

## Sarawak government looking for new revenue from forest sector — Abang Johari

November 23, 2018, Friday at 12:02 AM Lim How Pim, reporters@theborneopost.com



Awang Tengah (centre) with (from left) Hamden, Naroden, Len Talif and an unidentified person at the launching ceremony. — Photo by Chimon Upon

**KUCHING:** The Sarawak government will continue to explore new revenue from the forest sector, said Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg.

Without disclosing much detail, he said one of the ways is through eco-tourism.

“Several initiatives have been implemented to see to it that Sarawak’s forests are properly managed while programmes on conservation of forests and wildlife are to carry on.

“The local community is urged to be involved in relevant activities such as homestay programme, preparation of local delicacies and cultural performance to promote eco-tourism,” he said at the opening of the Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Sarawak 2018 Carnival at the Kuching Waterfront here yesterday.

His text of speech was read out by Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Industrial and Entrepreneur Development Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan.

Abang Johari said more government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private corporations should work closely to promote and market NTFP through the concept of ‘smart partnership’.

He asserted that such concerted effort can help create awareness among the rural community of the potential of NTFP.

“Relevant agencies should through their respective programmes help the local community develop and enhance their skills towards promoting NTFP.”

He believes that carnivals like this can serve as a vital platform to promote NTFP so as to enhance collaboration among the government agencies, the private sector and the local community particularly the rural folk.

To preserve Sarawak’s forests, Abang Johari said the state government is committed to achieving its target of seeing at least one million hectares under Totally Protected Areas (TPAs) by 2020.



Awang Tengah takes a closer look at some handicraft items. — Photo by Chimon Upon

To date, he said 803,042 hectares of land had been declared as TPAs.

The Sarawak government, he said, is also committed to implementing the initiative of Heart of Borneo (HoB) covering an area of 2.7 million hectares in line with the conservation of forest resources.

On top of that, Abang Johari said his administration would continue to go all-out to curb illegal activities that could put the state's timber resources at risk.

“We need the cooperation of all to look after our forests. The local community needs to tip off the authorities whenever they come across any illegal activities especially illegal logging.

“The Sarawak state government has also decided not to issue any more new timber licences except for areas where development is required, such as the development of NCR (native customary rights) land,” he added.

Abang Johari pointed out that the State Budget 2019 he tabled last week had set aside over RM9 billion for development.

Of the figure, he said some RM6 billion or 67 per cent would be meant for rural development in terms of the upgrading of infrastructure such as roads, bridges as well as the supply of electricity and water.

This, he said, is to enhance accessibility for the rural folk so as to enable them to market their products outside Sarawak.

He added that the Sarawak government will increase coverage of telecommunication services in rural areas to promote NTFP through e-commerce.

Among those present were Assistant Minister of Urban Planning, Land Administration and Environment Datu Len Talif Salleh, Assistant Minister of Entrepreneur and Small, Medium Enterprise Development Datuk Mohd Naroden Majais and Sarawak Forest Department director Hamden Mohammad.