

# Timber players taking up CM's challenges to transform industry

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(From left) Patrick, Kuo Hea, Lau, Ling, Kie Yik, Abang Johari, Sapuan, Tiong and Ling. — Photo by Chimon Upon

KUCHING: Timber industry players in Sarawak are willing to take up the challenges Chief Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg has thrown to them.

Among the challenges are shifting from the reliance on natural timber to planted forests and investment into research and development (R&D) to search for fast yielding species of high economic values.

Abang Johari gave these challenges in an-hour meeting with permanent council members of Sarawak Timber Association (STA) at Wisma Bapa Malaysia here yesterday.

Secretary general of Sarawak Timber Association (STA) Dato Henry Lau said the meeting was fruitful and the timber industry players were prepared to work closely with the state government to transform the industry.

“Basically, the chief minister wants us to reduce the reliance on natural forests and encourages tree planting. That would be our biggest challenge – to see whether we can do it meaningfully and competitively.

“It will be crucial that we plant the right species which have economic values which are competitive enough,” Lau told the media after the meeting.

He said the purpose of the meeting was to brief the new chief minister on the history and the current situation of the state’s timber industry.

It was also for STA to get a clear picture of the new chief minister’s timber policy and his vision of the future of the industry.

“I believe the new chief minister will continue to carry on with the policy of Tok Nan.

“His vision, I believe is to encourage tree planting, to shift from the traditional reliance on natural timber to planted

forests.

“He (Abang Johari) promised to give us good support and we will try to work our best towards R&D, certification as well as changing the landscape of timber supply and its downstream,” said Lau.

Lau said in the meeting, the chief minister was very open about what he had in mind.

“He understands our situation and he also has his intention and vision and we will go back and we will try to look into how to work with the government closely,” said Lau.

Other permanent council members of STA who attended the meeting included Tan Sri Sir Tiong Hiew King, Dato Sri Patrick Wong, Dato Wong Kuo Hea, Peter Ling, Pemanca Datuk Wong Kie Yik, Tan Sri Ling Chiong Ho.

Forestry Department director Datuk Ahmad Sapuan was also present.

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