

**How S'wak loggers walk away with RM230 mil**  
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A company allegedly linked to Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud has gotten its hands on one of the state's last remaining hardwood forests and stands to gain hundreds of millions of ringgit from its valuable timber sources.

This despite the presence of 16 Iban villages making up Kampong Ensika, whose inhabitants have lived, farmed and hunted in the area measuring 3,305 hectares for generations and who claim the land has been gazetted since 1956 as native customary rights (NCR) land.

According to the Sarawak Report, the threatened area is a small range of hills near Sebangan which had not previously come under 'development' due to its raised ground, though the surrounding region has already been devastated by state-sponsored logging.

It has now allegedly come in the sights of Quality Concrete Holdings Bhd due to the presently high prices that its rare timber currently fetch in the world market.

Quality Concrete is allegedly part-owned and directed by the chief minister's sister, Raziah, alleges *Sarawak Report*.

"Raziah (*below*) is a shareholder and paid non-executive director of Quality Concrete Holdings, a public company largely owned by the family of Tiang Ming Sing and Tiang Ming Kok (the chairperson and managing director, respectively).

"She is therefore directly profiting from her connections with the chief minister, who hands out all timber licences."

Since Quality Concrete possesses only a conditional one-year Occupation Certificate which comes under Section B of the Forest Ordinance, the company is compelled under the law to obtain the consent of the Iban landowners before commencing any logging, said *Sarawak Report*.

To get around that potentially sticky obstacle, however, *Sarawak Report* alleges Quality Concrete - by a combination of threats, bribes and misrepresentations - to have laid claim to the land for logging purposes.

#### Paltry payment

Among these ways is the payment of a paltry RM250 to each of the 16 families - and RM800 to each village chief - to sign away their claims to the forest.

"We have been threatened that if we oppose this claim we are going against the government and opposing development" *Sarawak Report* quotes one villager as saying.

"But why does the government act like a common thief in this case and how much development can we achieve for RM250?"

Quality Concrete, on the other hand, stands to gain significantly more than RM100 per ton of timber from the area under question, which adds up to more than RM230 million given there are about 700 tons of wood for every hectare of the 3,035 hectare-Sebangan forest.\*

"The Iban owners of the forest say they are happy to conserve the wood for future generations and to conduct sustainable logging for their needs.

"However, the aging chief (left) minister, who has already earned billions out of corrupt logging deals seems to have been unable to resist the prospect of grabbing more money by cutting it all down."

Sarawak Report said it will be forwarding the information it has gotten from sources within the state's land survey and forestry departments to lawyers to take action against Taib.

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