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Haze-Suharto

SUHARTO ACCEPTS MALAYSIA'S OFFER TO PUT OUT FOREST FIRES

JAKARTA, Sept 22 (Bernama) -- Indonesian President Suharto has agreed to accept Malaysia's assistance to tackle the haze problem in the country.

Minister Coordinator for Social Welfare Azwar Anas said after a meeting with Suharto today that Malaysia had offered to send more than 1,200 firefighters and medical personnel to Sumatera.

In addition, Malaysia offered to despatch another 130 firefighters from Sabah and Kuching, Sarawak to help extinguish forest fires in Kalimantan, he said.

Anas said Riau Governor Soeripto suggested that it would be better for the Malaysian firefighters be sent to neighbouring Jambi and South Sumatera as forest fires in Riau were diminishing.

He said Malaysia also offered its C-130 airplanes to conduct cloud-seeding in Indonesia and allowed Indonesian aircraft involved in such operations to use the Subang International Airport in Kuala Lumpur and Labuan in Sabah.

One of the planes would take off from Subang while other two from Labuan, he said.

Anas also said Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has asked the Indonesian government to reveal the names of the Malaysian plantation companies responsible for the forest fires.

Meanwhile, Environment Minister Sarwono Kusumaatmadja said Suharto had invoked the new Environment Law which will crack down on forest burners.

The law had given the government immediate powers to charge those involved in polluting the environment, he said.

Last week, the government disclosed names of 176 companies, mostly plantation firms, with satellite pictures of fires raging in their concession areas. -- BERNAMA

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