

## **Logs seized in Serian not cut by illegal loggers**

By: [Online News Editor](#) - April 16, 2019

KUCHING: The State Forest Department yesterday clarified that the 1,003 logs recently seized at Kampung Pati Kenyalang, Jalan Ensengi in Serian were not from trees felled by illegal loggers.

The logs and machinery were estimated to be worth a total of RM1.1 million.

Initial investigation by the department on April 10 revealed that the felling of the timber logs was carried out by a contractor on provisional lease (PL), department director Hamden Mohammad said yesterday.

The PL holder, a registered company, had hired the contractor to clear the land and extract the timber, to develop an oil palm plantation, he added.

Both the logs and machinery were seized by the 11th Battalion General Operations Force.

Hamden said the investigation also revealed that for the purpose of obtaining a permit for royalty estimates, the company had actually sent an application to the department on Jan 7.

The application, however, was not processed as the department had ceased issuing special permits under the Felled Log Mechanism for land to be developed since the beginning of this year.



File photo: Enforcement personnel showing the seized timber.

This is following a decision by the state government to come up with a new mechanism involving various agencies under a joint committee for the approval of every application.

The Environment and Urban Development Ministry will coordinate the joint committee.

Pending the enforcement of the new mechanism, Hamden said the department would not stop any land development activity on private land.

In line with this, the department also advised those who wish to sell logs harvested from their land to stock until the new mechanism is ready to be put to use.

“To prevent a similar seizure and misleading reports of seizure in the future, all agencies involved in carrying out forest enforcement operations must get in touch with the Forest Department first for verification purposes before making any press statement,” he said.

The implications of giving inaccurate statements could be wrongly used by irresponsible quarters including international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to accuse the state of not managing its forest sustainably and that the exported timber products were illegally sourced, Hamden cautioned.

He urged all concerned to be more responsible in issuing media statements lest they paint a wrong image and negative perception of the state’s forest sector.

Hamden said the state’s Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force, chaired by Deputy Chief Minister and Environment and Urban Development Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan has decided during a meeting that any operation to curb illegal logging in the state must be headed by the Forest Department.

As such all state and federal enforcement agencies must abide by the decision, he said.

He welcomed the appointment of Lt General (R) Datuk Stephen Mundaw as the Special Administrative Officer of the Anti-Illegal Logging Special Task Force and would give full cooperation to him in carrying out various operations to weed out illegal logging in the state.