

Action plan to tackle heat

Special committee to deal with hot and dry weather matters

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PUTRAJAYA: The Government will be drawing up an "action plan" on how to tackle the hot and dry season in Malaysia, caused by the El Nino phenomenon.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said the Cabinet would be asked to approve a special committee on hot and dry weather matters.

Speaking after chairing a special meeting on the heatwave, he said the action plan would serve as a guideline for the public to plan daily activities and precautions during the heatwave.

The actions could include closing schools or stopping all outdoor activities at school.

Dr Wan Junaidi said the proposed special committee would be a permanent body that will issue public warnings and advisories whenever a hot spell occurs in the country.

"The El Nino phenomenon

did not just occur this year, it hit us in 1997 and 1998, and it happens from time to time, with varying degrees of intensity."

He also said the Cabinet would be the one to finalise the action plan that would be taken when the heat reaches certain threshold levels.

"According to the Meteorological Department, a 'heatwave' is declared when the temperature of an area is over 35°C for five days in a row, or over 37 °C for three days in a row.

"But the heatwave is only declared at the areas that records the trend, not the whole country."

He added that the Cabinet would also decide if the special committee would be headed by his ministry or the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry.

The Department of Environment has recorded 617 cases of open burning this year, up till March 14, and compounds have been issued for 52 cases, said Dr Wan Junaidi.

TIPS FOR KEEPING WELL DURING HOT SEASON



Drink lots of water regardless of level of activity

Stay indoors and reduce outdoor activities

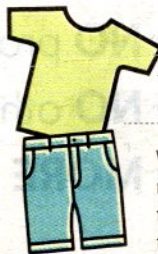


Use fan or air-conditioning to cool down body

Reduce caffeinated, alcoholic and sweet drinks



Use sun block (best if SPF 30 and above)



Wear light coloured and loose clothing

Drink Isotonic drinks to replace salt loss from sweating

Wear a hat or use an umbrella to protect from the sun



Don't sit in car for too long without air-conditioning



Source: Health Ministry