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Open burning: A-G nod for proposed RM500,000 fine

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Attorney-General's Chambers has approved the proposed amendments to the Environmental Quality Act which among others, seek to increase five-fold the fine for open burning to RM500,000.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said the approval was given yesterday.

The draft is now being circulated to the relevant agencies and ministries for their feedback.

"They will be asked to submit their views in two days to enable us to table the proposal to the Cabinet next Wednesday," he said today after receiving a RM60,000 satellite transmitter collar, for use in an elephant relocation programme, from Boh Plantations Sdn Bhd and Tehdara Sdn Bhd.

The amendments will also make land owners responsible for fires on their land instead of blaming them on their employees or contractors.

The amendments are in anticipation of the dry season which traditionally begins in June.

Law said the Government was also looking into installing water sprinklers on tall buildings and air purifiers at busy road junctions to reduce dust particles in the atmosphere.

Both ideas were mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during last year's haze.

The Prime Minister had yesterday again directed the Science, Technology and Environment Ministry to look into the possibility of installing water sprinklers on tall buildings.

For a start, the sprinklers would be installed on the Petronas Twin Towers on a trial basis.

The Ministry will invite scientists and experts from the Ministry's agencies and local universities to sit on a committee formed yesterday to study these matters.

On the air purifier, he said the Malaysia Electric Corp Bhd together with the Chemistry Department, Sirim Bhd and the Sungai Way Group, had come up with a prototype costing about RM50,000 which would be installed at the Puduraya bus terminal here next month on a trial basis.

If it works, the purifier would be used at busy road junctions during hazy spells.

On efforts to fight land and forest fires, Law said he was informed that the Global Environment Facility had agreed to a contribution of US\$800,000 (about RM3.04 million) to Asean.

The United Nations Environment Programme, co-ordinating all international contributions and offers to fight Asean's haze and forest fires, will handle the money.

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