

**Malaysia Hopes ASEAN Aims To Be Haze Free Region By 2018 - Wan Junaidi  
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KUCHING, Oct 31 (Bernama) -- Malaysia hopes ASEAN should aim to be a haze free region by 2018, said Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said.

He said he had attended the 11th Conference of Parties (COP) to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution held in Hanoi, Vietnam on Thursday and Friday where the haze problem was the main issue.

"Although this is not an official declaration yet Malaysia expresses the hope that the ASEAN region should aim to be haze free by then," he told the media after launching the state annual Environmental Week celebration here Saturday.

Wan Junaidi said ASEAN countries like Myanmar, Cambodia and Northern Thailand also suffered from the haze because of their forest fires.

"But the severity is less because they do not have huge areas of peat soil.

"Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia are badly affected when most of the 1.7 million hectares under peat in Indonesia catches fires," he said.

On Indonesia 's commitment to fight future forest fires, Wan Junaidi said he had met with his Indonesian counterpart, Siti Nurbaya Bakar recently.

"Indonesia will send a delegation to study our peat soil management system in which we have drains and dams to help moisturise such soil.

"They also want to learn about our tube well system while we have a very strong enforcement by the Department of Environment which they can learn from," he added

On the haze, Wan Junaidi said heavy rains, which occurred on Oct 17, had helped to douse forest fires in Riau and Jambi and reduced the haze problem considerably.

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