

Question by Mr Christopher de Souza:

To ask the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources what steps have been or are being taken under the Transboundary Haze Pollution Act to prosecute errant companies which have caused or contributed to the serious levels of hazardous haze pollution that Singapore experienced in 2015.

Reply by Minister Masagos:

1 The Transboundary Haze Pollution Act (THPA) came into force on 25 September 2014. The Act provides investigative tools and evidentiary provisions to allow for the prosecution of entities, whether in or outside Singapore, as well as persons holding positions of responsibility in these entities that are responsible for causing and contributing to transboundary haze pollution in Singapore. Under the THPA, haze pollution is said to have occurred if the 24-hour PSI remains at 101 or higher for 24 continuous hours or longer.

2 Haze pollution as prescribed under the THPA occurred for ten periods from 10 September 2015 to 28 October 2015. During this entire period, NEA had sent Preventive Measures Notices pursuant to Section 9 of the THPA to six companies, requesting them to carry out the following. First, to deploy fire-fighting personnel to extinguish or prevent the spread of any fire on land owned or occupied by them. Second, to discontinue, or not commence, any burning activities on such land. Third, to submit to NEA any plan of action to extinguish any fire on such land or to prevent its recurrence.

3 In addition, NEA served Asia Pulp & Paper Company Ltd (APP) in Singapore a notice pursuant to Section 10 of the THPA, seeking information from APP on its subsidiaries, its related companies and suppliers in Singapore and Indonesia, as well as measures taken by its suppliers in Indonesia to put out fires in their concessions.

4 Two companies have responded to the Preventive Measures Notices so far and we are corresponding with them, while the remaining companies have yet to respond. NEA also received information from APP following our earlier request for information. NEA is currently reviewing the information provided.

5 NEA has also written to its counterparts from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia, to seek their assistance in verifying some of the information provided by the two companies which have earlier responded to our Preventive Measures Notices. As investigations are still ongoing, more details cannot be divulged at this time.

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