

Malaysia: Big Win Against Illegal Timber Ops

JACK WONG, The Star

KUCHING: Sarawak Forestry Corporation has scored a major success in curbing illegal timber operations with the seizures of over RM1mil worth of forest products and sawmilling machinery in Bintulu and Sarikei.

Three men were arrested and several others held for questioning on Saturday, said the corporation's security and asset protection unit general manager Sani Bakar.

He said machinery seized included 11 units of bandsaws, three forklifts, three blowers, one circular saw, one generator, two lorries, 253 pieces of half logs and over 200 bundles of sawn timber.

Sani said the success came after more than three months of tireless surveillance work by forestry officers on four sawmills operating without licences or which had breached their licence conditions.

The surveillance teams, he said, got the break after tailing three lorries heading towards Bintulu town.

"When the driver of one of the trucks spotted the surveillance team, he tried to evade them.

"He then ditched the truck in a nearby plantation and escaped on foot. The timber products on the lorry was subsequently seized," he added.

Sani said while two other lorries unloaded illegally sourced timber at licensed sawmills in Kemena and Sarikei, the forestry officers moved in and raided the sawmills.

He said the corporation's actions were aimed not only at culprits behind illegal timber processing but also at "other forces" directly or indirectly involved in the crime.

Sani advised those involved in illegal logging and processing of timber and purchasing illegally-sourced timber products to stop immediately or risk been caught.

"Licence holders must strictly adhere to their licence conditions. If they breach the conditions, we will recommend an immediate suspension of the licences and court prosecution," he said.

He said the corporation would press for jail sentences for the offenders.

© 1995-2005 Star Publications (Malaysia) Bhd

Content Provider: The Star (Malaysia)