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★ EXCLUSIVE ★



Energy Commission going after 'firestarters'

IMPRISONMENT and a stiff fine await those who cause fires by using illegal electricity connections. The energy industry regulator is stepping up checks in the peninsula and Sabah to nab these people.

» REPORTS BY **ALIZA SHAH** ON **PAGE 2**

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ELECTRICAL FIRE

FINE, JAIL FOR ILLEGAL EXTENSIONS

Energy Commission to step up random inspections

ALIZA SHAH
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

OWNERS of premises destroyed in electrical fires will soon not only have to deal with the losses incurred, but could also face jail time if it is found that the blazes were caused by short-circuits from the use of illegal electricity sources.

This is because the Energy

Commission will be fully enforcing Section 31(13) of the Electricity Supply Act 1990, which allows for huge fines and imprisonment of up to two years.

A spokesman said the commission would be increasing random inspections on installations in the peninsula and Sabah.

"The commission is more than ready to haul up those who have made illegal connections on their premises, and slap them with a maximum fine of RM10,000, or im-



prisonment of up to two years, or both. The focus will also be on private homeowners," the spokesman told the *New Straits Times*.

Once an operation is carried out to dismantle illegal wiring extensions, the commission will initiate investigations under Sec-

tion 37(13) of the act, the findings of which will then be forwarded to the deputy public prosecutor for criminal proceedings to be initiated.

The commission is confident that two new provisions added to the act would ensure consumers better observe safe and legal use of electricity on premises.

"These provisions — Section 33A and 33B — hold licensees, owners, tenants, managements and operators of premises and contractors liable for criminal action if breached. Under the two new sections, these groups of consumers are required to ensure that all elements of effective

electrical safety management system are observed.

"This covers, among others, risk control measures and action for improvement. The purpose of this provision is to prevent fires and accidents caused by unsafe or non-compliant use of electricity," said the spokesman.

He said the commission, which was tasked to oversee and regulate the country's electricity matters, had last year identified 245 premises that carried out illegal extensions.

This problem, the commission believes, was prevalent in squatter settlements and low-cost housing areas.