference: 5th World Halal Summit 2026.

"A key topic I will discuss and coordinate with Bapak Gibran is the haze problem," he said, referring to Indonesian Vice-President Gibran Rakabuming Raka.

Zahid, in a statement issued following the meeting, said the government was shifting towards an "anticipatory action" approach to address the threat of extreme hot and dry weather caused by Super El Niño.

The measures include hotspot monitoring, ensuring the readiness of firefighting assets, peatland management, enforcement against open burning and disseminating health information to the public.

The statement also said the National Disaster Management Council had approved an allocation of RM5 million this year for cloud seeding and related management, comprising RM2 million for Phase One, approved on June 2, and RM3 million for Phase Two, approved on Sept 2.

In **Kota Kinabalu**, Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Datuk Seri Arthur Joseph Kurup said organisers might need to move outdoor

events indoors if air quality deteriorated.

He said the move was important to reduce public exposure to polluted air, particularly when Air Pollutant Index readings reached the "unhealthy" level.

"For example, the Malaysia Day celebration in Kuching was moved indoors to the Borneo Convention Centre, while fireworks were not allowed.

"We will, therefore, monitor the situation and adjust outdoor events according to the haze conditions," said Arthur after the Leadership Session during the 2026/2027 Orientation Week at the Universiti Malaysia Sabah Chancellor's Hall here on Tuesday.



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SUMMARIES

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