Wan Junaidi: Malaysia ready to help put out Indonesian forest fires

MR-2 3/17

Indonesian agency assures that Malaysia won't be experiencing haze as it has already taken steps to halt forest fires

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Wan Junaidi *(third from right)* **with his Deputy Minister Datuk Ir Dr Hamim Samuri** *(second from right)* **flagging off the participants in Kuala Lumpur yesterday**

MALAYSIA is ready to send firefighters to Indonesia to help put out forest fires in the republic.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said the government is seriously concerned about the problem, which could cause haze, and is ready to provide assistance at any time.

"I have discussed it with Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, who is in charge of the Fire and Rescue Department and the Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (SMART), and he has given the assurance that they are ready at any time," he told reporters when met at the SMART Tunnel Run 2017 in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Recently, Indonesia's Disaster Mitigation Agency warned of an increase in forest fire threats due the ongoing drought in the country that is expected to worsen, but some hot spots have already been detected in Aceh, causing the area to experience haze.

However, the Indonesian Peat Soil Recovery Agency has reportedly given assurance that neighbours like Malaysia and Singapore would not be experiencing haze as it had already taken steps to halt forest fires.

Following his recent meeting with governors of Riau and Jambi, Wan Junaidi said he is planning to meet with the governor of Acheh next to discuss the matter.

Earlier, Wan Junaidi had flagged off about 1,800 runners who took part in the SMART Tunnel Run 2017, organised by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment through the Department of Irrigation and Drainage, which was held in conjunction with the 85th anniversary of the establishment of the department and the 10th anniversary of the operation of the SMART tunnel.

The 9.7km storm water management and road tunnel project (SMART), opened in June 2007, is a dual-use tunnel aimed at mitigating floods in the federal capital by diverting 1.16 million cu m of water in the event of continuous heavy rain for three hours, as well as to ease traffic congestion.

As of July 15, 2017, a total of 299 flash floods in the capital had been diverted from the city centre.

Among the almost flood-free areas in the capital — due to the SMART tunnel — are the Sultan Abdul Samad Building, Dataran Merdeka, Jalan Munsyi Abdullah, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Kampung Baru, Jalan Tun Razak and Jalan P Ramlee. — *Bernama*