

Satellite to curb illegal logging, forest fires

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PUTRAJAYA: Remote sensing technology will be extended nationwide to curb illegal logging and control forest fires.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the satellite-based data gathering and monitoring system would also provide authorities with up-to-date information on the inventories of forests in the country.

"The technology will enable the gathering of data on species of flora and fauna as well as the volume of trees in our forests," he said.

Praising the technology developed by the Malaysian Centre for Remote Sensing, he said after the

technology was successfully tried out in the Gunung Stong State Park in Kelantan, the Government was expanding its usage.

Najib was speaking after chairing the 20th National Forestry Council meeting here, yesterday.

Najib said the government was concerned over the shrinking timber resources in Peninsular Malaysia and would take steps, including reviewing and restructuring related policies to overcome the problem.

The new policies which are being prepared by the Plantation Industries and Commodities Ministry will protect the interest of industries, especially, furniture manufacturing.

It would be tabled for the Cabi-

net by year-end.

On the sugar issue, Najib said he was holding on to sugar manufacturers' word that they would increase sugar output until the commodity's shortage was overcome.

If they lived up to the promises, Najib, who is also chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Essential Goods, said the government would not liberalise the import of the commodity.

"I'm giving them a bit of time. The government will not liberalise it. But if they are not effective, we will consider it (import of sugar).

"We are monitoring the situation and the government has taken steps to ease the problem," he said.

The four refineries are Malayan

Sugar Manufacturing, Central Sugar Refinery, Gula Padang Terap and Kilang Gula Felda Perlis.

Earlier this month, the government declared fine sugar a controlled item with retail prices fixed at RM1.55 a kg for Peninsular Malaysia and RM1.65 a kg for Sabah and Sarawak.

Asked on calls by certain parties that Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal should step down as Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister following the increase in consumer goods' prices, especially sugar, Najib said that Shafie should not be blamed, as it was the world market situation.

"Have pity on him, he was hit hard during the fuel price hike and now this."