



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**YB DATO SRI DR HAJI WAN JUNAIDI BIN TUANKU JAAFAR  
MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **QUERY FROM THE STAR AND NST ON OPEN BURNING IN JOHAN SETIA, KLANG**

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The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) is equally concerned about local open burning issues as well as burning in Indonesia because both contribute to local and transboundary haze respectively.

Based on the investigation done by the Department of Environment (DOE) and the Klang Municipal Council (MPK), the haze in the Johan Setia peatland area is being caused by the open burning of bushes and rubbish. This open burning always occurs during the dry season and is being carried out by immigrants who have been employed by the land owners there. This has affected the people around Johan Setia, Klang including Jalan Kebun, KESAS Highway, Bandar Puteri, Bandar Putera and Kota Kemuning. It is unfortunate that irresponsible parties always burn during the dry season and this further compounds the issue.

Many mitigating measures have been taken by the Department of Environment under the auspices of NRE in collaboration with other agencies from Selangor. They are:

- The Ministry strongly supports the action taken by the Selangor State government to seize the land of owners who have been convicted of continuous and recurring open burning offences. The issue of open burning in Johan Setia, Klang was recently tabled at a State Legislative Council Meeting and the state government subsequently has committed to implementing the seizure of the land of owners who are repeat offenders and have been convicted of recurring open burning offences.
- Activated the Open Burning Prevention Action Plan (Pelan Tindakan Pencegahan Pembakaran Terbuka)
  - Daily patrols of the affected areas have been conducted since February 2017;
  - Issuing show cause letters to the local councils who are responsible for the domestic dumpsites
- The Selangor State Disaster Management Unit is responsible for coordinating fire fighting work which also involves several Government agencies such as the Fire and Rescue Department, Department of Environment, Klang Municipal Council and the Land Office. The Fire and Rescue Department of Malaysia has been conducting intensive fire fighting manoeuvres in Johan Setia, Klang area whenever major open burning occurs there.
  - One of the main problems that the Fire Department faces in extinguishing the fires is the lack of water resources. In this

regard, the DOE has been looking into ways of obtaining groundwater resources through a study conducted by the Mineral and Geoscience Department. They will also implement the Peatland Fire Prevention Programme (Program Pencegahan Kebakaran Tanah Gambut Sering dan Mudah Terbakar) through the construction of five (5) units of check dams in Johan Setia to irrigate the areas in order to keep the peatland wet. The water can also be used for fire suppression.

- The ministry has taken many steps to bring the perpetrators to justice. Sometimes, it is difficult to prosecute the offenders because there is usually nobody around when the enforcement officers go to the sites to check on the burning. They then have to find out who the owner of the land is from the Land Office and then only can the investigative and prosecution processes begin. This investigation can take time as there are many agencies involved. Frequently, fires are found to be raging in Road Reserve Land which do not have any owners so no prosecution can be carried out.
  - On top of that, the DOE has also proactively set up the Pollution Monitoring Team (Pasukan Pemantau Pencemaran (3P)) which involves local residents in Johan Setia to help in monitoring the open burning activities in that particular area. The DOE welcomes any information on open burning cases. Complaints on open burning are investigated immediately and if no person is found at the site where the fires are burning, further investigation will be

carried out to identify the landowner, in which case, enforcement action will be taken under Section 29A of the Environmental Quality Act 1974.

- Between 2011 and 2017, 47 investigation papers have been opened and 43 cases have been filed in court for open burning offenses. Four (4) more cases are currently being investigated. The total amount of compounds and penalties charged for the open burning cases in Johan Setia area is RM78,400.00.
- There is a National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) which encompasses cooperation between federal and state agencies to share resources and also to expedite the resolution of cases. In this instance, the agencies involved are the Klang City Council, DOE, Police, Justice Department, Land offices and Immigration Department. From time to time, joint operations are conducted by the agencies to prevent or curb the crimes. However, not every single action is fruitful.

The real cause of open burning in Johan Setia is economic. The people here break the law because they are trying to survive. With the approval of the proposed LRT 3 project from Johan Setia to Bandar Utama, it is hoped that it will spur development in the area and gradually stop the open burning.

The Ministry has a no-compromise policy and all offenders will be brought to justice. There has been success in prosecuting the offenders and reducing the amount of haze significantly over the last couple of years. The Ministry is totally committed to and will continue to do its best with the available resources to prevent the recurring haze from ever enveloping the country again.

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