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Mahathir-Fires

STOP OPEN BURNING IN THE KUALA LANGAT FOREST RESERVE, SAYS PM

SEPANG, April 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today visited the site of the bush fires on both sides of the Expressway Lingkaran Tengah (Elite) highway and warned those responsible for open burning in the Kuala Langat forest reserve that they could face a jail sentence.

He said that land clearing through open burning in the forest reserve by irresponsible people had caused the fires which were spreading, along the KM 28.8 stretch of the highway heading towards the KL International Airport, affecting 50 hectares.

Dr Mahathir said that although the authorities had conducted a round-the-clock operation to put out the fires, raging for the 12th day, open burning in the forest reserve area had worsened the situation.

"In terms of enforcement, we have deployed police, Rela and military personnel (to arrest those responsible for the open burning) but there are still those who got away.

"For those responsible for the open burning, we will impose a jail sentence against them," he said after spending 40 minutes at the site where he also helped Fire and Rescue Department personnel to put out the fires using the high impact water fog device.

The fires also occur along the KM 26.6 stretch of the highway heading towards the city.

Dr Mahathir said that measures would be intensified to curb open burning in the area.

He said that efforts would be made to douse the peat soil to ensure that the fires were put out completely.

The Prime Minister had used the new device, which produces a "jet speed" water flow with 14 litres of water per minute.

Meanwhile, Paya Indah chief executive officer K. Muralee Dhora Menon said that the fire in areas belonging to the company along the KM 26.6 stretch of the highway heading towards Kuala Lumpur started on Friday.

He said that efforts to put out the fire in the affected area, covering 40 hectares, were made difficult because of the dry weather and the strong wind.

The fire however had been contained because of ample water supply from several disused mining pools in the vicinity, he said.

He said that the fire-fighting operation involved the state authorities and the Fire and Rescue Department, police, Rela and military personnel and non-governmental organisations. -- BERNAMA

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