

## **PKR blames corruption for rampant illegal logging**

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Sarawak PKR blamed rampant illegal logging in the state's forests and diverse wildlife national parks on weak enforcement by enforcement agencies.

"Illegal logging activities have been going on in many parts of Sarawak due to poor and weak enforcement.

"It has something to do with corruption," said Sarawak PKR chief Baru Bian, when asked to comment on a statement made by Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM).

The NGO had asked Sarawak's Chief Minister Adenan Satem to walk the talk in tackling the scourge of illegal logging.

Forestry is under Adenan, who is also minister for resource planning and environment.

Baru (right), who is the Ba'Kelalan assembly person, said: "They not only illegally cut down trees, but also cut down protected species such as engkabang trees."

"After cutting down the engkabang trees, the illegal loggers classify or mark the engkabang logs as ordinary timber. If corruption is not involved, how come the enforcement officers do not notice it," he added.

Baru said he also raised the matter in the state assembly but the relevant authorities have yet to respond.

Meanwhile, SAM urged the chief minister to revoke the timber licences of companies which also cut down protected trees like 'tapang'.

SAM said its field staff stumbled upon a huge pile of seized 'tapang' logs at the log pond of Sungai Pelutan in middle Baram, Sarawak recently.

"This tree species is protected under the Second Schedule of the Sarawak Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1998, because 'tapang' is rare and important nesting tree for honey bees.

"The felling of 'tapang' trees is prohibited and the penalty is a maximum one year imprisonment or a fine of RM10,000," added the NGO.

Urging the Forest Department to leave no stone unturned in its investigation, SAM feared that the amount of 'tapang' logs seized could be just the tip of the iceberg.

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