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Law-Punishment

OPEN BURNING: COURTS ASKED TO IMPOSE MAXIMUM SENTENCE

KUALA LUMPUR, April 13 (Bernama) -- The Science, Technology and Environment Ministry has sent an official letter to the Chief Justice of the Federal Court asking the courts to impose the maximum RM100,000 fine and five years jail for all offences relating to open burning.

Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said today he had also sought the cooperation of the Attorney-General to quickly bring cases involving open burning to court for trial.

"Stern action needs to be taken against offenders and we no longer want to just impose compounds for the offence.

"The Department of Environment (DOE) will investigate everyone involved, be they the land owner or the one committing the open burning and bring them to court," he told a news conference, here.

He said that if necessary, the names of the culprits would be publicised to impress upon the people that the government meant business.

"The Environmental Quality Act will also be amended if needed. This is important to emphasise action and enforcement concerning several issues to suit the situation," he said.

He also said that the haze/burning operation which was started in the Federal Territory and Selangor last Wednesday would be extended nationwide tomorrow.

The operation is to detect open burning and vehicle smoke emission with the help of the police air unit. The Fire and Rescue Department is also on standby to spring into action when a fire is detected.

The DOE has set up 39 teams to conduct patrols and will cooperate with the Road Transport Department and police to nab vehicles that emit excessive smoke.

Law said the DOE would send a daily report to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is very concerned about the matter and wants to know the true situation nationwide.

He said seven cases, including of open burning in estates and rubbish dumps, were detected in the operation last Thursday.

So far, one case of open burning had been investigated and sent to the Attorney-General for action and one more was still under investigation, he said.

-- BERNAMA

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