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River management boards to be set up

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ALL state governments are urged to set up a River Management Board at state level to help combat river pollution in the country.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said the new board, to be chaired by the respective state governments, will facilitate cooperation among the authorities, the Department of Environment (DOE) and the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) on monitoring the level of pollution in rivers.

"The State Governments are encouraged to set up the board under the recommendation of the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, although it is not compulsory for them to do so," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, after presenting prizes to winners of the Fifth ICI-CCM Environmental Journalism Award.

"The implementation date of the board in each state will solely depend on the respective state governments," he said.

Law was commenting on recent newspaper reports about the increasing pollution in rivers. There have also been cases where the high level of pollution in rivers has resulted in consumers suffering from water supply problems.

"So far, Sarawak has established a River Management Board which to a certain extent has helped the state in controlling the level of pollution of its rivers.

"I hope other states, especially those which with a high number of rivers will follow suit," he said.

Law said besides state government officials, each board will comprise representatives from the DOE and DID.

For a start, Law said, the Prime Minister has suggested that efforts to clean up polluted rivers in the country should begin in Selangor.

Meanwhile, owners of high-rise buildings are urged to continue with their efforts to spray water from the buildings even though the haze in most parts of the city has cleared in recent days.

"We hope to make the 'water dispensing' session a permanent activity. In fact, we are looking at using water from the surrounding rivers for this purpose now that there is a machine which has the technology to purify the water," he said.

Law said continuous water dispensing by high-rise building owners will help to cool the city during hot days, when the haze problem has been overcome.

Earlier, Forest Research Institute of Malaysia director-general Datuk Dr Razak Mohd Ali said the standards of environmental reporting in this year's Environmental Journalism Award were "quite impressive".

"However, the same cannot be said about the Bahasa Malaysia section. As a result, there is no major prize winner for this section this year," he said.

Seventeen journalists were recognised for their environmental reporting in this year's Environmental Journalism Award, which is organised by the ICI Group of Companies and Chemical Co of Malaysia. The event saw a total of 172 entries.

Razak, who is also the chairman of the panel of judges of the ICI-CCM Environmental Journalism Award, said the subject matter compared with last year's entries has expanded considerably.

"We found the style and impact of this year's entries to be carefully

thought out on the part of the writer."

The English, Tamil and Chinese sub-categories of the print category were won by Ms See Yee Ai (The Star), Mr Michael Savarimuthu (Tamil Nesan) and Ms Koh Yoke Moi (Nanyang Siang Pau).

Also, Mr Ong Choon Min of Nanyang Siang Pau came out tops in the photojournalism category while TV3 bagged the grand prize in the electronic media category.

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