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M'sia, Indonesia for further talks on combating forest fires

CYBERJAYA: Malaysia would hold further talks with Indonesia on the assistance required to tackle the forest fires and haze in the region, said Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar.

He said about 1.7 million hectares of forest and open land in Sumatra and Kalimantan were on fire and it was not easy to put out the blaze due to the lack of rain in the affected areas.

"This means that Indonesia still needs our help," he said, adding that he would be going to the republic tomorrow to discuss on the required assistance.

He also hoped to discuss with the Indonesian Environment and Forestry Minister, Dr Siti Nurbaya Bakar on the memorandum of understanding between Malaysia and Indonesia in tackling the transboundary haze which had yet to be signed as it was delayed due to the very bad haze. Wan Junaidi was speaking to reporters after meeting the 2015-2017 board members of the Malaysian Forestry Research and Development Board, here.

On Oct 11, Malaysia through the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) sent a Bombardier CL 415 aircraft and an AS 365 N3 Dauphin helicopter to participate in the fire-fighting operations in South Sumatra, Indonesia.

With the Bombardier aircraft doing 'water scooping' and 'water bombing' over the affected areas, more than one million litres of water were released on the burning forests and open ground on Oct 20.

Wan Junaidi said the Indonesians commended on the effectiveness of the first Malaysian fire-fighting mission in Sumatra.

"As the aircraft has to be serviced before it can be sent for the following mission, we are ready to send our Fire and Rescue teams to provide assistance there," he said.

On another note, Wan Junaidi said he would propose to the government to amend the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (Frim) regulations so that the institute could go commercial and generate its own income. — Bernama