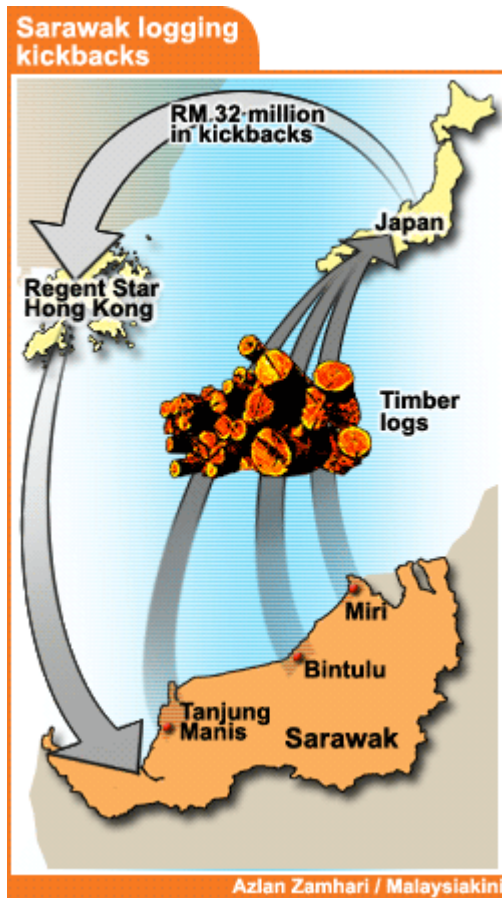


ACA starts probe on report against Taib
Malaysiakini.com
May 4, 2007
Tony Thien

The Anti-Corruption Agency has started investigations into media reports implicating Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud and his family in an alleged RM32 million 'kickbacks' paid by Japanese shipping companies carrying Sarawak logs to Japan.



This was revealed by a senior state ACA officer Supt Roslan Rambli this afternoon when a state Parti Keadilan Rakyat delegation went to Sarawak ACA headquarters in Kuching to enquire the status of investigations following a report lodged on April 13.

The report was made following Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's call to any interested parties to make official reports before the ACA could act.

The PKR delegation was led by state chief Wan Zainal Abidin Wan Senusi and included his deputy Baharuddin Mokhsen and party's state legal advisor See Chee How.

The state ACA chief Mohd Yusoff Akope was not present but according to Wan Zainal, he has confirmed he would meet them on May 9 at 3.30pm to discuss an update on the matter.

The story on the alleged kickbacks first appeared in the Japan Times on March 29. It was later

carried in the Asahi Shimbun and the International Herald Tribune Japan edition and picked up by malaysiakini.

It was also mentioned in several vernacular newspapers in Malaysia.

Legal action planned

Taib later threatened to sue malaysiakini unless it retracted the story and apologised to him. Malaysiakini has rebuffed the chief minister's demands.

Yesterday, while addressing a Sarawak backbenchers club meeting in Kuching, the chief minister appeared to be in combative mood, saying he would use the legal system to fight anyone trying to smear his name.

In a statement after visiting the ACA office, Wan Zainal said the visit was a follow-up to their report to ACA on April 13.

"Taib's denial of involvement in receiving the money through Regent Star in Hong Kong has not done any good to his tainted image," he said.

"We feel that the only way he can 'clear' his name and that of the people of Sarawak is by voluntarily agreeing to be investigated by the ACA."

"Only an investigation can unveil the truth behind the alleged scandal," he added.

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Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/66827>