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Law-Filter

OUTDOOR AIR PURIFIERS TO FIGHT POLLUTION

PETALING JAYA, Nov 4 (Bernama) -- The Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment has asked the Malaysian Electric Corporation Bhd (MEC) to design efficient air purifiers that can clean outdoor air and filter major pollutants.

Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said the MEC, which had already produced indoor air filtration units, could use its expertise in designing the air purifier on a bigger scale which would be installed at billboard structures in congested and polluted areas.

"We have tested the indoor air purifier and are satisfied with its performance," he said referring to the MEC's air purifier that he believed could filter almost 99 per cent of the pollutants suspended in indoor environment.

Law was speaking to reporters after he opened the Asia Pacific Conference on the Built Environment entitled "Intergrating Technology With the Environment" here today.

The four-day conference was jointly organised by American Society for Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineering (Ashrae) Malaysian Chapter, Singapore Associate of Ashrae members and the Institution of Engineers Malaysia.

He said the idea, mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at a cabinet meeting recently, would be seriously studied by the Department of Environment, Sirim Berhad and Chemistry Department to determine the viability and to find the right technologies before it could be implemented.

He said that a preliminary study had been completed based on indoor air purifying units which are now commercially distributed by several local and foreign companies.

On the high cost and maintenance of such purifiers, Law said the ministry would ask the advertising agencies to pay for some of the cost as they also benefited from the billboards.

Meanwhile, United Air Technologies Managing Director Bernard Loh Son Wah told reporters that the idea to develop such air purifiers was viable since cheaper technologies were available at present.

"We can use "water screen" to wash the suspended particles instead of using the more expensive filter used in the indoor air purifiers," said Bernard who is also the Director of the National CFC (Chloro-Fluoro-Carbons) Phase-out Project.

He said such a technique was now being used in big factories and tobacco industries.

On the progress of the Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) phasing-out programme, Law said since 1990 large chillers which used CFC-11 and CFC-12 had been gradually phased-out and non-ODS based chillers had been introduced into the Malaysian market since 1992.

ODS refers to chemical substances that attack and break up ozone molecules in the atmosphere which is vital to living things as it filters the harmful ultra-violet rays.

He said a total of US\$848,000 of the US\$10 million multilateral fund under the Montreal Protocol had been used for the ODS phasing out programme.

"We hope, by the year 2000, our industry will be free from ODS," he added.

On the haze situation, Law said the wind pattern showed that the North-Easterlies would blow the haze away from Sarawak but would change its direction and move back and bring the haze to peninsula.

He said, the Air Pollutant Index (API) in Sarawak is expected to decrease while the API for several towns in peninsula will increase slightly over the next 24 hours. -- BERNAMA

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