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Thursday, 19 May 2016

MoU allows relevant parties to work together to achieve objective

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THE community in Kuala Selangor are not the only ones responsible for the drop in the number of peat forest fires in the area.

Smooth cooperation between several stakeholders including the Global Environment Centre (GEC), the Selangor State Forestry Department, the Fire and Rescue Services Department, Civil Defence and the Selangor Disaster Management Unit has ensured that peat swamp fires are detected early and put out immediately.

Selangor Environment Committee chairman Elizabeth Wong said the cooperation between GEC and state government, through the Forestry Department, was achieved after they signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

The MOU that was signed in 2010 had just been renewed for another nine years. It was initiated when the state realised people in the surrounding areas were burning the forests.

Wong highlighted the commitment of the state government which had adopted and made annual allocations for the implementation of an Integrated Management Plan for the North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest 2014-2023 prepared by the Selangor Forestry Department

"With help of GEC, we began engaging with local residents and schools to show they have more to benefit if they preserved the peatlands. This helps to regulate and understand the development around it," she said.

She also said that the local community was given training in firefighting skills and the SOP in firefighting was continuously revamped, including using special

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materials called the PeatfireX.

"They are even using drones during forest fires to help detect the extent of destruction in forest reserve and to find out the current state of fire to plan appropriate follow-up actions to combat the fires.

The biggest improvement in the last three years, she said, was the decision to classify all peat fires as emergency thus putting all District Offices in charge. At the same time, the Selangor Disaster Management Unit in the state secretariat will be alerted.

Selangor State Forestry Department director Dr Mohd Puat Dahalan said the MoU made it easier for all the relevant agencies to work together.

"Even the Friends of North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest has become an added strength for the Forestry Department since they act as the eyes and ears in monitoring the situation," he added

GEC director Faizal Parish said the state's willingness to agree to the integrated plan had proven effective to eliminate fire threats as soon as possible.

"We have managed to find the root causes and identify the necessary agencies that need to be deployed and their roles in the issue. Through these departments and cooperation with plantation companies, we also have good access to the roads leading into the forest that would otherwise be closed off.

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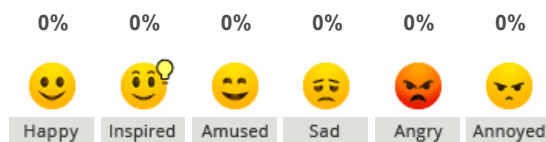
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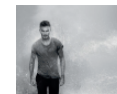
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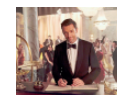
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