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Minimising loss in event of natural disaster

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PETALING JAYA, Sun. - The Science, Technology and Environment Ministry will recommend to the Cabinet several measures to be taken to minimise loss of lives and properties in the event of a natural disaster caused by inclement weather.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said today the recommendations, which will include the upgrading the Meteorological Services Department's capability, would be included in a report to be submitted to the Cabinet on Wednesday.

He said the report, compiled by the department, concerned the chain of weather-related events which led to the Keningau storm disaster on Dec 26.

The tragedy left 193 people dead and thousands homeless when tropical storm Greg hit Keningau and some other parts of Sabah.

"The recommendations we are proposing cannot prevent an occurrence (of the storm) but they can minimise loss of lives and properties," he told reporters after launching Larian Hijau '97 at 1 Utama shopping complex today.

The annual run, to be held on March 9, is jointly organised by the ministry, The New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd and the Petaling Jaya Municipal Council with the co-operation of the Federal Territory and Selangor Amateur Athletics Associations.

On the upgrading of the Meteorological Services Department, Law said the ministry was thinking along the line of increasing the department's expertise, manpower and equipment.

"If the Cabinet agrees that the department needs to be upgraded, then we will work out the details."

The report will be submitted by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha as Law will be attending the Asean Environment Minister's meeting in Phuket from Tuesday to Thursday.

Abang Abu Bakar will be the acting Science, Technology and Environment Minister.

On the call for an early warning system, Law said the department had been asked to work out the funds needed to upgrade its forecasting capability besides studying the type of system the country could adopt.

The department is working with other related agencies, including the National Disaster Relief Committee, the Civil Defence Department, and the Special Malaysian Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team.

"They are to come up with a proposal on the best system we could adopt for the whole country," said Law.

He also welcomed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's directive to State Governments to ensure employers prohibited their workers from building houses along river banks.

Law said the directive should be enforced especially in flood-prone areas.

On the fee issue for the Bukit Nanas integrated scheduled waste treatment plant, Law said the Department of Environment had prepared a new proposal after meeting with Kualiti Alam Sdn Bhd and its potential clients.

The DOE had three meetings each with Kualiti Alam and the industries on the matter. Both parties have given their co-operation, making it possible for DOE to prepare a new proposal.

The proposal will be circulated among the related agencies such as the

International Trade and Industry Ministry, the Economic Planning Unit and the Treasury for feedback.

Law said he would then submit the revised proposal to the Cabinet for approval.

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