Mânia, Sôapore equally to blame for haze
Amir Ali
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It is time Malaysia and Singapore stop blaming Indonesia for the haze problem since companies from the two nations are equally at fault for the open burning.

PETALING JAYA: The haze problem will continue to persist over the years and the situation can only be brought under control if there is enough political will from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore to find a permanent solution.

An international political observer, Muhammad Isa Selamat, in Bengkalis, Riau, said the price to pay for the haze was too high.

“The three countries are getting huge economic benefits from the oil palm plantations in Indonesia that resort to the slash-and-burn method,” he said when visiting his village home in Muntai.

The revenue obtained from oil palm plantations in Riau goes largely to the investor companies from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Singapore said it was bracing itself for a second round of haze from Indonesia, putting the blame solely on the Indonesians for the problems suffered by the republic.

The truth is that the Singaporean and Malaysian firms are benefiting from the oil palm plantations in Indonesia and they should cooperate to reduce the risks of haze.

“Why blame the Indonesians for the haze, when we all know foreign companies are involved in the burning,” he said.

Isa, who is running for a parliamentary seat in next year’s general election in Indonesia, said there were various news reports in Malaysia and Singapore that companies from the two countries bought land in Riau to plant oil palm.

“Since this is not a secret anymore, the two countries should stop the blame game to find a solution to the problem. For example, they can modernise the process,” he said.
He said the slash-and-burn technique was used to add nitrogen to the soil.

**Finding alternate measures**

He added that the Indonesians would have to find other ways to add nitrogen to the soil, such as adding fertilizers.

The key to the problem is open burning because this is the cheapest solution for these companies using the traditional slash-and-burn method to clear their land for the next planting season.

The alternative is to use a more western style of farming where the land is cleared and cultivated by using tractors, Isa said.

Modern technique and fertilizers are costly but these are inevitable if Indonesia does not want to be blamed year in and year out for the haze, while foreign companies are making great monetary gains.

Based on satellite detection of hotspots, the province of Riau in Sumatra has been found to contain 88% of the hotspots that caused the worst haze over Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia since 1997, according to Wikipedia.

Indonesian press reports indicated that in June 2013, Indonesian Environment Minister Balthasar Kambuaya revealed that investigations found at least 20 domestic and foreign companies operating in Riau were the cause of land and forest fires, eight of them Malaysian companies.

Indonesian officials have said that farmers are being educated by the government on alternatives to clearing land, instead of the traditional slash-and-burn method.

Greenpeace also called on big oil palm companies such as Malaysia-based Sime Darby and Singapore-based Wilmar International to check whether their subsidiaries are involved in the burning.

*KL-based Amir Ali works for an Indonesian NGO called the Warisan Melayu Riau, which is based in Bengkalis, Riau.*
Based on article above, prepare a 10-15 pages of double spacing written report and 10 min of presentation slides on *Land Clearing for Oil Palm Plantation Causing Haze: Truth or Myth?*

**Execution:**

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