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Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, 38th Storey, PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road, Singapore 0511. Tel: 2799740

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JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY THE HON DR AHMAD MATTAR,
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, SINGAPORE AND
THE HON DATUK AMAR STEPHEN K T YONG,
MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & THE ENVIRONMENT, MALAYSIA
ON 7 OCTOBER, 1988

The Honourable Dr Ahmad Mattar, Minister for the Environment, Singapore made an official visit to Malaysia from 4 to 8 October 1988 at the invitation of the Honourable Datuk Amar Stephen Yong, Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, Malaysia. This visit is part of the annual exchange of visits between the two Ministers for the Environment. Dr Mattar was accompanied by his Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Eugene Yap, the Chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee on Health & Environment, Dr Aline Wong and six senior officials from his Ministry.

During the visit, the Singapore delegation held fruitful discussions with their counterparts in Malaysia on common environmental matters.

The two Ministers took note of the follow-up measures on the Third ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Jakarta in October 1987 and the Environment Mandate on sustainable development in the Manila Declaration of the Third ASEAN Summit in Manila in December 1987. They agreed that more efforts need to be made to obtain funding from ASEAN dialogue partners in financing projects under Phase III of the ASEAN Environment Programme (or ASEP III) and consideration be given to contributions from ASEAN member countries to complete those projects which are in the priority list. The Ministers also noted that the proposal for the establishment of an ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN) has been approved by the ASEAN Committee on Science & Technology (COST) at its recent meeting for transmittal to the Asean Standing Committee.

The Ministers endorsed the principle of sustainable development which would require the integration of environmental considerations into the development process. Dr Ahmad Mattar informed that such considerations are being adopted by his Ministry in reviewing development projects. This process of implementing the sustainable development concept is greatly facilitated by an institutional framework which places the Ministry of Environment, Singapore as the sole authority on all environmental matters. Datuk Amar Stephen Yong informed that the Malaysian Government has introduced regulations for compulsory Environmental Impact Assessment studies for certain large projects.

On control of smoke emission from motor vehicles, Dr Ahmad Mattar informed that Singapore will soon be adopting the more stringent Malaysian standards 50 HSU currently in force. He revealed that there has been a significant decline in the percentage of Malaysian vehicles found breaching the Republic's pollution regulations on motor vehicle smoke emission - from about 85 per cent in 1985 to almost 24 per cent presently.

The Ministers discussed matters under the Revolving Fund Committee for the Straits of Malacca and Singapore and expressed satisfaction at its operations. Both Ministers agreed in principle that joint exercises to combat oil spills be undertaken in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore so as to test the effectiveness of the standard operating procedure for combating oil spills adopted by the three member states viz Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

The two Ministers also discussed the management of toxic and hazardous wastes. Datuk Amar Stephen Yong informed that a memorandum on Malaysia's approach on this matter will be submitted for Cabinet's approval by the end of the month. He revealed that initially only one treatment plant will be considered which will be complemented by a number of secured landfill sites established on a region-wide basis. Dr Ahmad Mattar informed that Singapore exercises control over the storage, transportation and disposal of hazardous substances through the Poisons (Hazardous Substances) Rules 1986 and the Environmental Public Health Act 1987. The Meeting noted that bulk tanks used in the transportation of hazardous substances in the Republic have to be certified by Third Parties. In addition, vehicles in which these tanks are mounted are also subjected to vigorous inspections. Furthermore, drivers of these vehicles are given adequate training on defensive driving as well as instructions on dealing with emergency situations. Dr Ahmad Mattar informed that Singapore is planning to mount spot checks on the road-worthiness of such vehicles including Malaysian registered vehicles.

Both Ministers expressed concern over the growing problem of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes especially from developed countries. In this regard, the Ministers supported in principle the ongoing efforts by UNEP in drawing up a Convention on Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes. The Meeting noted that Malaysia is a member of the Working Group constituted to draft the Convention.

Datuk Amar Stephen Yong informed that following his visit to Singapore in September 1987 he directed the Task Force on the Klang River Clean-up to prepare a similar programme based on the success achieved by Singapore in cleaning up the Singapore River and Kallang Basin. The Task Force visited Singapore in February this year to study at close quarters Singapore's approach in cleaning up the Singapore River and Kallang Basin. A 10-year Action Plan has been prepared which will be submitted for Cabinet's approval. The objective of the plan is to clean-up the Klang River so as to achieve a water quality where the water can be used for non-water contact recreation. Besides cleaning up the Klang River of its rubbish and silt, the plan involves beautification of river banks, buildings treatment systems for piggery wastes, maintenance of the river, sewerage projects and awareness and education programmes. The estimated cost of this plan is M\$200 million which does not include the cost of sewerage projects.

Both Ministers agreed that senior technical officers from both countries should meet on a regular basis to exchange views, information and experiences. Such meetings will help to promote greater cooperation between the two countries and contribute much to the handling and management of environmental matters.

Dr Ahmad Mattar revealed that Singapore intends to sign the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. A memorandum on this will be submitted to Cabinet soon. Both Ministers agreed that ASEAN explore the possibility of ratifying the Protocol as a Regional Economic Integration Organization.

The Meeting noted that Singapore presently does not entertain any proposal regarding the establishment of Vinyl Chloride Monomer (VCM) plant and exercises stringent safety and pollution control on chemical and petro-chemical industries. Regarding the proposed VCM plant in Pasir Gudang, Datuk Amar Stephen Yong informed his Singapore counterpart that the proponents of the plant will have to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment study which will, among other things, include aspects pertaining to plant safety. The Department of Environment has already transmitted this requirement for the attention of the Johor State Economic Development Corporation.

The Singapore delegation visited Taman Negara, the Proton plant and the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Mosque in Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan as part of their 4 day visit to Malaysia.

The Singapore delegation recorded its appreciation to Y B Datuk Amar Stephen Yong for the warm hospitality accorded to them and the excellent arrangements made for their visit. The Meeting was held in the traditional spirit of cordiality between the two countries.

7 OCTOBER 1988.

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