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Ministry will help in conservation efforts

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The newly established National Water Resource Council will look into conservation and protection of catchment areas as part its effort to ensure adequate water supply.

Science, Technology and Enviroment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said today his ministry, with help from the Department of Environment, would be assisting the council in this aspect.

"Our main concern is the protection of sources of water such as catchment areas.

"Conserving and protecting these sources is one of the most important measures to be taken and the council is aware of it," he told reporters after launching the Projek Riadah Alam Sekitar '98 (Environment Awareness Project 1998) at the DOE headquarters.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who chaired yesterday's meeting had said the council would address a wide range of issues on inter-State water movement.

Law who also attended the meeting, said today the council did talk about conservation aspects as well.

To emphasise this point, Law distributed to the state representatives at the meeting two sets of guidelines drawn up by the DOE to protect water sources.

The guideline, which have been in place for years but mostly not adopted by State Governments, were on zoning, and soil erosing and siltation prevention.

The soil erosion and siltation prevention guidelines are basically measures that need to be taken when planning or carry out development activities.

The guidelines on zoning are no land use and management for sensitive sites like water catchment areas.

"We hope all officials involved in the planning and execution (of development activities), contractors and developers follow the guidelines strictly to protect water sources.

"Measures should also be taken to prevent industrial effluents, and human and animal waste from being discharged (into the water-ways)," said Law.

On the regional effort to tackle haze, Law said the United Nations have again urged the international community to contribute to Asean's cause.

The under secretary-general for UN's Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Sergio Vieira de Mello, who is based in New York and the under secretary-general and executive director of United Nations Environment Programme, Klaus Topfer, in Nairobi had written to the various ambassadors asking them to expedite their contributions.

In an unrelated matter, Law said two new cases of open burning had been detected in Malaysia yesterday, bringing the total to 383 cases since April 8.

One case was detected at a construction site in Kuah and the other was a forest fire near the Kelab Golf Port Dickson.

The party responsible for the first case was fined RM1,000 while the DOE is still investigating the second case.

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