

Ministry to punish arsonists

JAKARTA: The Environment Ministry will punish the arsonists in Palembang, South Sumatra, who are allegedly responsible for forest fires in the city.

"I have commanded the third and fifth deputies to Palembang to enforce the law," Environment Minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta said as quoted by Antara news agency.

The ministry recorded Riau as the province in Indonesia with the highest number of fire-prone hot spots, with 2,159. Other fire-prone provinces are West Kalimantan with 809 hot spots, North Sumatra with 600, Northeast Kalimantan with 543, Jambi with 455 and South Kalimantan with 259.

The ministry successfully reduced fire hot spots in the country by up to 70 percent in 2010, and is targeting to reduce them by 20 percent this year.

The government has been targeting to reduce fire-prone hot spots annually, since a massive fire in 2006 that triggered more than 26,000 fire hot spots.