

EDITOR, NEWS DESK

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**SUHAKAM URGES TIME-BOUND ACTION TO HOLD HAZE POLLUTERS
ACCOUNTABLE**

KUALA LUMPUR (13 OCTOBER 2026) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) reiterates that recurring transboundary haze is a serious human rights and public health concern. It threatens people's rights to life, health, education, information, safe and healthy working conditions, and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Public advisories and diplomatic engagement must be accompanied by concrete action to protect people, investigate the sources of haze affecting Malaysia and hold responsible parties accountable. Recent reports have linked haze affecting Malaysia to hotspots in Indonesian regions, including Kalimantan and Sumatra. These reports warrant thorough investigation, but do not by themselves establish the responsibility of any particular company or individual.

SUHAKAM supports the "polluter pays" principle. Malaysia should develop a robust legal strategy and build a credible, evidence-based case by tracing verified fires to land ownership or control, company operations and fire-prevention measures, and by establishing how smoke travelled and affected communities in Malaysia. Satellite observations should be corroborated with scientific and other evidence, and investigations should consider competing sources of pollution and other relevant explanations.

The Government should establish a dedicated, multi-agency investigative team bringing together environmental scientists, corporate investigators and government lawyers. The team should coordinate with relevant authorities in the region and examine the evidence needed to identify those legally responsible. Any Malaysian corporate involvement should be investigated with the same determination as other potential involvement. No company or individual should be shielded from scrutiny, and no party should be held liable without reliable evidence and a fair process.

SUHAKAM urges the Government to make full use of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. Under Article 4(2), a State where transboundary haze originates is required to respond promptly to requests for relevant information or consultations from affected States. Malaysia should formally seek information that can assist investigations, including relevant concession and land information, operator identities, fire-control records and enforcement outcomes. The Government should also report publicly on the requests made, responses received and outstanding matters, subject to legitimate investigative and legal requirements.

Malaysia should also move without delay to develop a dedicated transboundary haze law. Singapore's Transboundary Haze Pollution Act offers a comparative reference for considering how legislation can address conduct outside a country that causes or contributes to haze within it. Malaysia's law should be carefully designed for the Malaysian legal context, with clear definitions, effective investigative powers, and appropriate civil remedies and criminal penalties. It should provide for corporate and individual accountability, including the role of parent companies and directors where their responsibility is established by evidence, while protecting due process and the right to a fair hearing.

SUHAKAM calls on the Government to publish a time-bound plan covering the investigative team, formal information requests, public consultation and introduction of the proposed law in Parliament, with regular public progress updates that protect ongoing investigations and fair proceedings. This work should also advance the Clean Air Act, strengthen access to environmental justice and ensure affected communities can seek remedies, including recovery of proven losses and health costs.

MEDIA STATEMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)

The Government must protect people while haze persists by providing timely air-quality information and clear health advice, and by applying consistent, evidence-based protocols in schools and workplaces. These measures should prioritise children, older persons, persons with disabilities, people with existing health conditions, outdoor workers and communities with fewer options to reduce their exposure. At the same time, urgent action must be grounded in sound evidence, supported by laws with clear safeguards and accompanied by transparent progress reports. Sustained regional cooperation and effective legal measures are essential to prevent further harm and hold those responsible to account.

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Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
13 October 2026