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Recycling, recovering chiller refrigerants

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THE Malaysian Chapter of ASHRAE (American Society for Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers) is carrying out a project on recycling and recovery of chiller refrigerants in the country, said Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment Datuk Law Hieng Ding.

"A planned gradual retirement of these chillers is needed in order to avoid undue financial burden on its owners," he said at the opening ceremony of the Second Asia Pacific Conference on the Built Environment in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

He said since 1990, large chillers using CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) have been gradually phased out. With effect from 1992, non-ODS (ozone depleting substances) chillers have been introduced into the Malaysian market.

"The significant quantity of chillers which still have useful working life ranging from 10 to 15 years presently house an estimated 766 metric tonnes of ODS," he added.

Cost of the project he said, is funded by the Multilateral Fund, a fund formed under the Montreal Protocol where some US\$10 million (US\$1 = RM3.27) is available to Malaysian and multinational corporations to carry out projects.

Director of the CFC Phase Out project, Mr Bernard Loh said the project will cost US\$848,000. The cost he added, involves an education programme to create awareness on the part of building owners on the need to have recovery and recycling machines.

There are some 5,000 machines running on CFCs that do not have recycling and recovery features. Without this he added, these machines are destined for the junk yard and will incur capital cost.

"Most of the cost towards the project involve the procurement of recovery and recycling machines," Loh told reporters later.

Earlier, Law said while technology is introduced to look after and maintain good quality of the indoor environment, these actions should not result in the emission of more pollutants to the outdoor environment.

"Indoor air purifiers can clean air up to 99 per cent but in terms of outdoor air, work still needs to be done," he said.

Malaysia Electric Corp Bhd (MEC), he added had been asked by the Chemistry Department and SIRIM Bhd to come up with a large air purifier capable of cleaning air in the atmosphere.

"MEC have come up with an air purifier but they have been asked to improve its efficiency as well as its cost and practicality," he said.

The idea for the external air purifier he said, was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the ministry has been asked to look into the viability of such an air purifier.

The external air purifier said Law, will be placed at busy road junctions for example at Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman or Jalan Raja Laut. The air purifiers he added, could be installed in billboards and advertisers could perhaps help finance its cost.

On the haze he added, the situation in the peninsula is expected to worsen over the next 24 hours. Four stations recorded unhealthy air quality. The Air Pollutant Index (API) at 8am for Jerantut was 103, Johor Baru 101, Kemaman 119 and Malacca 131.

The north-easterly wind he said, will improve the situation in Sabah and Sarawak. Meanwhile the El Nino phenomenon has delayed the northeast monsoon which is expected this month.

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