

Government Plans To Set Up Special Court To Try Environmental Crime Cases
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 19 (Bernama) -- The government plans to set up a special court to try environmental crime cases, especially open burning of forests.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said his ministry was currently studying various aspects pertaining to the matter such as the maximum fine to be imposed on the offenders.

"We want to enforce the existing law and I have obtained information from the Department of Environment that to date, action have been taken against more than 3,500 cases across all industries including plantation, agriculture and manufacturing, as well as individuals.

"We want this court be set up to specifically tackle environmental crime so that the cases can be dealt with fast by the court and for the offenders to feel the effectiveness of the punitive action," he told a press conference at the Parliament lobby, here, today.

Wan Junaidi said his ministry was also currently collaborating with the Attorney-General's Chambers in looking at the legal aspects in establishing the special court.

He said the existing penalty for industries involved in open burning and causing air pollution was insufficient, considering the adverse effects on various parties.

"We see the RM50,000 fine imposed on companies for polluting the environment as still inadequate. We are looking at the law as a whole and the action against offenders."

Wan Junaidi also said that Indonesia had asked Malaysia for continued assistance of sending the Bombardier CL425MP aircraft to help douse the fires in Palembang, South Sumatra.

He said Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Retno Marsudi had informed that the fire-fighting mission was effective in reducing the haze in several areas in Indonesia.

"However, at the moment fires are still raging in some places with the smoke moving towards Peninsular Malaysia from Sumatra and Kalimantan, breaking into two directions due to being blown by the south-westerly wind.

"Indonesia appreciates our help but the aircraft assistance may be temporarily halted to allow it to undergo the maintenance process and the mission to resume after that," he added.

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