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Law: Be major player in forums

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SHAH ALAM, Sat. - Malaysia should play a leading role in international forums and seminars if it wants to make significant contributions to safeguard the environment and resolve environmental problems threatening the world.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said today this was one way for Malaysia to present its views to the international community in dealing with problems such as indiscriminate disposal of hazardous waste and global warming.

"Environmental issues have become global issues as the impact of environmental problems such as ozone depletion and global warming is worldwide," he said when representing Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in launching the Malaysian Environment Week at Dataran Shah Alam.

To become a major participant in international forums, Law said Malaysia had to be well prepared.

This could be achieved by incorporating environmental preservation aspects into the nation's development.

"In addition, more efforts must be made to increase awareness among Malaysians towards safeguarding the environment," he said.

"Despite organising various programmes to increase public awareness on the environment, we still hear of illegal logging at catchment areas and forest reserves and of industries indiscriminately discharging waste into rivers."

Besides polluting the environment, Law said such activities could lead to other problems such as landslides and flash floods.

In an effort to rehabilitate polluted rivers, the ministry has directed State Governments to select a river in their respective States for rehabilitation under a new programme.

He also expressed hope that the new programme would be more successful than previous river rehabilitation programmes implemented by the ministry.

Law added that recent studies conducted by the ministry showed that about a third of 120 main rivers in the country were polluted.

Law also instructed State Governments to submit their projected allocation for environment to the ministry so that it could present its allocation under the Eighth Malaysian Plan to the Government for consideration.

Earlier, Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Mohd Khir Toyo in his speech said Selangor would add another E to its Four Es Administration Concept (Educated, Efficient, Effective and Electronic), which was Environment.

"With the fifth E, this will ensure that all future development projects in the State are environment-friendly."

He said the State Government had set up an Environmental Awareness Action Committee comprising representatives from government departments, the private sector and non-governmental organisations.

On top of this, Mohamad Khir said Selangor planned to introduce guidelines called the Selangor Environmental Blueprint for better management of the environment.

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