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Mahathir-Report

DR MAHATHIR RECEIVES SABAH LOG SMUGGLING REPORT

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad this morning received a report from the Sabah Cabinet Committee set up to investigate claims of log smuggling via Tawau in the state's east coast.

The report was handed over to Dr Mahathir at the Prime Minister's Department here by a Sabah delegation headed by Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee.

The Chief Minister also handed over a copy of the report to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Sabah delegation included Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Ghapur Salleh who is Chairman of the State Cabinet Committee.

The other members of the committee include Sabah Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia; Sabah Police Commissioner Datuk Maizan Shaari; Sabah Attorney-General Datuk Stephen Foo and representatives of the Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB); Forestry Department and Customs and Excise Department.

Ghapur said yesterday that the report contained recommendations on rectifying weaknesses in the relevant procedures governing timber exports.

The recommendations were based on existing documents and the Prime Minister would be briefed on the developments, he had said.

Ghapur had said that the top leadership was likely to decide on the position of the State Forestry Department based on the report.

The State Cabinet Committee was set up after Anwar directed the state government on Jan 20 to investigate the detention of the Port Klang registered "MV Able Helmsmen" by the Sabah Forestry Department while it was loading logs at Tawau, which were believed bound for Japan.

The log smuggling case had become a hotly debated issue with Ghapur and Federal Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik each giving different versions on reports of log smuggling.

Ghapur charged that the MTIB, an agency under the Federal Primary Industries Ministry, was aware of logs from Indonesia being smuggled into Sabah and the illegal felling of logs in Sabah, for export.

Dr Lim said his ministry had never issued any permit for log exports but had given temporary approval for the purpose to four companies for the period between October and December last year. -- BERNAMA

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