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## Solid waste disposal only by registered contractors

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Prime Minister today directed that only registered contractors be allowed to collect and dispose of solid wastes from now on.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said today the directive was a move to address the problem of rampant illegal dumping.

This directive by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad followed recent cases of indiscriminate dumping of solid waste.

He said the relevant agencies have been directed to immediately register all contractors and sub-contractors engaged to manage their solid and hazardous wastes.

"This is to ensure that only those responsible and those who know what they are doing are allowed to handle the wastes," he told reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

Scheduled wastes are currently under the DOE's jurisdiction but solid waste is managed by local authorities.

The DOE already has a system of monitoring places where only registered contractors can handle, transport or dispose of scheduled wastes.

Under the Environmental Quality (Scheduled Waste) Regulations 1989, all those generating, storing or importing such wastes have to inform the DOE, providing data such as the types and amount of substances involved and the manner in which they are being stored, handled or disposed of.

Such waste must only be disposed of at licensed premises.

Following the directive, Law said he would ask the DOE to tighten the system and check and plug all loopholes that might exist. They will have to see if the system is the best or if it needs to be improved.

As for solid waste, Law said anyone could be engaged to handle it.

"Some local councils engage contractors to manage their solid waste and many of these contractors engage sub-contractors. And this is where the problem starts.

"There are also companies and factories which pay anyone to dispose of their solid waste. Many take the short cut and dump the waste anywhere they like," he said.

With the registration of contractors, local authorities will be able to monitor those who collect waste from a particular area, where the waste is destined for and how it will be disposed of.

Local authorities have to formulate a system of monitoring so that they will know if wastes collected have been disposed of at the proper sites.

If there is illegal dumping, the local authority should be able to trace the contractor responsible for it.

"The Prime Minister is very unhappy with the situation. There are too many cases and (illegal dumping of waste) is an ugly sight," said Law.

The latest case is the illegal dumping of solid and hazardous waste at an abandoned Public Works Department quarry in Kampung Bukit Kapar.

This has been going on for 14 years and the Klang Municipal Council only knew about it late last year.

Law said the DOE was still investigating the case and had asked Alam Sekitar Malaysia Sdn Bhd to assess the site to check for contamination.

Asked if the DOE would take legal action against the PWD since it was the owner of the land, he said only those who had carried out the illegal dumping would be held responsible.

Selangor State executive Councillor Datuk Ch'ng Toh Eng had said that the PWD might be held responsible for any health problems suffered by nearby residents.

He said that PWD knew about the illegal dumping 10 years ago.

Meanwhile, Law said those responsible would not only be prosecuted, they would also have to pay for the cost of cleaning up the site and the cost of transporting and disposing of their waste at the Bukit Nanas integrated scheduled waste treatment plant.

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