

Act against open burning

WE are now in the middle of the hot and dry season. According to the Meteorological Department, the hot and dry weather, especially in the north of the west coast of the peninsula, is expected to continue until the end of March.

The country is at end of the north-easterly monsoon where there is less rain in most areas for a long period, resulting in this hot and dry weather.

As such, the public as well as industries are advised not to conduct any open-burning activities.

Activities which can be considered as open burning include the burning of unwanted materials such as paper, trees, brush, leaves, grass, and debris, where smoke and other

emissions are released directly into the air without passing through a chimney or stack.

Open burning can also include incineration devices that do not control the combustion air to maintain an adequate temperature that do not provide sufficient residence time for complete combustion.

It is important to note that any activities of open burning will pollute the air and pose a high risk of fire, especially during the current hot and dry weather condition.

The long-term effects of air pollution, created by open burning, can irritate eyes and lungs, obscure visibility, soil nearby surfaces, create annoying odours, and cause danger, especially to those suffering with respiratory conditions.

Instead of conducting open burning, the public should be advised to take other alternative approaches to deal with the waste like making compost in which leaves and grass can be turned into nutrients for the garden or houseplants.

The public can also use their own creativity to recycle or reuse any old or used materials.

Stern legal action needs to be taken against those carrying out open burning using existing laws such as the Environmental Quality Act 1974 (Act 127). Section 29A of the Act clearly forbids any person from conducting open burning.

It states that no person shall allow or cause open burning on any premises. Any person who contravenes this rule shall be guilty of an

offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding RM5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or both.

According to the Act, "open burning" means any fire, combustion or smouldering that occurs in the open air and which is not directed there through a chimney or stack.

The relevant enforcement agencies like the Department of Environment under the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry should constantly advise the public not to carry out open burning in order to avoid any disaster.

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