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NGOs to be asked to help solve haze problem

THE Government will meet with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) next Tuesday (May 12) to discuss what the latter can do to tackle the haze problem caused by the forest fires in Indonesia.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said the meeting will see how NGOs can help the country recover, from the financial and technological aspects of the haze.

"So far, we have sent out invitation letters to some 40 NGOs," he told reporters after the weekly Cabinet meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He said the decision was reached at the Cabinet meeting.

"At the same time, I will also talk to the NGOs on the setting up of a special fund that will help combat the haze. The proposed fund is different from the National Disaster Fund in that it will be managed by the NGOs themselves," he added.

Law said he will also be writing to private companies or individuals to appeal for donations to buy equipment used to fight the haze. "I think it is a good thing for them to contribute."

He also said the Cabinet had issued a directive that makes it mandatory for all high-rise buildings to install water sprinkler systems to help reduce the smoke particles and lower the temperature during hazy days.

"I hope high-rise building owners will comply with this new ruling as soon as possible," he added.

Law said for the first time, a test was conducted using a sprinkler system at the Kuala Lumpur City Centre on Tuesday.

He said 7,115 litres of water was used for 53 minutes from the 44th floor of the Petronas Twin Towers had managed to bring down the temperature in the vicinity by 5 1/2C.

The agencies involved in the exercise comprised the Fire and Rescue Services Department, the Meteorological Department, the Chemistry Department, the DOE, Universiti Putra and the ministry.

"We will continue to hold similar exercises. Our next location will be at the KL Tower... before next Wednesday," he said.

Law also said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had suggested that fountains be built at disused mining pools to reduce the dust particles and lower the temperature.

Meanwhile, Law said satellite images of six water catchment areas in Selangor had been presented to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar.

"The photos, taken on January 28 last year, are to facilitate the authorities concerned in their checks on the extent of development taking place in the areas that may have caused the current water shortage," he said.

The six water catchment areas are Subang, Semenyih, Batu, Langat, Sungai Buloh and Klang Gates.

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