

CM: Timber industry has to move downstream – Abang Johari

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Abang Johari pours water onto the balloon to symbolically launch the Stakeholders Consultation on the Proposed Forestry Policies.

KUCHING: The Sarawak timber industry has to transform structurally from primary processing to producing higher value-added products like bioplastic, biofuel, pulp and paper, engineered wood and furniture, says Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg.

He believes that for this transformation to materialise, it is necessary and vital for the industry to embark on changes in a drastic and innovative manner. Sarawak, he noted, aspires that by 2030, about 60 per cent of its export value of timber and timber products will be from high value products like engineered wood and furniture. “As the log production from natural forest is declining, the industry, therefore, would need to undertake the retooling and re-engineering process within their mills and timber operations.

“This is in line with the changes on the type of raw materials available in the future such as timber from planted forest which has different physical characteristics from that of the natural forest,” he said at the Stakeholders Consultation on the Proposed Forestry Policies opening ceremony here yesterday.

Abang Johari said other key areas that needed to be considered and looked into are promotion, research and development (R&D) programmes, capacity building, and the use of new technology to enhance quality and efficiencies especially in downstream processing.

On another note, he said Sarawak is already exploring non-timber forest resources such as eco-tourism, carbon trading, payment for ecosystem services and community-based forestry as alternative source of revenue for the state and the community.

“It is obvious that we cannot rely only on one or two main sources of revenue especially on primary timber products. “We must be able to diversify the revenue base and enhance the value of our forest resources,” he said. Regarding the consultation session, the Chief Minister hoped that it would come up with useful suggestions to further improve the proposed new policies that the government intended to introduce. This, he noted, would ensure that the new policies will be a win-win for all the stakeholders in the timber industry.

The Stakeholders Consultation Session is jointly organised by the Ministry of Urban Development and Natural Resources, Sarawak Forest Department, Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (STIDC), Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC) and Harwood Timber Sdn Bhd and supported by Sarawak Timber Association (STA). Attended by government agencies and timber industry players, the objective of the consultation is to seek stakeholder input on the proposed forestry policies and on the implementation mechanism.

There are eight proposed forestry policies to be discussed, namely Statement of Sarawak Forest Policy; Sarawak Timber Industry Development Policy; Forest Management Certification Policy; Planted Forest Policy; Raw Material for Downstream Timber Industry & Value Added Product Policy; Forest Revenue and Other Potential Forest Related Income; Fee on Sale, Distribution and Marketing of Timber & Timber Products from Sarawak; and Mechanism for Rubber Wood Extraction.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan was also present.



Abang Johari (right), accompanied by Awang Tengah, arrives for the Stakeholders Consultation on the Proposed Forestry Policies in Kuching.