

## **Malaysia's FDRS System May Be Expanded To Include Asean Countries**

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**By Alan Ting**

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- The national Fire Danger Rating System (FDRS) may be expanded to include other ASEAN countries in order to provide early warning on potential fire occurrences, said Natural Resources and Environment Minister, Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas.

He said the environment ministers from five countries taking part at the 13th Meeting of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Meeting (MSC) on Trans-boundary Haze Pollution in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei on May 8 agreed to recommend the development of the proposed ASEAN-wide FDRS to be considered by ASEAN's Leaders.

"The meeting agreed that the FDRS be expanded to other countries. They would make the respective recommendations to their government and leaders," he told Bernama here Friday.

The FDRS provides early warning on potential fire occurrences, which enables preparedness and preventive action during dry weather periods.

He said the system, developed by Malaysia and Indonesia, actually already had the ASEAN-wide FDRS map and been regularly updated by Malaysia. The ASEAN-wide FDRS map is also displayed on Google Earth.

He said for the past few years, Malaysia and Indonesia had been working to further improve the FDRS system by integrating weather data and ground conditions with information such as fire prone peat areas.

"For these, we have also installed more weather stations to provide better short term and medium term forecasts. Many ASEAN countries have expressed their interests and want us to help them set up the system in their country," he said.

During the two-day meeting, Uggah said the environment ministers were also given an update by the Asean Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC's) on the weather outlook for the region in the coming months.

He said the ministers were informed that fire hotspots were generally reduced due to more wet weather conditions but to expect the number to be increase again due to the drier weather between June and mid-October 2012.

"The countries involved have said they would continue to closely monitor the situation," he added.

Uggah also said during the meeting, Malaysia also shared its experience in implementing fire prevention and peat land management programme, which has helped in reducing hotspots in several areas while other countries, such as Thailand shared their Guidelines on Agricultural Residual Burning and Indonesia its experience in mapping burnt areas through satellite.

On when Indonesia will ratify the ASEAN Agreement on Trans-boundary Haze Pollution, he said they were currently in the process of doing it.

The ASEAN Agreement on Trans-boundary Haze Pollution was signed by ten countries on June 2011 in Kuala Lumpur and had been effective as of November 25, 2003 after six countries ratified it.

To-date, Indonesia is the only country in the ten-member ASEAN grouping that has not ratified the agreement.

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