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Yong-Apology (with pix)

CHIEF MINISTER INSTRUCTS LAWYER TO DEAL WITH APOLOGY DEMAND

KOTA KINABALU, May 16 (Bernama) -- Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee said today he has instructed his lawyer to deal with a timber firm's demand for a public apology in relation to the seizure of logs by the state forestry department early this year.

Yong, however, declined to give details on the contents of the letter from Tawau-based Syarikat Raspond, saying that his counsel would handle the matter.

"I have just forwarded the letter to the lawyer. I don't remember exactly when, but it went out almost immediately to the lawyer after I received the letter from the company," he told reporters after launching the ground-breaking ceremony for SRJK Chung Hwa's new RM2 million school block here.

Syarikat Raspond, in letters to Yong and his deputy Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh on Monday, demanded a public apology. The company said if they did not publish their apologies within 14 days it would file defamation suits against them.

The company claimed that Yong had on Jan 23 and 30 made defamatory statements on the seizure of its logs on Jan 18, near Sebatik Island, off Tawau.

The company's counsel Sugumar Balakrishnan said the defamatory statements were published in the New Straits Times, The Star, Berita Harian, Utusan Malaysia, Daily Express, Borneo Mail, Borneo Post and several Chinese newspapers and also reported by Bernama.

Meanwhile, when asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's stand on corruption, Yong said all cabinet ministers had declared their assets.

"They submitted their declarations to the Prime Minister early this month," he said.

On Wednesday, Dr Mahathir said action would be taken against government leaders who led a lifestyle beyond the income they had declared when they were appointed.

He said action would also be taken against them if they failed to disclose their assets accurately. -- BERNAMA

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